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BY

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I

THE corkscrew road descends by a natural staircase into a valley, where the verdure is greener perhaps than anywhere else in Ireland. The sea at the foot of the vale is gradually revealed to the traveller by the parting of rounded and terraced bosses of bare mountains, which reflect rainbow-tinted lights from sky and ocean, and take an ethereal colouring more exquisite than the beauty of fresh flowers or the splendour of jewels in the sun. These are the hills, and this is the valley of the Burren of the Kings, and small be the wonder if the Kings of Burren fought hard to hold their own.

In the heart of the vale, and up the sides of the barren grey rocks, as far as the grass can dare to creep, are the little cots and homesteads of the natives, flanked by the rich dark foliage of the elder trees, that in season shake out their fairy-like white blossoms round humble chimneys exhaling the pungent fragrance of burning turf. Here and there

the gable of a ruined church or a wrecked and deserted dwelling, or perhaps a melancholy moulder-ing group, still shows where the struggle of soul and body for leave to pray and live was for centuries carried on in this smiling region.

One morning in the summer of 1746, a girl on a pony was coming down the road-staircase, the gleam of a white gown observable only by the goats and the landward-faring gulls, even when the rider with her unconventional garb and gear dropped into the grassy slopes between the road-flights, making short cuts into the valley. The girl on the pony was not in a hurry. She was young, and there was always plenty of time to spare in Burren. A few people were working in the fields, the women with their heads tied up in handkerchiefs, for the sun was strong. The solitary girl who was going down into the valley carried her black hat in her hand, reckless of sunburn or sunstroke. It was a long ride to the goal she had in mind, but she was taking it leisurely, rather as one who was anxious to spend the hours than to save them. Sometimes she dis-mounted, and while her pony munched the sweet short grass she sat for a while on the grey rocks, from which ferns and foxgloves rose up or dangled, and always there was a deep shadow in her eyes as if from a habit of sorrow or of bodily suffering.

Down on the level road in the valley she went

more quickly. Salutations were given her by those who met her, little children curtsied to her, and she nodded to all with a smile that brought a brilliant momentary light into her eyes, and was lost again in the shadows of her deep preoccupation. As she rode on, the land grew more bare and lonely, and at last the grey mouldering walls she was bound for came in sight. She had reached Corcomroe Abbey, an ancient Cistercian monastery that saddens with its shattered beauty a lonely spot between the gleaming crowns of the Burren Mountains. She left the pony at his grass, stepped through a gap in the broken wall, and entered the chancel by a doorway of finely cut stone, crossing the grassy floor that hid a little world of mortality, and reaching the sanctuary where the sunshine burned like a sacrificial fire on the altar stone, and illuminated the carven pillars, their capitals formed of weird human faces, strangely grouped and typical of distinctly different nationalities.

Familiar with the place, she walked leisurely in and out of the grassy aisles, where Gothic arches are so built up to stay ruin that their openings have become parts of the solid wall. In the chancel, roofed with the blue heavens, she stood musing. An army was buried under her feet. That might be hard to realise. But everything, thought the girl, is as hard to realise. One's own existence and the

reason for it are inconceivable. Brona at nineteen might not have had these thoughts if she had lived pleasantly amidst happy surroundings, but her days were bitter, and the purposelessness of things of this world sometimes dogged her better nature like a haunting shadow of evil, and threatened to destroy her faith. In this mood her own existence seemed as unreal to her as the dead warriors above whose heads she now stood, trying to imagine their forms, their armour, their noise, to build them up again out of their dust that had been flesh like her own, like the warm round wrist that she touched speculatively with her slender fingers.

Not less of dust was she, who for the moment appeared to be something real and of lasting material. Whence come, whither bound? For all her latent faith, inherent and invincible, Brona was a mystery to herself, and her sad musing habit which sprang from the deadness of her life, like some pale weed out of an uncared-for grave, led her often to this silent, forlorn ruin that once had been so vigorously alive with human movement, so loud with prayer and music, so resonant of the noise of war and dismal funereal cries, a shrine of God, sometimes a barrack for soldiers, a tomb where Masses were offered for the repose of the fallen brave. This is all that the greatest, the fiercest, the saintliest come to. The grass of the field, the nettle, the wild duck, and the

dust and clay of which all are made lying undistinguished beneath them.

She felt a solemn pleasure in gazing on all the features of the place; the blue heaven above; the lofty windows of sharply-cut stone round which the ivy hung; the clustering faces on the pillars frowning and smiling in the strong sunshine; the heavy shadows that draped the central walls; the intense light on the forlorn sanctuary, on the altar stone; the sedilia with its arches of exquisite carving; the stone effigy of the King that lay in an alcove of the sanctuary, in crown and sceptre, with long locks, short robe, long cloak and quaint pointed shoes, the costume of the Irish Kings of his century. Flitting noiselessly about the place, the girl finally gravitated to this spot beside the King's tomb, and resting on a pile of loosened stones and hardened earth, the upheaval and accumulation of ages, she sat gazing at the fallen King, marking the chips and notches in his mouldering grandeur.

II

THE girl's position in life was sad and difficult enough to account for her grave brows, and her habit of serious meditation. Hers were the days when the Penal Laws were still in force in Ireland. The price was on the priest's head, and death the penalty of his ministrations of the Mass and Sacrament. If a Catholic gentleman still held his ancestral house it was on sufferance, as a castle of the air that might be blown away at any moment by the breath of the "discoverer." Any enemy or covetous person, a traitor in his family, a kinsman, or even an unworthy son of his own, might report him as a "discovered" Papist, and take possession of his property in the name of the law and as the guerdon of treachery.

Such an Irish Catholic gentleman Brona's father was, Morogh O'Loghlin, of the ancient family of the O'Loghlins, Kings of Burren, who continued to live modestly under the shadow of the ancient castle of his forefathers, contented with the state of peace-

ful insecurity into which Providence had ordered him. Devoted to study, he found forgetfulness of danger and difficulty in his own library, enjoying in imagination the privileges of ancient Greeks and Romans, and tasting with relish the liberty of life on the prairie, the sierra, and the desert. His gentle manners and cheerful philosophy had won him the respect and good will of his neighbours in the county, and though it was known that he harboured a Popish priest, fingered a rosary, and even wore a small crucifix under his garments suspended round his neck, no one of those favoured by the law had risen up to take advantage of it to dispossess and bring ruin to one so admirable in his endurance of adversity.

Neither the son nor the daughter of Morogh shared his patience under the burden of their disabilities, but chafed at the chains on their youth the odium and insult cast on their religion. Brona who had lately come home from the school in France, where she had been sent after her mother's death, had found with amazement that she was in some sort an outcast among the women of her own degree in her native country. On learning the inevitableness of her fate she had accepted it with courage, and wrapping herself in her pride she had kept close to her father, resolved to seek no countenance from a world that was disposed to think ill of her.

Her brother Turlough was of a totally different mind, and resented furiously the injustice under which he was obliged to live. He also had been educated in France, and, restless at home, spent most of his time in Paris. He was as much disposed to be a king as any of his Dalcassian forefathers, and as eager for supremacy as those who delighted in wars for the maintenance of it, while abiding by their own admirable laws in times of peace. Turlough hated war as destructive of all pleasure, but as there were now no admirable laws to be obeyed, he did not feel bound by any laws in existence in his day. He scorned Morogh's philosophy of endurance as a mean contentment with slavery, and took advantage of his father's self-denying generosity to remain where he could live on a common footing with other young men of his rank, drowning in amusement the future of degradation prepared for him in his own country.

The connection of the west of Ireland with France and Spain, traditional and practical, made it easy for the young man to live among gay friends in Paris, winning popularity by his handsome face and the charm of manner, half Irish and half French, which distinguished him when happy, but was unknown to the gloom of the Irish home which his presence darkened. Links with the Continent had always been kept up by the O'Loghlins.

Morogh's sister Aideen, the Marquise de Chevrières, had married in France, and having lost her husband early she had returned to live with her brother, not denying herself an occasional visit to Paris. While Brona was there at school in one of the ancient convents now evacuated, her visits had been more frequent than now when her niece preferred to share her father's overshadowed life, rather than escape into the pleasanter *milieu* which her aunt had desired to provide for her. Secretly the Marquise admired the gay expensive tastes of her nephew more than the simplicity and quiet fortitude of her niece, and out of her own purse she contributed generously to enable the young man to make a brilliant figure in the salons and drawing-rooms of Paris.

III

THE old castle of the O'Loghlins was in a half-ruinous condition, part only being habitable, but attached to it was a more modern dwelling, connected with certain apartments of the ancient structure, which were still sound and available for the uses of life. The new dwelling, which was about a hundred years old, was two-storied and straggling, with thick walls and low-ceilinged rooms, part thatched, and part roofed with the curious large thin slabs of the Donegore stone, of which so many uses are made in the County of Clare. With its back to the castle for shelter it faced the sea, and the approach to it was a narrow, hilly by-road, boring its way through the outskirts of a magnificent wood which wandered away on one side in the direction of a desolate stretch of bogland, encrusted here and there with rocks and ridges of limestone, and flecked with pools deep as mountain tarns or shallow as rain puddles. Besides their primary uses, woods and bogs seem to have been designed

by nature as shelter for the secret Mass, affording untrackable pathways for the feet of proscribed priests and their adventurous congregations. Above and beyond all rose the rounded bastions of the bare Burren Mountains, gleaming with opalescent colour, like fortifications of some fairy realm, bulwarks of some jewelled citadel in a dream.

Within, the O'Loghlin homestead was comfortable enough in a spare way, the antique furniture almost all of foreign workmanship, with here and there a solid oak piece hewn to shape by native hands, black and polished by the usage of time. The dining-room and drawing-room were in the newer building on the level ground facing the cliffs and ocean, the library was an apartment of the old castle on the same flat, near it a spiral stair leading up to the " peel tower, with its round room also in good preservation. In a corner of the library flooring was a trap door, leading down by a flight of steps to a subterranean passage, giving on the seashore through a natural gateway of the towering rocks that menaced approaching ships with wreckage. Such passages had been originally designed for escapes and secret arrivals in time of war, and were often availed of for the reception of smuggled goods from continental ports in times of peace.

O'Loghlin had no taste for trading, but there were others in the county who contrived, in defiance

of danger, to amass a fortune by such methods, and it was probable that the small chamber at the entrance to the subterranean passage had been used for the stowing away of valuable contraband goods. It was ill-ventilated, yet with sufficient air through apertures contrived in the stone work above ground to enable life to exist within it, and at the time of this story it was the hiding place of Father Aengus, an Irish Franciscan friar, chaplain of the O'Loghlin household, and spiritual administrator and comforter, by stealth and at the risk of his life, of the penalised Catholics for miles around.

The little dungeon was a cell which the humble son of St Francis was glad to inhabit. A crucifix on the wall, a table with books and writing materials, a bed in the corner, were about all its furniture. When no particular scare was abroad, no warning of a visit from the priest-hunter, Father Aengus would give his company to his friend and protector, Morogh, and would sit with him in his library talking or reading. In times of danger he was buried in his cell, the door of which was not to be found except by the initiated. The greatest danger of all was faced when Mass was said on the rock altar of the bog, and the people were assembled to assist at it, or when the priest ventured across the land to the cots and hovels of the faithful to take the Sacraments to the dying. Each time his

going forth from his hiding place under O'Loghlin's roof was likely to be the last. That night the stars might look down on his corpse floating in the bog pool, or swinging from the roadside tree.

Meanwhile the soul of his sainted patron of Assisi lived behind the pallid brows and soft, brown eyes of Father Aengus, eyes where human tenderness and the strenuous energy of mystical devotion burned their imperishable fires. A slender figure in gown and girdle, brown as the bog-earth travelled by his sandalled feet in his Divine Master's service, he came and went by the secret stair, sometimes scarcely seen for days, at other times showing a cheerful and comforting face to the household. Beloved by all, from Morogh to the servants who whispered his name and watched at every outpost for his safety, he was worshipped by the countryside at large as God's visible messenger to the afflicted, a hero of the Cross, who daily courted death to carry them the saving grace which would enable them also to die, when necessary, with courage.

A lamp was always burning in his cell where no daylight ever entered. One table was piled with books, the lives and writings of the saints; another was covered with papers and pens and ink. Linked in spiritual descent with those Irish Franciscans of the ancient and demolished and ruined friaries of Quin (Quinchy the arbutus grove), of Ennis and

others, Aengus, namesake and follower of the Rapt Culdee, kept a record of these evil days in Ireland, and of the harvest of glory reaped from the rack for God, writings to be conveyed when opportunity might arise to the heads of his Order in countries where Christian and Catholic worship was happily free.

IV

THE Marquise de Chevrières had the prettiest and most frivolously appointed chamber in Castle O'Loghlin. One could here see that though Aideen was Irish by birth, she was by a second nature a Parisian. Curtains of brilliant silk made much of the sunlight that got through the narrow windows, and many odds and ends of feminine fancy lay about among properties and furniture that had evidently been exiled from a French interior. While Brona was riding homeward, her aunt was busily engaged examining and spreading out on exhibition a number of pieces of rich silks, velvets, and laces, evidently taking great pleasure in her occupation. Now and again she went to the window that looked inland, and when at last she saw the girl on her pony approaching by the road between the bog and the wood, she threw over her head and shoulders a light scarf of a colour very becoming to her white hair dressed high, her dark eyes and healthy complexion, and taking her way out of

doors went quickly up the road to meet her brother's daughter. Brona sprang from her pony, and walked beside her aunt back to the castle.

"MacDonogh is here," said Aideen, "and has brought letters, besides a lot of interesting things. His ships got in the night before last. He is talking with your father. I think he will stay until to-morrow. No, Turlough is not coming. Now, don't blame the boy. How can we expect him to bear this dreary life? Yes, of course it is expensive in Paris and he wants money. I am sending him some. It is my own affair."

"You are unselfish. He is not," said Brona. "Father needs him."

"We can do very well without him. Your father lived about the world a good deal when he was young. Let Turlough do the same. He can settle down later on. I wish you had a little of his spirit, Brona, to go abroad and enjoy yourself for awhile. There is plenty of time before you, *après*, for a life of old maidenhood in a country suffering under tyrannical rule."

"Now, Aideen," said Brona, "how can you talk like that? Have you not left your gay Paris to live with us here, willingly?"

"That is different!" cried the Marquise. "I have had my happy youth. I have lived my life. My husband gone, I have no more concern with

the world. But you, who ought to have all that before you."

Brona shook her head. "Nothing of the kind for me, dear auntie. Put it out of your mind. Mere glitter and excitement do mot make me happy. Paris, as I hear of it from Turlough, disgusts me. Better the grand hills and the forbidden prayers than such goings on as I hear of."

"You ought to be a nun!" said Aideen impatiently.

"Ah, no," said Brona. "I am not good enough. If I am restless and depressed here, I should be worse either in a convent or at Versailles. Were I as resigned as father I might be content in a cell, or if I were as easily uplifted by pleasure as you, I might take my fling abroad and come back here the better for it. But as I am just myself——"

She gave her pony to a servant, and followed up the stair to Aideen's room, where the rich fabrics and other prettinesses were displayed to her by her aunt.

"See what charming clothes you might have, child, if you were not so obstinate!"

Brona laughed at her aunt's childish delight in the pretty things that she no longer coveted for herself, and by that laugh the girl was transformed. The grave face became irradiated, and the ripple of clear, musical notes that fell from her would

have taken a stranger by surprise, contrasting with the quiet seriousness of her usual speech.

"What a pity we can't exchange ages," she said; "you to be young. I to be——"

"Not old! Don't say it, my dear. I am not old, nor do I intend to be. But come and let us take these presents to our friends below stairs."

The marquise seized a bag of parcels. "Here's something for everybody," she said. "My friend in Paris has attended to all my commissions."

"This is how you spend all—never leaving yourself a penny," said Brona, peering into the bag; and then they went down the stairs together to the housekeeper's room, where about a dozen individuals were gathered from outdoors and indoors, summoned by a whisper that had been running round the house for half an hour, beginning at a back door, making a circuit of garden and stables, and coming back again by the front entrance.

Ribbons and kerchiefs and smart aprons for the girls and women, vests and caps and ties for the men and boys, besides rosary beads and a crucifix for everybody. Thanks and blessings in Irish were freely poured out in return, and repeated in English to make them doubly emphatic. Thady Quin, the butler, and Mrs MacCurtin, the housekeeper, had first of all leave to choose the best to their taste,

the younger people in turn afterwards. Aideen, giving orders for the evening and the next morning, was appealed to by whispered remarks and questions.

" God bless Mr MacDonogh, and we hope he has brought good news from France ! "

For all reply the Marquise put her finger on her lip, which seemed to say that there was no bad news, and there was safety in silence. But the anxious were not satisfied. Norah and Bridget murmured together as they made ready the visitor's bedchamber for the night. The best embroidered counterpane was put on the bed, the finest linen sheets and the woolliest blankets. The best of everything in the dwelling was for the guest. An antique silver font was taken from a hiding place and hung by the bed, a little blessed water was put into it, and a bit of the blessed palm of last Easter was placed above it.

" Sure nothin' will happen for one night, and if it does there's the hole under the boards."

As MacDonogh came up to his room to prepare for dinner, he was waylaid in passages and on stairs. Mrs MacCurtin in her best cap curtsied to him in a dark corner.

" God bless you, sir, and have you a word of news from my Dan that's own body-man to Lord Clare ? "

" Dan ? Dan MacCurtin ? Of course I have the

best of news. I know him. A splendid fellow! No news is good news, ma'am, and you may give God thanks for it."

Mrs MacCurtin burst into tears and vanished.

Further on Norah and Bridget, their task finished, were lying in wait in a passage, when the tall burly figure of MacDonogh came tramping towards them.

"Beg pardon, your honour, but how is the boys you took from us last year? Sure we don't know if they're living or dead. And is it comin' back they are to us at all, at all?"

"Oh, you girls!" said MacDonogh. "Would you bring them back to be hanged, drawn, and quartered?"

The girls wept into their aprons.

"There now! They're well enough, as right as a trivet. I'll give your love to them all."

"Shán O'Hare," faltered Norah.

"A great fellow! Will be a general," said MacDonogh.

"But you're not goin' to take Brian Conor with you this turn, sir?" said Bridget. "There's work for him here with the master."

"Is it refuse a fine recruit like Brian for the Brigade?" said MacDonogh. "Where's your patriotism, my good girl? If Brian wants to come, I'll take him."

The girls lowered their heads with groans and

retreated tearfully, while the guest passed into his room, followed by Phelim, the boy who had been told off to wait on him, and who also was a candidate for membership in the Irish Brigade under Lord Clare in Paris.

MacDonogh was in fact a recruiting officer for the Brigade, as well as a clever merchant, doing a thriving trade in smuggling wines and silks from foreign parts and exchanging them for tallow, wool, and hides in his native country. His vessels, coming and going, brought news as well as goods from France and Spain, and conveyed the recruits required to keep up the standing regiment which held its place in Paris until dissolved by Louis XVI. in his days of evil fortune, when at the dissolution he presented the Brigade with a banner bearing the motto—

1692–1792
Semper et Ubique Fideles.

V

AFTER dinner the little company sat in the library, Morogh, his sister, Brona, the guest MacDonogh, and Father Aengus, who had been pressingly invited to leave his cell for the moment, no danger being imminent. A huge turf fire burned on the wide flagged hearth, for though it was spring the sea dews were chill and the winds were sharp. The group in their various costumes made a picture. Aideen was in the French dress of the day, gay and elegant, for she held that to make a pleasant appearance does something towards creating cheerfulness in sad and serious surroundings and circumstances. Brona's grey woollen frock, with a blue girdle, protested against elaborate fashions, Morogh and MacDonogh were in the gentleman's dress usual at the time, and Father Aengus wore his brown gown and cord of the Franciscan Order. A tall screen of Spanish leather made a rich and sombre background for the figures at one side of the hearth, and behind in the shadows of the more dimly

lighted part of the room, rows of books were to be seen covering the wall from the floor even up to the very ceiling.

Morogh, a pale man of placid countenance, with thoughtful brows and somewhat worn and weary eyes, was unusually bright and lively in enjoyment of the rare visit of his friend; yet in every particular of manner and appearance he was in strong contrast with MacDonogh, who was a big florid man, loud of speech, with a certain reckless-seeming dash that covered a good deal of wary prudence not to say occasional cunning.

"Here is the letter," said MacDonogh. "The date is six months old. I found it waiting for me in care of a safe hand. I was in Spain when it was written. A good long way to come round to get a letter from France!"

Morogh took the letter, and read it aloud in a low voice, while all the little company listened with the keenest interest.

PARIS, *October*, 1746.

DEAR MACDONOGH,—I congratulate you on your marriage, but trust it will not induce you to retire from the Irish Brigade. I hope you do not forget the memorable day we had at Fontenoy, and the other glorious days in which they had a share. Your promotion goes on and all are wishing for your return. With your assistance and O'Brien's the ranks are near filled up. I hope to see you soon.

How does my old friend and relation Capt. Dermot O'Brien get on ? How is Morogh O'Loghlin ? Are they in good health and permitted to live and pray in peace ?—Yours, CLARE.

To MONS. A. MACDONOGH,
Co. Clare, Ireland.

" He doesn't forget his friends," said Morogh, folding the letter. " Pity that he will die over there, unmarried, and that his line will come to an end."

" We hope not. We hope not," said MacDonogh. " A noble French wife will not bring him any fresh danger. And since even I have now got a wife in France, what may not be expected to happen ? "

" My nephew will do the same, I hope," said Aideen briskly.

" Turlough ? I don't know. He will need to get a bit steadier first," said MacDonogh with a change of voice.

Morogh sighed and shifted in his chair.

" He does not make himself happy here," he said.

" How could it be expected ? " Aideen hastened to say.

" He is young. He will improve," said MacDonogh. " We must give him time." The big recruiting officer regretted the words that had roused pain in the mind of his friend and host.

" Aye ! " said Turlough's father, " aye ! "

" You were not always a contented stay-at-home, yourself," said Aideen.

" No," said her brother, " I took the full benefit of my youth in many scenes and societies. You are right to remind me of it, Aideen."

Brona said little. Her eyes were on her father's face. More than any other she knew how deep was his disappointment in Turlough. She shared his sorrow, a grief that at nineteen was enough to overcloud her days with even a bigger shadow than was cast by Penal bondage.

" You have more letters to read, Morogh," said Aideen anxious to divert her brother's mind from Turlough's affairs, of which she knew more than he did.

" Very interesting letters," said O'Loghlin, " life is not so hard when one has friends. Here is one from honest Charles Lucas, who never forgets that he is a Clare man."

" Or that he began life as an apothecary in Ennis," said MacDonogh. " What is he doing now ? Is he still fighting the Corporation of Dublin who disfranchised him ? For a man who is not a Papist he has had a rough time of it."

" He has got the better of them. He is returned to Parliament. Anything that can be done for his Papist friends he will do."

" That will not be much," said MacDonogh.

"He will ruin himself over again before he will be of any use to us. There is nothing for the Papist but war, and war at present is not possible."

"Impossible nowhere but here," said Aideen. "War everywhere except where it ought to be! England and France plunging at each other. You and your Brigade fighting for France, and your own country with the assassin at her throat."

"Sh—sh—dear lady!" said MacDonogh. "No use showing your teeth when you can't bite. Better fight as at Fontenoy than nowhere."

Aideen shrugged her shoulders, French fashion, and looked at her brother. Fear of injuring him was stronger in her even than her desire to indulge in the freedom of speech she had been accustomed to in Paris. Morogh changed the conversation by producing another letter.

"This is from Mrs Delany," he said, "my old friend of so many years ago."

"The Dean of St Werbergh's wife?" said MacDonogh. "Certainly you have an odd assortment of friends, O'Loghlin. Now, where did you make accquaintance with this comfortable, prosperous English dame, who is enjoying, on her husband's ill-gotten spoils from Papists, all the best the world can give her, while you and yours suffer that she may thrive, and are pinched to ensure her plenty of pin money?"

"Let me see," said Morogh, "I met her first in Paris, in, I think, 1718, the year of the Quadruple Alliance. She was then the almost child-wife of the brutal old Cornishman, Pendarves. Her uncle, Granville, had forced her into the marriage two years before—by way of providing for her,—and we were all amazed at the dignity and modesty of the young creature, and her patient endurance of so pitiful a fate. My memory holds her as one of those figures never to be forgotten. I first saw her then, and not again till I met her as a widow in London living with her mother and sister, and declining all invitations to make a fresh venture into matrimony. Many a one she disappointed, for she was a charming creature, but no one ever had a right to complain of her treatment. About 1730 she came to Ireland to stay with the Donnellans in St Stephen's Green, and I met her at Dr Delany's in Stafford Street in company with Swift and Stella."

"And became one of her lovers," said MacDonogh laughing.

A shade crossed Morogh's face, and Brona darted an indignant glance at the guest, and then raised her eyes to her mother's portrait that hung on the opposite wall.

"My wife was with me then," said Morogh quietly.

"Pardon!" said MacDonogh.

"After that," continued Morogh, "I met her frequently in London, for, as my sister reminds me, I was a good deal about the world, and interested in many people, before I settled down to be a proscribed Papist in my old home in my native country. I have always had a warm and pleasant feeling for Mrs Delany, and when I heard of her marriage with the worthy Dean, three years ago, none of her friends were more rejoiced than I was to know that she had found happiness with an affectionate husband."

MacDonogh was evidently not in sympathy with his friend on all points, and his face showed it now, but before he could speak again Aideen averted danger by turning the conversation on the King of France.

"Has Louis profited anything by his illness at Metz and the counsels of the Bishop of Soissons?"

MacDonogh laughed.

"When the devil was sick
The devil a saint would be:
When the devil was well
The devil a saint was he,"

he said. "The Bishop is still in banishment from the Court in consequence of his temerity. Châteauroux is gone, of course, gone the way of all flesh, but Pompadour is reigning. Louis will never be

anything but a vulgar profligate, and the people who were frenzied with anxiety about him in his fever, fearing his death, are losing their enthusiasm, and are suffering horribly throughout the country. God knows what will be the end of it. Wise men say there will be a revolution."

"They worshipped his predecessors, why not him?" said Aideen scornfully.

"Louis XIV. was an outrageous and vainglorious spendthrift," said MacDonogh, "but his audacity and magnificence dazzled the multitude, who saw in him a splendid figure, and were proud of him, vices and all. But this man is all low vice and vulgarity, no splendour, no bravery of style even, and the disgusted people are gnashing their teeth at him."

"He may yet repent," said the Franciscan, who had scarcely spoken to ask some questions about friends of his Order in the places lately visited by MacDonogh, who had brought him letters.

"As a coward, at the last," said MacDonogh bitterly.

"Even that," said the friar mildly. "The Lord made no conditions except just repentance."

Then he slipped away, and left the group of friends to talk round the fire while the wind whistled like a war bugle in the chimney and through the chinks of the doors, and the ocean rollers beat like the roll of drums on the not far distant shore.

At four o'clock next morning the house was astir, for Mass was to be said in the secret cell, and all the household were preparing to receive the Sacraments.

"The best opportunity I ever get," said MacDonogh, "and I am not going to lose it," and there he was on his knees on the steps outside the cell with all the Norahs and Bridgets and Dans of the household, waiting to go to Confession with the rest. When all that was done, and Brona had lighted the candles on the altar in the little dungeon chapel, the door was shut and the Mass was said, and everyone in turn partook of the Lord's Feast. Morogh and his sister and daughter in line with the humble members of the household, all being there but Thady Quin, who was on watch to avert the tragedy of a surprise, and was busy in the dining-room preparing for the family breakfast. As he spread the cloth and arranged the table, he talked to himself, going frequently to the windows to take a sharp observation up and down the country.

"For they might have a spy set on MacDonogh," he said. "Now, what would I do if they walked into me this minute? Where could I say the family all did be? Out takin' a ride, may be, or down to the shore to bathe? The whole o' them? MacDonogh and the Master, and Miss Brona and the Marquce herself? And Honor MacCurtin on a pillion, or in the sea, rheumatism an' all? With

them troops o' girls and boys thrapesin' after them ? No, I don't think the King's regiments would be believin' ye, Thady Quin, so it's only to the heavens above that you have to look for deliverance. And be at your prayers, my man, while you do be handlin' the cups and saucers, for the Lord won't be angry if you break a plate or two through the distraction of an ' Our Father,' and it's angels will be pickin' up the pieces ! "

VI

AFTER breakfast the next morning MacDonogh took horse and rode off to spend the day recruiting for the Irish Brigade under Lord Clare, who at that time maintained a standing regiment of sixteen hundred men at Paris, ready for active foreign service when required. When he had gone O'Loghlin called his daughter into the library, and read to her the kind letter of Mrs Delany, to which he had only alluded the evening before.

"MacDonogh, though a brave and true fellow, is a bit of a bigot," he said smiling, "and we need not discuss everything in his presence."

> DEAR MR O'LOGHLIN [said the letter],—I have heard that your daughter has returned from school, and it seems to me that the County Clare will be rather a sad place for a young girl at present. Will you lend her to me for a few weeks, during which I may try to give her a little pleasure and amusement? You know me well enough to trust that I will take every care of her, and will shield her from all annoyance on the burning subject of religion. Indeed, intolerance and tyranny are less cruelly in evidence

here than in the country parts. You know D. D.'s liberal-mindedness of old, and that I pretend to be nothing but a mere Christian. Do, please, persuade your girl to come, and believe me always Your sincere friend, MARY DELANY.

During the reading of this letter several changes had passed over Brona's countenance. Surprise, disapproval, and something like indignation followed each other in her expressive eyes.

" You don't wish me to go, father ? " she said.

" I do wish it, Brona," said Morogh. " Why not ? " he added as the girl sat silent, with opposition gathering strength on her dark brows.

" Oh, why ? " she exclaimed. " Why should I go out among these people who hate us, call us idolaters—rob and murder us ? "

" Hush ! my dear, you are surely not speaking of the kind woman whose letter I have read to you ? "

" I do not believe in any of them," said Brona passionately, folding her hands tightly together on her knees.

" You dread the Greeks, even when bearing gifts," said her father with a little playful smile. " Well, Mary Delany is not a Greek. She means friendship when she offers it."

" I could not live with them ! " cried the girl piteously. " I could not help showing my distrust

of them, could not make myself agreeable to their patronage. Let me stay with you, father! I am as happy here with you as it is possible for me to be in this world."

"I am disappointed," said Morogh, sinking back in his chair. "I thought I saw a little ray of brightness—but if you deny it to me——"

A wild look of pain swept the girl's face.

Disappoint! Deny! Oh, would one ever get to the bottom of this well of misery? It was too much for her. She dropped her head and hid her face in her hands.

O'Loghlin looked at the bowed head and his heart ached.

"Brona," he said, "don't make yourself too unhappy about the matter. Think it over, dear, and bring your own naturally sound judgment to bear on it, then let me know your decision. Just at this moment impulsive feeling has got the better of your common sense."

Brona burst into tears, stooped beside her father's chair, and kissed the hand that rested on the arm of it, then silently hastened out of the room.

Aideen, who met her rushing up to her own retreat in the "peel tower," came to Morogh to know what had happened to agitate the girl, who was usually so controlled and self-contained.

"Oh, she must go!" cried Aideen on hearing

all about it. "She will end by doing it to please you. Though you may appeal to her common sense, her decision will be of the heart rather then the head. She will gratify her father."

Morogh was hardly consoled by the suggestion that he was to win by giving his child pain, instead of the pleasure he thought to provide for her. He sighed and retired behind his book, leaving Aideen to her pleasant anticipations of a coming change for her niece, who she believed would be happier in Dublin than in Paris, and who must surely benefit by a little experience of life beyond that of her convent school or of her home in the Burren. The event proved the Marquise right in her reading of Brona, for next day the girl came to her father to offer the sacrifice of her will with so much well-assumed cheerfulness, that Morogh dismissed his fear of affectionate coercion and replied to Mrs Delany's invitation with a lightened heart.

Then, for a week or two Aideen was in her glory, preparing a fitting wardrobe for her niece.

"My love, I never knew you were so beautiful," said Aideen, embracing her as the girl stood before her arrayed for the first time in one of the pretty Pompadour costumes of the day.

"Don't be silly, Aideen," said Brona. "If clothes make beauty——"

"They discover it. They illumine it," said Aideen

enthusiastically. " People in Dublin shall not say that the beauty of Clare women is on the decline, or that they dress like Hottentots."

The question of how Brona was to travel from the County Clare to Dublin, no easy journey in the year 1747, was solved by the thoughtfulness of the good lady whose invitation Morogh had accepted for his daughter.

" Miss Ingoldesby, a friend of ours," she wrote, " is returning after a visit to arrange a household for her nephew, who intends settling down on his paternal property of Ardcurragh, near you, and she will be pleased to take your daughter under her wing. For her return journey to you I shall take care to provide an equally desirable escort."

Brona, having yielded, made no further allusion to her sacrifice of her will and inclinations, but braced herself to endure what was a severe trial to her pride and natural shrinking from strangers, an attitude not to be wondered at considering the circumstances into which she had been born and had grown up. To be forced into the society of strangers who persecuted her faith, was to her like being thrown into the arena to fight with wolves. Seeing that her father and Aideen with their cosmopolitan experiences could not understand her, she locked up the unconquerable pain and dismay

in her heart, saying to herself that she would have courage enough to live through the experience, that it would pass as all things pass, and that she would return when it was over to the refuge of her home.

On the evening before her departure, after Aideen's maid had packed the trunks and all was ready for the morrow's journey, she stood at the window of her high room and looked out on the weirdly beautiful montains in their silver-grey and violet veils, and from them glanced round the chamber which she loved as a hermit loves his cell. White curtains and a small white bed with a large crucifix above it, an ancient statue of the Holy Mother in worn silver, a long Irish rosary of amber beads with silver tubular links and crucifix hanging on the wall, a table with books and desk and a couple of hard chairs, were all the furniture visible. As she looked round this cell of her prayers and dreams, which had seemed to her on her return from school rather cold and lonely, she could not remember that she had ever found it anything but the sweet home of her separate and solitary soul. Half the night she spent on her knees wrestling with her unwillingness to leave it, praying that it might be left to her by the cruelty of the law, entreating God that her father might remain undiscovered by an enemy till her happy return. Next morning the private

coach that was to convey Miss Ingoldesby to Dublin called for Miss O'Loghlin at an early hour, and Brona smiled her good-bye to her father as brightly as if her anticipated pleasure in the visit to his friends had been as great as his own.

VII

THE journey to Dublin of Miss Jacquetta Ingoldesby and Brona was tedious, the coach stopping only to change horses or to allow of sleep at two places on the way. Miss Ingoldesby had shrunk a little from such close companionship with a probably rather uncouth young Irish Papist from the back of the bogs, and wondered what Mary Delany meant by transferring the creature from her native wilds to civilised society in Dublin. Her manner, accordingly, was at first cold and distant to the young person, and Brona was left a good deal to her own meditations. As the journey proceeded, however, the elder woman's attitude to her fellow-traveller changed, and when they arrived at Delville near Dublin, then the home of the Delanys, she delivered over her charge with a word of commendation.

" I think I have brought you a rather remarkable young woman, my dear Mary," she said, " she has given me several surprises by the way. Of course

these stately old French nuns give a manner and a finish. I did not know she had been at school with them."

" We must be careful with her," said Mrs Delany. " Her father gives me to understand that she is an obstinate little Papist. I was glad to hear it. I do not like half and half people."

" Well, I am off to England to-morrow, and I wish you safely through with your visitor, for I think she has a will of her own," said Miss Ingoldesby just before they descended to dinner, and while Brona was dressing in that nook of Mrs Delany's " peaceful bowers " which had been assigned to her.

At dinner a pleasant company was assembled, including Miss Delany, a niece of the Dean's, and Mr Greene, a young man to whom she was engaged to be married ; Miss Ingoldesby, a couple of young barristers from Dublin, Mrs Barbour, the poetess, whose home was close by in the village, and Mr Hugh Ingoldesby, the nephew in whose domestic interests Miss Jacquetta had paid her visit to the County of Clare. So closely did his aunt hold this young man engaged in conversation on the subject of her efforts for his comfort that the dessert was on Mary Delany's beautiful polished mahogany, and the pierced silver " coasters " were going round the table with the wine, before Ingoldesby had found leisure to make observation of the rest of the com-

pany. Then, his eyes travelling towards the Dean's dinner companion at the other end of the board, he had to lean forward a little to see the lady fully, and after a few moments of silence, during which he gave his aunt a rather absent-minded answer, he said abruptly:

"Who is the remarkable-looking girl sitting beside the Dean?"

"A bitter little Papist, low be it spoken! Turn your eyes elsewhere, my boy. She will not appreciate any interest you may take in her."

"I am sorry for that," said Ingoldesby, "for it is a face that will create a good deal of interest."

Miss Jacquetta reflected with satisfaction on the obstinacy insisted upon as characteristic of Miss O'Loghlin, and did not tell him that the interesting young person was a neighbour of his in the county in which he was to establish himself, but pointed out to him the charming flower-wreaths formed of shells on the ceiling above their heads, the ingenious work of their hostess, far more exquisite than the carved stucco it imitated.

After dinner, however, Mr Ingoldesby lost no time in requesting an introduction to Miss O'Loghlin. Brona was sitting a little aloof from the other young people, who were making merry together with their own familiar quips and jests and catchwords, and sat with a little the air of a spectator of a novel

scene. The pretty French costume which Aideen had charged her to wear on the first occasion, was curiously in contrast with the face above it, giving to seriousness a touch of something like tragedy.

Mr Ingoldesby was presented and received with "rather the air of a queen receiving a subject," as Mrs Delany said afterwards to her husband. "It will do him good. Our friend Hugh has had sufficient favour from fair ladies, and played the king often enough in different social *milieux*. It is amusing to see our little Papist from the bogs exacting tribute from him."

"Take care, my dear," said the Dean. "There are burning questions in the air. Don't let us play with fire."

"Oh, have no anxiety," said his wife. "The girl is a rock of principle, and no Ingoldesby will ever be tempted to draw nearer than is convenient to a proscribed maiden."

Hugh sat down beside the sphinx-like stranger, and felt unusually uncertain of how to proceed further. But he was not daunted, and endeavoured to draw her out. No, she was not very well acquainted with Paris. French society did not attract her. Yes, the Burren Mountains were strangely beautiful. One must know them to believe it. Her answers were short, if intelligent, and she made no spontaneous effort at conversation.

Only once she looked up quickly with a flash of feeling that illumined her countenance in a startling manner, and she was beginning to say a few words to account for it when Mrs Delany approached her with :

" My dear, you are shockingly tired, I know, and would like to get some rest. No trifle is travelling to Dublin from the County Clare. Miss Ingoldesby has gone to bed. Do you not wish——"

" Thank you ! " said Brona. " You are very kind. Travelling by coach is more fatiguing than walking——"

" All those miles ? "

" No," said Brona with her first laugh since she left home. " I am a good walker, but——"

Ingoldesby and his hostess were both so surprised by her laugh, and the change it made in her face, that they neither heard nor said more for half a minute, while Ingoldesby gathered up the stranger's fan and other frivolities as she had called them to Aideen, and then " good-night " was all that was necessary before Brona made her escape.

" That laugh broke the ice," said Mrs Delany to Ingoldesby when she was gone. " There is deep water under the ice. Don't let us drown her."

She had suddenly realised that the Dean was right, and that, whether of fire or water, there might happen to be danger in the air. Here Miss Greene

and Miss Delany approached Ingoldesby with messages, which they asked him to convey to their friends in England.

"I am not going to-morrow," he said, "but I am sure my aunt will attend to these matters much better. Shall I ask her?"

"Not going?" said Miss Delany.

"I find I have still some business in Dublin."

"I am surprised. Miss Ingoldesby expects your escort," said Miss Greene.

Ingoldesby smiled with a slight bow, and the young ladies went off to confer with their hostess on the change of affairs. Journeys were serious undertakings in those days, and so was the conveyance of letters and parcels. Miss Ingoldesby was decidedly dissatisfied at finding that her nephew was not to accompany her, but he departed with her next morning to see her off from Dublin, and for a few days he was seen no more at Delville.

After the early breakfast Mary Delany took her young guest all over the house and grounds. The evidence of perfect freedom and security in this happy and prosperous house impressed Brona, in contrast with the sadness of her own home, with its overhanging cloud of danger, and she was silent as she passed from one to another joyfully-displayed detail and circumstance of prosperity.

Mrs Delany began to fear that her guest was

going to prove unconquerably shy and dull, but found her more sympathetic in the garden, which was the name given to the whole extent of the pleasure ground of Delville. Brona was introduced to the brook with its high bank and hanging wood of evergreens, the long walks covered with great trees and bordered with flowers.

" The robins are as fond of this place as we are," said Mrs Delany, " it just holds a few of them as well as D. D. and myself."

The fresh air and the peep at mountains and the sea seemed to restore some of her natural vigour to Brona's spirits, and colour flowed into her cheeks and light into her eyes. The natural sweetness and happy peacefulness of it all, the air of protected liberty and joyful security everywhere around, appealed to her latent power of sympathising generously in the good of others which she could not share, and for the moment she looked on her surroundings with the eyes of her kind entertainer. The clear tones of her voice were heard ringing with admiration as Miss Greene and Miss Delany came up a side path to meet them, half afraid of the grave stranger of the night before, and relieved to hear her cries of pleasure and her laughter.

After this success Mrs Delany was encouraged to proceed energetically with her plans for giving pleasure to this " half-frozen girl " from the gloomy

wilds of the Clare of the proscribed. During the following week many visitors passed in and out of the gates of Delville, and excursions were made into Dublin to see the sights and the people. The Parliament house in College Green was visited, St Patrick's Cathedral, and Christ Church where Strongbow the invader lies beside Eva his wife, daughter of the Irish King; St Werbergh's, the church where Delany officiated, and Stafford Street to look at the Dean's old house where Mrs Pendarves used to meet Swift and Stella and Morogh O'Loghlin, as members of the lively Dean's Thursday dinner parties.

A great surprise was in store for the charming Papist (as the Dean called her to his wife), when she was informed that a nun had been invited to dinner to meet her.

"Privately, you know, my dear. She is Miss Crilly, a relative of my husband, and we are on excellent terms with her. She will be exceedingly pleased to see you."

That was a quiet family dinner, and Miss Crilly proved to be a plain but pleasant-faced elderly lady, dressed in black with collar and coif of white, who made herself very agreeable, and was evidently a favourite with the family circle.

To return her visit Mrs Delany and Brona were driven the next day to her "nunnery" in King

Street, a hidden convent of Poor Clares, where they spent a lively afternoon, drinking tea, seeing " the pretty chapel," and entertained by Mrs Delany, who played the nuns' organ (the gift of the Countess of Fingall), greatly to the delight of the Community.

Brona was drawn into many corners by the Sisters, whispered to and petted with joy, and warmed and comforted by their sympathy.

" I knew you would enjoy that visit," said Mrs Delany as they were driven homeward. And after this surprising and unexpected experience, Brona began to feel really happy at Delville, glad to send pleasing reports to her father without hurt to her sense of honesty.

The week ended with a little dance at Delville, such as Mary Delany loved to get up in a hasty unceremonious way, beginning early and ending early, and greatly delighting her simple friends and neighbours of Glasnevin village and surroundings. At the " little rout " in question, the company were all matched in couples. There were Miss Delany, the Dean's niece, Miss Greene, sister of her fiancé, Mr Parker, the curate, and his sister Miss Parker, two Mr Swifts, young men of the village, and another young man a nephew of the Dean's. Mrs Barbour, the poetess, in whom Swift was interested, who lived in the village of Glasnevin, came " though the gout was on her."

Such an entertainment was a complete novelty to Brona, who had never danced except with her schoolfellows on the polished floor of her French convent, but after a little hesitation she paired off with Mr Parker, the curate, and threw herself into the fun of the moment, much to the satisfaction of her benevolent hostess. She was in the act of flying down the middle in a country dance, when Hugh Ingoldesby came into the room, and stood near the doorway to watch the performance, his eyes arrested on the moment by Brona's laughing face and flying figure.

"I think we have cheered up our gloomy little Papist rather successfully," said the Dean coming to welcome him.

"A miracle!" said Ingoldesby.

"A bright creature enough, only under a cloud," said the Dean.

"She positively radiates enjoyment," said Ingoldesby, still following Brona with his eyes.

"So, so!" said the Dean laughing. "But don't get too much interested in her, my dear fellow. No good could come of it."

Ingoldesby did not hear him. When the dance was over he made his way to the spot where Brona was waiting for a cup of tea, which her partner had gone to fetch her.

"Will you dance with me?" he asked.

" Oh, yes," she said, " if you are not afraid of the blunders of my school dancing."

" I am not a dancer myself," said Hugh, " but I would like to learn from you."

" It is just a pleasant romp," said Brona. " Our minuets at school were far more prim and stately."

" That was in Paris ? "

" Yes."

" All your life has been spent between Paris and the county of Clare ? "

" I am only beginning to feel that there are some other places in the world."

" You find the new experience pleasant ? "

" Too pleasant in contrast with the county of Clare, which is my home."

" My home is also in Clare. Do not depress me."

" It need not be sad for you. There will be nothing to depress you. But the music is beginning. I really want to dance."

" And so do I." And they danced. A memorable dance for Ingoldesby.

VIII

THE next day was Sunday, and Mrs Delany, stepping from her carriage at the entrance to St Werbergh's Church, was met by Hugh Ingoldesby, who handed her out.

"Miss O'Loghlin is not with you?" he said.

"You forget that she is not one of us. I tried to persuade her to come, or to stay at home. We have dropped her at their little secret place on Arran Quay."

"Heavens!" said Ingoldesby under his breath. "A girl like that—an idolater!"

"No, don't flatter yourself that you have such an excuse for persecuting her."

"What does it all mean, then?"

"I have to call for her on my way home. Not exactly desirable for the Dean, but——"

"Let me go and fetch her," said Ingoldesby. "I will bring her to meet you, and so save——"

"Oh, no!" said Mrs Delany, but Ingoldesby had lifted his hat and was gone.

The lady followed her husband into the church, and Hugh walked towards Arran Quay, wondering how he was to find the secret worshipping place in which Miss O'Loghlin had hidden herself. He walked up and down, and observed people passing in at a small dingy-looking door, in twos and threes or one at a time, and all with a frightened or guilty look as if dreading to be caught in the act.

"This is the place," he said at last, and next time the door opened he passed in with the rest.

He went up to the top of a high, narrow stair that creaked under his feet, and entered a dimly-lighted room, where people were packed together in a kneeling crowd, and where on a low mean altar candles were burning and vessels of gold were shining. Before the altar a thin dark man was robing himself, putting a richly-coloured vestment over a white gown. And then some young boys gathered to his side and the Mass began.

Ingoldesby had squeezed himself into an obscure corner, and stared at the spectacle of the altar, which was to him just what he had been taught to call it, a "mummery." How strange and unaccountable was the scene, people daring death for such an experience as this! And where was the unhappy girl he had come to seek? Was she too assisting at this worse than pagan travesty of religious worship?

At last he saw her, kneeling in the front near the altar, just caught a glimpse of her, squeezed in between two stout, meanly dressed women, herself covered all over in a black silk cloak, her pure features in profile almost screened by her black hat. Her hands were clasped and raised to her chin, her eyes fixed on the altar.

"What is the thrall?" asked Ingoldesby of himself. "Why does this girl, with family troubles on her head, turn from God to pray to—what? It is a mystery."

When Mass was over she was one of the last to move, and when he saw her rise he went down and waited for her at the foot of the stair. Then he explained to her that he was to take her to meet Mrs Delany at St Werbergh's, and they walked along the quay together. Conversation was difficult. Ingoldesby was feeling too much shocked and pained to know what to say, and Brona had put on her breastplate of steel. She was the first to speak, but only about the river and the buildings along its sides and the bridges. Before long they met the Delany carriage coming to meet them. Brona was picked up, and Ingoldesby walked towards his club, pondering deeply by the way.

Hugh Ingoldesby had never given a serious thought to religion, except as placing it foremost among the disastrous things of existence, the cause

of wars and persecutions, the instigator and perpetrator of cruelties. His ancestor had been planted in Clare by Cromwell, and his people had held a place there as staunch Protestants, upholders of English Church and State. His father having died while he was a boy, he had lived with his widowed mother in England, and received an English educational training. After the death of his mother, his aunt had tried to fill her place, but Hugh was by that time past feminine tutelage. Leaving his university he had been seized with a strong desire to see the world in all its continents, and had spent a good many years of his youth in gratifying the wish. All that being done he had been stationary in England for the last year or two, and only quite recently had bethought him of taking up a position in Ireland on his hereditary property.

It had not entered into his mind as an objection that he would be living in a country where the people were suffering persecution, where men and women burrowed in holes to escape observation, and priests were hunted like wolves. He had a general idea that the Irish were a bad stock, and that any ills they suffered had been brought on them by themselves. A few Protestant and English, or of the Anglo-Irish type who had conformed sensibly to the religion and ways of living

prescribed for them by their masters, would, he deemed, be friends enough for him in the shooting or fishing season, and for the rest of his years he would live where he might please. He had arrived at a time of life when it had become rather interesting for him to go and see the ground on which so many fierce battles had been fought, where struggle never came to an end, where superstition yet reigned, and where he was assured romance was still afoot on the hills and in the glens, while the rest of the world had settled down to make the best of common-sense. He was even beginning to feel a little curious as to whether he belonged at all in any of his parts to the Celtic race, or was wholly English accidentally born in Ireland, whether the words Dalcassian or Milesian had any significance for him, or were only decorative quantities in the dream-talk of a people whose history was a make-up of inventions and delusions. That a creature like Brona O'Loghlin could be found among the ignorant Papist population of the country deserving to be treated no better than rats, was an amazing fact never recognised till to-day when he had seen her on her knees in that mean crowd, jostled by bargemen and fishwomen, and praying like any Hindoo fanatic, with her eyes fixed on—something that he could not bring himself to designate or even to think of.

As he sat in his club room that Sunday evening staring at the wall, with his unread English paper on his knee, he told himself that it did not matter to him if the girl were an Egyptian priestess, and prayed to a cat or a bull.

But another wave of what he called curiosity crossing this angry thought washed it out, and he got up suddenly, put on his hat, and walked out to Delville, where he dropped into the evening family circle, to the surprise of everybody, so unusually late was the hour.

IX

He was rewarded for this friendly visit by an invitation from his hostess for the next morning, when the Lord-Lieutenant, the Duke of Dorset, and the Duchess were coming to honour the lady of Delville by breakfasting with her. Such breakfasts were Mrs Delany's favourite form of hospitality. Dinners had become such luxurious entertainments, that the Dean's wife did not feel inclined to " show away with such magnificence."

Breakfast was prepared in the beautiful old drawing-room. The entertainment passed off delightfully, the great people walking through the interesting rooms on that floor, and requesting to be played to on the harpsichord by their hostess. In the afternoon, when they had retired, Ingoldesby who had been in attendance on the vice-regal party, looked around for Miss O'Loghlin.

" Oh, I think that as early as possible she retired somewhere with her embroidery," said Mrs Delany, " but not before his Excellency remarked her face

as new to him, saying he had not seen her at Court. I made a pretty excuse for her without betraying the little cloven foot peeping from under her charming Pompadour dress, which by the way is so quaintly unsuited to her style and at the same time so fascinatingly becoming to her."

Mrs Delany, while speaking, was called away by the Dean, and Ingoldesby proceeded to walk through the gardens alone, hardly expecting to find Brona. Yet he found her in a little summer-house, which was a favourite resort of Mary Delany and her husband.

"Am I intruding? May I sit beside you? I will go away if you bid me," he said, but looking so pleasant and manly, so ready though reluctant, to keep his word and depart if necessary, that it would have been difficult for anyone to wish for his absence.

"Oh, no," said Brona, "this bower is none of mine, and it really holds two. Mrs Delany says it just holds herself and the Dean and the birds. I have been watching her pet robin hopping round. He can't think why I am here instead of his mistress—and without crumbs!"

"May I wind this silk for you?"

"Thank you. You wind in this direction."

"Are there many birds in Clare?" asked Hugh, having caught the right trick of winding a skein of silk.

"Birds in Clare? Ah, the birds of the cliffs of Moher. There you have a different voice of nature."

"As how?"

"Wait till you hear them."

"I shall do so. Seabirds? But they don't sing."

"They speak, cry, scream, denounce the ills of some world that is beyond our ken. It is a war of voices. One does not think of mere birds when one is listening, and when one goes away one is haunted by something that is neither of man nor bird."

"I must hear them. May I go with you some day where they are to be heard? You know Clare is to be my home as well as yours. I shall be glad to have friends there before me."

Brona shook her head very gently, and put a few fine stitches in the petal of an embroidered flower.

"My place is only a very few miles away from your father's place," Ingoldesby went on. "At much greater distances people are neighbours in the country."

Brona was silent for a few moments, and lifted her face to look at a thrush that was shouting melodiously from the top of a high tree.

"That is the music of peace and prosperity," she said. "Is it not sweet? Our birds in Clare shriek of war and hardship."

Ingoldesby was thinking at the moment more of

the rare outline and colouring of the uplifted face than of the words. He noted the rich creamy tint of the cheek, in which the carnations went and came, the eyes like sea-water, grey, green, or blue, the generous curve of the dark yet delicate eyebrows that hinted of Brona's Spanish mother, the clustering locks above the low forehead. A rare face, full of latent strength, though touched with the softness of youth. The lifting of the face had suggested the experience of Sunday, and Hugh said with an impetuosity that might have answered his own question as to his Celtic blood!

"Miss O'Loghlin, why did you go up that crazy stair yesterday, and into that crowd so unfit for your presence?"

Brona looked amazed. "Why did I go? If Mrs Delany——"

"I know she took you there—consented to gratify her guest. But why in the name of heaven did you want to go?"

"In the name of heaven," said Brona slowly. "That is just it."

Ingoldesby made an impatient gesture.

"Mr Ingoldesby, you came here to-day because you were bidden to meet a great personage. I went to meet a greater. If you had not come to welcome that Vice-King, he would not have missed you. If I had not gone my King would have missed me."

She spoke simply and quietly, but she had turned white from a deeper feeling than indignation, and her eyes were full of tears.

Ingoldesby heaved a sigh.

"If there is a God, is He not everywhere?"

"He is everywhere."

"Then why go to a pestilential den?"

"Because you have seized His churches—our churches," cried Brona with a sudden blaze in her eyes turned full on him.

"I did not take them," said Ingoldesby. "I do not want any churches. I do not believe in them."

"Let us say no more, then," said Brona. "I am in your power. For myself I should not care, but you can ruin my father if you will."

"Great heaven! You know that it would be impossible."

"I do not know. It is an incredibly cruel world as I have found it. You are part of that world——"

But here Mrs Delany interrupted them. She had come to look for Brona.

There was no opportunity for resuming the conversation that evening, and as Hugh Ingoldesby walked back to Dublin in the clear starlight of a June night he told himself that he did not want to know anything further of this unaccountable girl, who shocked even more than she charmed him. What was to be thought of a country that produced

such bewitched and bewitching beings, keenly intelligent on all points but one? Devotees of an intolerable creed? Eyes capable of flashing green fire, mouth of childlike tenderness, but ready in a moment to take a set of determination? A man could not be in sympathy with a woman like that. To draw near her would be to submit to thrall.

A week passed of busy days with his lawyer, and of mixing in the society of his many friends in Dublin. He felt that he had quite shaken off the strange impressions which had of late so disturbed his calm self-contained habit of mind. Papists and Papistry were nothing to them, there were too many other charming women. Having recovered from his curious attack of mental irritability, he felt sufficiently in good humour to turn his steps once more to Delville. Mrs Delany was busy gathering sweets in her garden, and met him with her laced muslin apron filled with lovely blooms.

"You are just in time," she said. "I shall want you for dinner to-morrow. We have friends coming. The table was nicely filled, but as Miss O'Loghlin went off unexpectedly this morning there is a vacant seat."

"She is gone?" said Ingoldesby. "I thought you said she would stay another month."

"So I hoped. But there was a summons home,

and she would hear of no delay. As a proper escort offered at the moment we could not try to keep her."

"I hope no special trouble."

"I don't know. Her brother has returned from Paris, and her presence was urgently required. I suspect that the visits of Mr Turlough O'Loghlin to his father's house are not productive of much happiness to his family."

"She has a brother?"

"The proscribed heir of a proscribed father—without the strength of grace to bear what my old friend Morogh endures with dignity. I imagine that Brona has influence over her brother, and that altogether she is the person who keeps up a sort of mental equanimity in the household."

"What others are there?"

"Only an aunt, Irish, my friend's sister, but an almost naturalised Frenchwoman, devoted to her brother's children, but silly on the subject of Turlough, while she expects superhuman wisdom from Brona."

"What a fate!"

"For whom?"

"For Miss O'Loghlin, of course. Brains-carrier and peacemaker in a miserable home, and in a country no better than a charnel-house—from what I hear."

"She loves her people and her country, and none of them are wanting in brains. The conditions of life all round her are painful indeed. I wanted to do something, but the evil goes too deep."

Ingoldesby was silent, and Mrs Delany, raising her eyes to his face, saw something there that prompted her to speak further.

"It is better that neither you nor I should interfere too much. Whatever I may do, you can do nothing."

"I have no desire to try. The whole situation is repulsive. I have changed my mind about going to take up residence at Ardcurragh. There would be endless vexation and no kind of advantage to anybody. I will return to England immediately."

"I think you will be wise to do so," said Mrs Delany gravely, speaking rather on her own thought than on his words. "You could, as you say, do nothing to alleviate suffering. You might only bring further trouble to a young creature already overweighted."

"As how?"

"Now, Hugh! I have known you since you were a little boy, and I may venture to warn you. We have seen you unusually interested in Miss O'Loghlin."

"Surely I am able to guard myself."

"It is not for you that I am uneasy. You need not put on your 'all the Courts of Europe' air with me. What was the song some one sang the other night?

> He gave his bridle-rein a shake,
> Said adieu for evermore!

You may not be that hero of romance, but remember that my friend's girl is just out of her convent, where her mind has been filled with high ideals. You are the first man she has known except her father and brother. She may have found you attractive."

"You flatter me."

"I don't mean to do so. Circumstances may bestow on you graces not your own. When you ride away she will be left with an added difficulty in her place in the world, which you describe as a charnel-house. You tell me you are going to England. I have noticed you a little unstable in your resolutions of late. If you are thinking of going—go."

Ingoldesby was silent, and Mrs Delany glancing at him saw that he looked pale and disturbed. He left her abruptly, without thanking her for her counsel.

A week later Mrs Delany said to her husband: "I wonder what has become of Hugh Ingoldesby."

The Dean came home that evening saying: "I went to look up Hugh at his club. He has left Dublin."

"For England?"

"No, for Clare."

X

On a brilliant summer morning Hugh Ingoldesby wakened in his house at Ardcurragh in Clare, in the room in which he was born, and where his father had died. Of the second event he had no more memory than of the first, and all his recollections of his mother were associated with far other places. He had arrived so late the night before, that driving up the avenue he had seen nothing but the heavy darkness of trees in the sky, with the stars glittering above them, and a great block of a house with lights in the windows, and high chimneys barely discernible. Entering the gloomy hall, floored with black and white flags, and the large lonesome-looking dining-room lined with portraits, his impressions had been anything but cheerful.

By morning light things looked less sombre. Miss Jacquetta had done her work thoroughly, and the fresh paint and well-polished furniture showed the neatness and proper care of present prosperity. Richly coloured hangings softened the upright lines

of the tall windows. Old mirrors reflected the waving green of the trees and the high golden clouds sailing above them. In the morning-room where Hugh at once decided to live chiefly, these features were noticeable, but a visit to the portraits in the dining-room was far from exhilarating. Here frowned the lowering countenance of the man established in Ardcurragh by Oliver Cromwell, followed by other masters of the house, who turned the same unwelcoming gaze on their absentee descendant. His Dutch great-grandmother was of a type particularly unattractive to Hugh, but his own fair-haired mother, who had evidently given her complexion and perhaps some other traits to her son, pleased him so much that he resolved at once to separate her from her uncongenial company, and transfer her to his own apartments.

He was satisfied to find English servants around him. His aunt had been thoughtful for his comfort in that as well as in every other respect. After breakfast his favourite man, long in his service, was at the door with horses, engaging to take the master for a ride, while giving him the benefit of the six weeks' sojourn in the country which had put Jonathan Judkin in possession of a great deal of information which he was anxious to impart. Leaving the long darksome avenue, with its clamorous rooks behind, the riders came out on an

open road, with a distance of violet hills and low woods on one side, and on the other a vast extent of green and brown, of field and bog, with water of pool and stream gleaming like the flash of swords and shields when parting clouds left them shelterless under the bare eye of the noonday sun.

"What air! What light! What a splendour and loveliness of nature!" said Ingoldesby to himself. Then turning to Judkin, "Can you tell me where are the people, the inhabitants of this beautiful region?"

"The people, sir?" said Judkin. "Do you see that row of low hovels between you and the wood over yonder? More like dirt-heaps? That's what they call a village. And do you see the wisps of smoke rising out of the hill nearer to us? More of them live in holes down there."

"Human beings?"

"Like rats and weasels—what they are!" said Judkin. "Unhappy, unsightly creatures. Sunk in superstition. I wonder the law doesn't put gunpowder under them and blow them all up."

"The law is hard on them as it is," said Ingoldesby. "What is their particular criminal superstition?"

"Why, there's the Mass, as they call it, carried on in the bogs and woods where nobody can catch them, and I hear that it ends up with the cere-

mony of drowning a young child in the water-holes of the bog."

"Softly, Judkin! The Mass is a fact, I am afraid, but the drowning business is an exaggeration. These people profess to be Christians."

"Not they, sir. They worship stocks and stones, and know nothing about God. Their priests hide in holes, and come up out of the earth and down out of ruined walls, nobody knows how or when."

"I see you have got all the news, Judkin. You and the law have no mercy on them."

"And their gentry defy the law like the lowest," persisted Judkin. "There's young Turlough O'Loghlin come over from France with a splendid Arab horse, and goes riding about on him, though he's not allowed to have any such property."

"Turlough O'Loghlin!"

"Yes, sir. Son of Morogh O'Loghlin over yonder. One of the worst of the lot."

"A worthy gentleman, Judkin, as I have been assured by friends of his who are also friends of mine."

"Don't have anything to do with him, sir. The Protestant gentry could hunt him if they liked, and pity it is they spare him, say I. He's one of the 'massers,' and has a priest hiding in his house, a French rascal and outlaw, and you or me could put a rope around his neck any minute and swing

him from a tree. That's your worthy gentleman for you, sir, a lawbreaker and a blasphemer. Then there's a fine French lady, a Marquise or something, lives there and keeps house for O'Loghlin, and has a thing they call a rosary, of gold beads a yard long, and a gold idol hanging to it, and says her prayers to it. Lydia, Miss Ingoldesby's maid, when she was here, got a sight of it some way or other. There's a young lady, too, has come home from Dublin—they say she's handsome, and the poor devils in the village there adore her as if she was one of their saints or idols."

"Perhaps she is good to them, Judkin."

"Oh, maybe so. I believe she's as bad a heathen as any of the lot. But the pick of them all is this Turlough with his Arab horse, swaggering about the country with his clothes cut French fashion, showin' off his impudent defiance of the King and the law of the land."

They were approaching a turn of the winding road. As Judkin ceased speaking shouts and the sound of a scuffle arose, and the riders pressed on to see what cause of disturbance might lie beyond the huge drapery of ivied trees that formed a curtain in front of them.

"D—— me, if it's not Turlough!" said Judkin savagely; and added with a laugh, "he's catching it!"

The sunshine was blazing on the bare handsome head of a young man on horseback, well set up and foppishly dressed and appointed, who was laying his whip about the shoulders of a man who had seized his horse by the bridle. Another young man about the same age as Turlough was leaning from his own horse close by, and laughing at the fury of O'Loghlin.

"It's Ralph Stodart," said Judkin. "His father ousted O'Kennedy last year, and the young fellow is as big a cock o' the walk as Turlough, and has the law on his side for it."

"I'll give you five pounds for your horse," shouted Stodart with a roar of laughter, flinging as many gold coins on the road. At the same moment the man smarting from the whip-lash, struck Turlough a blow on the head with a cudgel, that felled him from the saddle to the road, where he lay unconscious, head and shoulders in the dust.

"This is shocking conduct," said Ingoldesby, riding up and frowning at Stodart.

"Who are you?" asked Stodart insolently. "It is the law. I paid the price for the horse and it is mine."

The man who struck the blow was disentangling Turlough's feet from the stirrups, and letting his legs drop on the road, where he now lay stretched at full length.

"Is he dead? If so this is murder," said Ingoldesby.

"You mind your own business," shouted Stodart. "It's no murder to kill a d——d Papist."

"There's a kick in him yet," said Stodart's man who had struck the blow.

Stodart dismounted and got on Turlough's horse, and his servant took the bridle of his master's horse and mounted his own; and the two men rode off laughing and shouting back to Ingoldesby to "look to the carrion."

"We can't leave him here," cried Hugh. "We must put him across my horse and walk back with him to Ardcurragh."

"Can't we take him to his own people?" said Judkin. "What do we want with the heathen at Ardcurragh?"

"The distance is too great to his father's house, and it would be a terrible shock to his family." Hugh was thinking of Brona.

"It would be no loss to the world to let him lie where he is," grumbled Judkin.

"I've heard you talk of your Bible, Judkin," said his master. "What about the Samaritan?"

"Oh, the Bible's one thing and this is another," said Judkin. "If we did all they did in those old times it would keep us busy. Besides, there were no Papists then. Howsoever, your orders must be obeyed, sir"

Turlough was carried to Ardcurragh as suggested, and put to bed in the best spare bedroom, an apartment that had seen many generations coming and going through the heavy mahogany door, and sleeping and waking in its funereal four-post bed, wrapped round by curtains of dark tapestry with obscure sinister befigurements folded in their depths. A carriage was sent posthaste for the nearest doctor, and Ingoldesby, having seen the patient regain consciousness, left him in the care of Judkin, and rode off to Castle O'Loghlin to break the news of the accident to his family. As he rode he had a vivid realisation of the strange, unlikely ways of fate, that will seize a man's horse by the bridle and turn him out of his course on the high-road into byways he never dreamed of.

He had been wishing to meet Brona, and wondering how he could best make an approach to acquaintance with her people. He had imagined her, with all her lights out, sitting in the darkness of the proscribed, here in her home, far from the gay scenes of prosperous life in which she had so delightfully shown her natural capacity for happiness. He had said to himself that she would be inaccessible to him in her present position and circumstances. And now, here he was hastening to her as one the urgency of whose mission could not be denied. Half way down the bowery road that led to Castle

O'Loghlin he saw her coming slowly towards him, and slacked his rein the better to see her before she perceived or recognised him. She wore one of the wide lemon-coloured sun-hats of the women of Tuscany, tilted back from her brows as she walked in the shade. She was looking at the far-off hills with their blue distance in her eyes, when, suddenly seeing him, a gleam of undeniable gladness lit up her face. Hugh, riding up to her, could scarcely remember the words he had intended to say to her.

"I thought it was my brother," said Brona with a little bright laugh, and held out her hand.

Ingoldesby sprang from his horse, and held the hand a moment longer than was necessary. Then he walked beside her, feeling that this man was not Hugh Ingoldesby, but some other unknown to him. The truth had struck him a blow in the face. Be she heathen, Hindoo, or whatever the world would call her, he, the hater of all mummeries and idolatries, loved this Papist woman.

"Your brother—yes," he said, and his voice sounded to himself as if from far off. "I have seen your brother, Miss O'Loghlin. He rode out this morning, did he not? He has not returned."

"What of him?" cried Brona, alarmed.

"An accident. Don't be frightened. I left him tolerably comfortable in my house at Ardcurragh. He provoked an outrage. He has lost his beautiful

horse and got a shaking—though nothing worse than that, I hope."

"Oh, poor father!" said Brona. "He has enough without this. Why——?"

"Your brother ought to live in France. This is no place for one of his temper."

"Ah, if he would. But is he in danger? You have been very good to him. Tell me the truth."

"I do not think he is in danger. The doctor will let us know. I am sorry for such an occasion of making your father's acquaintance, but I greatly wish to be introduced to him."

Morogh had gone with Aideen for a walk towards the sea, and Brona hastened to follow and bring them back, leaving the visitor alone in the library.

Ingoldesby looked around the room with a sense of interest that was part sympathy and part curiosity. The interior, though full of brooding peace, had a suggestion about it of mental life and vigour. The books that lined the walls were evidently books in use, not kept in the formal unbroken range that declares the owner who is proud to possess but scarcely cares to read them.

"A man need not be lonely here," thought Hugh, taking down an early edition of Don Quixote, "at all events not a man of many languages."

Then he came before the portrait of Brona's Spanish mother, her identity declared by the

delicate dark brows which enhanced the brilliance of the darker woman's eyes, and gave such a rare and lovely setting to those of her Irish daughter, with their colouring of the sea and hills.

Morogh came in, anxious but calm, Aideen followed weeping.

"Why will he not stay in Paris where he has friends?" she said. "We have no friends here."

"Nay, is not this a friend?" said Morogh. "My son has given you much trouble, sir. We cannot put an old head on young shoulders. Perhaps when he has lived as long as his father, he will have learned resignation to the will of Providence."

Ingoldesby invited Aideen to come to Ardcurragh, if it pleased her to take personal care of her nephew. And the Marquise gladly accepted the invitation, promising to be ready when the carriage should come to take her.

XI

TURLOUGH had suffered from concussion of the brain and a dislocated shoulder. He was now convalescent, with Judkin still in attendance, and with his aunt ensconced in rooms near to his. Ingoldesby had set no limits to his hospitality, despite his prejudice, which in this case was more for the young man's character than for the religion he professed. He paid Turlough occasional visits, but felt his guest's effusiveness more like flattery of a powerful friend than like manly gratitude. Judkin had ideas of his own, which he shared freely with his master.

"That youngster's no chip of the old block," he said. "Not a drop of Papist blood in him. He cares for neither Pope nor King—is furious because his old family is put down in the dirt,—doesn't know why he isn't as good as you or Stodart, or any of the Protestant gentry.

"'Well, sir,' said I, 'why do you worship idols, and support witches and priests that have to hide their bad deeds in holes and corners?'

"'I don't,' he shouted.

"I was afraid for his head, and didn't contradict him. And after a while he began envying you and admiring everything round him, and complaining of his own ill-fortune. So I didn't know what to say to him after that, and I sent for the Marquise to come to him, and I left them there."

But the patient soon tired of the foster-mother who had petted and spoiled him as a boy, and who still wanted to look on him as her baby.

"Can't I have my sister to see me?" he asked querulously. "She's pleasanter to look at than my aunt."

"You ingrate!" said Hugh, but he could not feel as angry as he wished to feel because of the opening given him to invite Brona to Ardcurragh. Brona was appealed to, and was directed by her father to gratify her brother, and when the Ardcurragh carriage was sent for her she got into it willingly.

Many hours of the following summer days she spent with Turlough in the pleasant rooms assigned to him in his convalescence, or walking with Ingoldesby in the big wandering gardens that straggled away into the woods. During these walks Ingoldesby took pains to keep all subjects of painful interest aloof, to allow nothing but matters of mutual interest to suggest themselves

for discussion. Thus a number of golden days went past. Ingoldesby had ceased to remember that there was such a thing as religion in the world, and Brona forgot that there was cruelty, only felt that a holiday of sweets had been granted to her, and that she might enjoy it as she had learned to enjoy happiness while at Delville.

When Turlough was well enough for a long drive, pleasant excursions were made. Hugh claimed a visit to the cliffs of Moher as a boon promised him. Brona reminded him that it had been promised to him only by himself, but the drive was taken on a day glorious enough for any pageant or holiday. Nature seemed laughing at poverty and desolation, sunshine making such a glamour in heaven and on earth, the air so quickening and refreshing that humanity would seem, for the moment, to have nothing to complain of and everything to exult in.

When the road approached the ascent to the cliffs Aideen remained with Turlough in the carriage, and Ingoldesby and Brona climbed the green slopes that led to the heights. At the top they followed the beaten path skirting the cliffs, and stood to see the wide Atlantic Ocean filling all the view and sweeping the horizon, studded with its Irish islands, its line broken at one side by mysterious distances of mountain ranges, ghostly and uncertain as if belonging to the spiritual world which is never

seen by us and yet never quite unseen. Nearer to them were the freakish masses of separated cliff, torn from the coast by some primeval earthquake, weird shapes with names as uncanny, defying the green rollers that beat them from inward and outward, and lash them with spume as from a cauldron.

"That is the Hag's Head," said Brona. "Legend tells that she was hurled with the rock to where she stands, and bid to remain there like other petrifactions of humanity."

"Was that a punishment for crime in prehistoric ages?"

"Something like that. There is a suggestion of savage wickedness about the shape, isn't there?"

"Are we expected to believe these legends?"

"I think not. Poetry is one thing. Faith is another. But who condemns the old, old, fairy tales? Is not good to be gathered from them by analogy?"

"True," said Ingoldesby. He could not bring himself to say,—not then—that faith like hers and fairy tales were one and the same thing to men like himself, who were in possession of their reason and common-sense.

As they moved on the air became burdened with a confusion of strange sounds, like echoes of some distant angry tumult.

" The birds ! " said Brona.

Already wide wings rose and fell above the summit of the highest cliff, and turning a corner they beheld a spectacle that might startle the most experienced in this world's wonders.

A long line of cliffs, seven hundred feet high, stood forth majestically in the green flood, and marched away to the distance where the water-world rises to meet the cloud-world and the cloud-world stoops to meet the water-world. The cliffs folded and unfolded their gigantic masses in black landward curves, their walls upright as the walls of a fortress built with hands, their faces carved in terraces whitened by the birds, so that one seemed to look on some weird white city created in this fastness of nature by an unheard-of civilisation as intelligent as any evolved by the races of men.

The titanic walls, with their solid darkness and chalk white terraces aloft above the green ocean, were the least amazing part of the scene. Birds filled the air, making it thick and white as steam with their winged bodies. Huge and white-winged when near, in the distance below they looked like the butterflies that wheel round a lavender bush in June. Diving into the waves, soaring against the clouds, hurling themselves on the black cliff-walls, perching on the whitened ridges, they never ceased their piercing cries, whether of

joy or of pain, of strife or of fear. Who, listening, could attempt to disentangle the myriads of voices or to imagine their meaning? Ingoldesby stood silent.

"How do you feel it?" asked Brona.

"A magnificent bit of creation. And you?"

"I know it so well!" said Brona. "Fear, effort, warfare, triumph, cruelty are all to me in these cries. Do you hear that dominant note, about twice in every minute, that comes cleaving downward and scattering the other voices?"

"I hear it," said Ingoldesby. "Who is he, this bird despot? What message, what threat, what sentence does he deliver?"

"They say he is an alien who has gained mastery over the multitude, and that scientists do not know him, have not named him. So the people say. I am not learned enough to try to verify this. But he sounds like a tyrant, does he not?"

"His harsh orders, condemnations, denunciations—whatever his cries may mean, are not well taken. There is a clamour of weak remonstrance or angry rebellion raised after each of his fierce utterances," said Hugh listening.

"We may speculate for ever," said Brona. "It is one of the mysteries of nature."

"Oh, your mysteries!" cried Hugh with sudden pain in his voice. "Nature is always accessible.

You lose your life groping in mysteries, loving them, satisfied with them."

"God wraps Himself in mystery as the sun is veiled by cloud, but His face shines through like the sun, and gives us all the light and warmth He intends us to need."

Hugh gazed at her as she turned her eyes away from him to the white mist of wings and ocean foam between her and the far horizon of light, and something in him gave way, caution, prudence, patience—or what ?

"Brona," he said with passion, "come out of the mysteries and live with me in the sunshine. Give up dreams and be a real woman. I love you. Be my wife and you shall never regret trusting yourself to a strong human man, rather than to visionary priests and their idols and bugbears."

"Hush !" said Brona softly, but with white lips. "You do not know what you are saying."

"Do I not ? Am I not a sane man ? Do I not know that you have learned to love me ? Have you not allowed me to see it ? Or am I contemptibly vain to imagine it ? You are too honest to deny it, if it is true."

Brona's lips moved, but no sound came. She only shook her head.

Hugh trembled with passion. Brona was still silent while that imperious note of the dominant

bird rang down the air in her ear like the voice of conscience, louder and more masterful than all the clamour of weaker voices of heart and imagination that shrieked within her against the penalising of happiness.

"Speak, Brona! Tell me that you will at least try to love me, that you will come out of the shadows and live with me in sunshine."

"It is impossible," said Brona. "You know, if you reflect a moment, that it would be your ruin in this world and mine in eternity. If I did not conform to the law within a year you would become one of the proscribed."

"You would conform. I would not quarrel with your secret dreams."

"Peril my soul? Deal treacherously with my Creator?"

Hugh made an impatient gesture.

"Do you look on me as a condemned wretch—lost for all eternity?"

"No. For you are in ignorance of the truth, and we are all to be judged according to our lights. What would be heinous sin in me is no sin in you. Let us talk of this no more. Oh, why have you spoken, and spoiled our friendship? I was so happy in having a friend. Why—why?"

Brona stood off a little and bent her face on her hands.

" Because love is so much more than friendship."

" I am sorry, for friendship was so great and so sweet to me."

She turned away and began to walk down the slope towards the highroad.

Hugh followed her, deploring his rashness and vehemence.

" I am sorry for being so hasty. Listen to me. Our friendship can remain. For your father's sake, tolerate me. I may be of service to him. Don't be afraid of me. Give me your hand as a friend."

Brona put a little cold hand into his large warm grasp. And then they saw Aideen below on the road, signalling to them to return to the carriage.

On the next day Turlough returned to his father's house. It was true that the home of the O'Loghlins was none the happier for his presence. He fretted at the dullness of life, envied Ingoldesby, sat in his room staring at the ocean, on which he longed to see a ship that would take him back to France. He would not walk on the public roads, lest he should meet Stodart riding his Arab horse, and he disdained to mount any of the " garrons " kept by his father merely as a sorry means of locomotion when necessary. Grumbling incessantly at the hard fate that had driven him back from Paris, and created difficulties about his return to that

refuge of his discontent, he made Aideen miserable by his appeals to her for the removal of impossibilities. The usually cheerful spirit of the Marquise was crushed. She tried to bear the brunt of the young man's ill-humour, and to save his father and Brona something of his sullen hints and querulous complaints. When overcome to tears she would repair for counsel to the retreat of Father Aengus.

"I cannot send him to Paris at present," she said. "I paid his debts but a short time ago. I must save up more money before I can do it again, and he has not patience to wait. His father cannot and will not increase his allowance, and even if he did there can be no return to Paris till the debts are paid."

"We can only pray for him," said the priest.

"Have we not prayed?"

"Evidently not enough. God requires more. Could you persuade him to come and talk to me?"

"Alas, no!" said Aideen. "The counsels of religion irritate him. If God does not give him on the moment what he wants, he will have nothing to do with God."

The Franciscan's face fell into lines of a more fixed sadness.

"Yet, for our prayers God may give him what he will not ask for himself — a changed heart," he said.

Morogh, among his books, relieved the trouble of his mind more and more by reading, and Turlough kept as much as possible aloof from his father, the only person whose presence seemed to put a check on his complaints. Despite Aideen's efforts, Brona was not spared. If she offered to walk with him or took her needlework to his room, he seized the occasion to reproach her for failing to make use of her opportunities of improving the family fortunes.

" What was the use of your visit to Dublin ? " he said. " Why did Aideen spend money on you ? Why do you not encourage Ingoldesby ? Anyone can see——"

Brona gathered up her needlework and left the room. But at the next opening for conversation, her brother took up his reproach where he had broken it off.

" If you want to live like a nun, why do you not go back to your convent ? "

Both of these thrusts made deeper wounds than he could have imagined or understood. Ingoldesby's appealing words were always in her ears, while before her eyes were the letters of the saintly Mother Superior, whose faithful love had followed her from the Convent of the *Annonciades* in Paris, suggesting that at some future day she might find it her vocation to take up the sweet yoke and light

burden of the religious life, escaping from the perils and temptations of an afflicting world.

She had already suffered the indelicate attacks of her brother for the unprofitableness of her short season in Paris, where she refused to consider the matrimonial overtures of more than one noble and wealthy Frenchman. One, particularly favoured by Turlough, had followed her to Clare, and departed in such ill-humour as Turlough feared might somehow prove injurious to himself. But these matters had not weighed on her, seeing that her father was the happier for her fidelity to him and his fortunes. The pain she now carried with her to her tower was more poignant than could be caused by any of the stings of her brother's ill-temper and unkindness.

What had become of the peace of that high chamber towards which the Burren Mountains gazed perpetually with their mysterious smile? Her little lamp still burned, its red flame typical of God's love. Her chosen saints still looked on her from the wall, welcoming her to tranquil hours when she escaped from melancholy or terrifying experiences. There was the spiritual mother's last letter from the convent open on her desk, beside her own half-written response, which she found so difficult to finish without confessing the personal anguish that had fallen so unexpectedly on her

heart. It was not through want of confidence that she had withheld the confession, but with dread of making real what she resolved to treat as unreality. Now it was too terribly real. She looked round at her household gods which had imaged her ideals, met the calm eyes of her saints, with their lofty gaze speaking to her as the statues spoke to Mignon :

" *Was hat Man dir du armes Kind gethan ?* "

There was no one able to help her but God.

She went on her knees before the ancient crucifix with its tragic figure.

" There is still God," said Brona.

XII

THE bog that lay over beyond the O'Loghlin woods was a wilderness stretching far towards the mountains in deeply coloured lines of dun brown, blurred and blotted with green and purple. Flecked with gleaming pools of water, studded with grey masses of limestone in fantastic shapes, here and there a witch-like bush of thorn, it is lovely to the eye as a vision of dreamland. There is a never-failing animation in its stillness and solitude, caused by ever-moving cloud-shadows, sun-flashes, and floating mists. Beckoning spirits seem to invite the unwary traveller, but to explore it is perilous beyond all imagining. Only those who know the safe track that skips from stone to stone and from one solid green boss to another, can venture to travel towards its distances. About the centre of the bog and in the direction of the rising sun was the secret altar, a grey pile chosen for its flat top and rude reredos which looked as if prepared by nature in some of her earliest upheavals for the purpose to

which a persecuted people had devoted it. Close by in a cave, with opening hidden by a dense thorn bush, the sacred vessels and vestments were concealed, and not far off was a higher rock, on which a scout watched while Mass was proceeding and until the congregation had dispersed, creeping through cuttings and behind boulders, taking many a circuitous route to reach their homes.

Confessions were made behind the screen of a rock. Candles were lighted by means of a flint and steel while Father Aengus vested himself. These preparations were made by starlight, and Mass was said in the first gleam of dawn. Morogh, Aideen and Brona and some of their servants were among the communicants. The first rays of sunrise struck their uplifted faces, and when all was finished the resplendent risen sun gave a solemn benediction from the top of the highest mountain. The people dispersed as they had come. Father Aengus had departed at the risk of his life to give comfort to the dying. Brona lingered to succour an old woman, who devoured the food she had brought her while relating the too usual tale of her needs and sorrows. Coming homeward Brona was overtaken by Ingoldesby.

"You look tired," he said. "Where have you been and what have you been doing to yourself?"

"It is better that I should not tell you," she said smiling.

"You distrust me."

"No."

"At all events I am coming to warn your father that a search party is likely to visit his house this evening. Fortunately I met Father Aengus an hour ago, and advised him to stay away from the castle for a few days. He was not disturbed—told me cheerfully that he had many hiding-places. It is well; as I believe Colonel Slaughterhouse will be about the country for some time to come."

"We are accustomed to such attentions," said Brona. "though not, I think, from that particular gentleman."

"He is an old acquaintance of mine, and thorough in doing his duty as he understands it. With your permission, and on your father's invitation, if he will give it, I mean to sup at your table this evening. The Colonel will have called at my place, and in my absence come on here at once. His finding me in your family circle will be an advantage to you."

"Will it not injure you?"

"No. My name, for good or for evil, will bar that."

Here Turlough joined them. Having espied Ingoldesby from a high window, he descended to seize one more opportunity for improving his acquaintance with the man he admired and envied.

Brona hastened to prepare her father and aunt for the threatened visit. The news spread through the house. The servants went to work to efface all signs of the Faith, hiding every emblem of religion. Brona gathered together the company of her saints and locked them up in a cupboard concealed in the wood-sheathed wall, last of all kissing her crucifix and hiding it in a niche behind the panelling.

In the middle of supper the search party arrived, a small number of men on horseback headed by Colonel Slaughterhouse. Thady Quin, well instructed, invited the Colonel to enter, as if he had been an invited guest, pleasantly expected, and the dreaded visitor found himself in the dining-room, shaking hands with his friend, Hugh Ingoldesby, who introduced him to Mr O'Loghlin and his family. The Colonel had ridden a long way, and had been disappointed of the hospitality he had looked forward to as sure to be awaiting him at Ardcurragh, and the sight of a bountifully spread board and comfortable welcoming faces, including Ingoldesby's, disarmed his soldierly wrath, and cooled his enthusiasm for a triumph of discovery. He felt a little awkwardness at announcing the cause of his visit.

"Pleasure first and business afterwards," said Hugh smiling. "I can recommend Mr O'Loghlin's game, and as for his wine——"

The hungry Colonel did justice to all the good

things before him. Aideen had provided unusual dainties, and there was no doubt about the wine, which was of the best, direct from France and Spain.

Besides being a lover of good wine the Colonel was an admirer of wrought silver, and Hugh skilfully drew his attention to some beautiful specimens of foreign workmanship in use on the table, as well as to the Waterford cut glass that so generously contained the wine. Added to these attractions was the *spirituelle* charm of Brona's beauty, which was only enhanced by the pallor of the moment, and which was not unnoticed by the stern soldier, who seemed to forget that he had come among these hospitable friends as an enemy, until reminded that he had business to do and had better do it before the shades of night set in.

"It is a mere matter of form," he muttered apologetically. "Mr O'Loghlin will excuse me."

The house was explored in a perfunctory manner, the men who had been liberally entertained by the housekeeper feeling as little anxious as was their Colonel to give annoyance.

"You have pledged me your word that there is no Popish priest in this house at this moment," said Slaughterhouse to Ingoldesby.

"I have given you my word," said Ingoldesby, "and when you are satisfied I will ride back with you to Ardcurragh, where I hope you will be my

guest for as long as you can manage to stay. I can promise you some good sport."

So the search party departed under Ingoldesby's escort, and Castle O'Loghlin again breathed freely.

Only in the housekeeper's room was the good faith of Ingoldesby questioned.

"He's as sound as a bell," said Mrs MacCurtin. "Don't talk to me about bad stock, Thady Quin. A man is what he is. I tell you Ingoldesby's a rale good friend of this family."

"God send he is!" said Thady, "but I know their tricks. See how quick he wormed himself into favour with the master, and even the Marquee that has always her wits about her. And to see his eyes when he looks at Miss Brona! As for Turlough that's a trouble to us all, you don't know what he'll end by makin' of *him*. Then this Slaughterhouse comin' as his friend——"

"An' goin' away peaceable for that reason," said Mrs MacCurtin. "Suppose he had dropped down on us unbeknownst! Father Aengus in the middle of us! And the crucifix where it ought to be! Much good your wise talk would ha' been to us then, Thady Quin!"

"I'm not new to it," said Thady. "If Father Aengus had been here he would have circumvented them easy. Many's a time I told you how my father

before me, when things were worse than they are now, lived in a sufferin' family."

"Oh, indeed you did," said Mrs MacCurtin tartly.

"And when the enemy came down sudden, what did the priest do? 'Where's your livery, Mack?' says he, and in half a wink of an eye his reverence was dressed in it. The mistress snipped off a bit of her own hair, and plastered it down with soap—the handiest thing—on the holy Father's tonsure, an' wasn't it the priest himself they were huntin' that opened the door to the villains, and then attended table when they were eatin' all before them!"

"Had they no hiding-place?" asked Norah, who had never heard the story before.

"The ruffians had got wind of it, and searched it. But they found nothin', for in them days a priest had no belongings, wore an old sack, and slept in holes in trees, or in under an old ruin."

"Isn't it mostly the same now?" said Mrs MacCurtin.

XIII

As they were at breakfast at Ardcurragh, Colonel Slaughterhouse gave Ingoldesby his impressions of the people at Castle O'Loghlin.

" O'Loghlin himself seems a good sort of fellow, a bit of a philosopher, a little too fond of books for a soldier like me. The Marquise is a Frenchwoman to her finger-tips—has been a handsome woman. Is a little too anxious to conciliate. Turlough I do not like. A mean fellow. Would lick my boots if I let him. The girl——"

Ingoldesby drew a hard breath. He did not like to hear Brona alluded to as " the girl " by Slaughterhouse.

" A rare kind of beauty—lost in this wilderness," continued the Colonel, " hardly opened her lips. Looked on me as a wild beast come to gobble them up, I suppose."

" Must have been agreeably disappointed," said Ingoldesby. " Have some game pie, Colonel ? "

" Thanks. I have breakfasted. She is too

before me, when things were worse than they are now, lived in a sufferin' family."

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"A rare kind of beauty—lost in this wilderness," continued the Colonel, "hardly opened her lips. Looked on me as a wild beast come to gobble them up, I suppose."

"Must have been agreeably disappointed," said Ingoldesby. "Have some game pie, Colonel?"

"Thanks. I have breakfasted. She is too

good for this hunted life. Why not take her to Paris ? "

" I understand that she prefers the County Clare," said Ingoldesby. " Have a smoke, Slaughterhouse, and then we will go for some sport."

" Now, what have they done with the priest fellow ? I am not going to spare *him.* Not if I find him outside of their house. A sneaking friar, I am informed, a foreigner, one of the worst."

" Try to remember you are on holiday," said Ingoldesby.

" Oh—h ! I wish I could. I hate the service. But why are the Papists such obstinate pigs ? Can't they make the best of life as the law allows it to them ? "

" A problem to you and me," said Ingoldesby.

" Your duty does not oblige you to discover and punish offenders."

" No."

" So it does not trouble you to see people running their necks into the noose. By the way, I nearly got up at three o'clock this morning when I heard their bell ringing from somewhere—Mass bell I take it."

" That was a little trick of your imagination," said Ingoldesby. " They have no bells. Centuries have passed since they dared to ring a bell. They keep their trysts without summons of that kind."

"But I heard it," said Slaughterhouse. "I am utterly devoid of imagination—a much misleading quantity."

"Then it was some peculiar accidental chime—the clash of the wind with the sea," said Ingoldesby. "Come along, if you are ready. My people are waiting for us."

The day passed pleasantly, and next morning Colonel Slaughterhouse and his men went their way. Ingoldesby rode with them many miles, and saw them out of the country.

"It hasn't been very satisfactory, but I shall come again," said Slaughterhouse at parting. "I mean to keep wideawake, with my eyes on the County Clare."

As Ingoldesby rode home, he pondered the fact that he did not know Slaughterhouse intimately enough to decide whether his admiration for Brona would prove chivalrous and helpful, or would be an added difficulty and danger to her family. Were he to press a suit on her she would take an attitude that would quickly betray herself and her father. How would rejection act upon the Colonel? Would mortification embitter him, and provoke him to a revenge easily accomplished? Would he continue content with hunting the priest out of doors, and leave the O'Loghlins at peace in their home?

There was no sleep for Hugh that night. Life

seemed to have become horribly complicated. Thinking showed him no way out of difficulties. Jealousy was unreasonable. Brona was as far removed from him as if she had been a nun in her convent. But if Slaughterhouse were to become an enemy, how could he protect her? While he lay trying to pick hard knots of future trouble, a storm arose and blew against his windows from the direction of the wood. Was it an echo in his brain of the Colonel's fancy about a bell ringing in the night, or did he really hear such sounds, clear and sonorous, coming at intervals on the wind?

"The gale clashing with the voices of the distant sea," he said to himself as he had said to the Colonel, and listened for another weird note, the unmistakable note of a bell. Sometimes faint and musical, sometimes loud and deep, as the soughing of the trees seemed to carry it this way and that way. Unrested and disturbed in mind he fell asleep at last, and was awakened by Judkin, who knew all about the bell that haunted the wood, and was surprised that his master had not heard it before.

"The Papists say it's rung by angels," he said, "and our people say devils. Some that have sense tell that long ago when the 'massers' were hiding their things a bell got into a tree, and the tree grew round it, and it never could be found. They say your grandfather, sir, cut down many trees, full

sure he had tracked the sound, but gave it up. It takes a big wind to ring it, and still there's many a storm when it doesn't ring at all."

The idea seized Ingoldesby with fascination. Sometimes he haunted the woods with thoughts very curious to himself, and lay awake at night listening, but the bell did not ring again, though the weather continued windy. The knowledge that these eerie sounds would be sacred in Brona's ears, impressed him with a sort of reverence for the legend told by Judkin. Brona hiding her crucifix, as he knew she must do, came vividly before him as he saw in imagination the " massers " dropping their bell into a hollow tree.

What a strange faith it was that seized on all earthly material as its own, and even associated common things with God by invoking His blessing upon their use, things made by the hands of men, for His service ! He had given up the idea of idolatry in connection with Brona's religion. He knew that her crucifix was nothing to her except inasmuch as it imaged the martyred Arch-Hero of her spiritual warfare. Her fidelity, so maddening to her lover's impatience, had become beautiful to him as a feature of her character.

XIV

THE visit of Colonel Slaughterhouse had not improved Turlough's spirits or temper. He had felt bitterly the evident contempt of the English soldier, not realising that he was despised for his cowardly subservience to the enemy, rather than as the son of a proscribed father who might at any moment be dispossessed of his property. He had also seen the stranger's admiration of his sister, and her avoidance of such notice. He returned to his reproaches of Brona for her want of generosity in withdrawing from the attentions of those who were powerful to spare and to protect. He, Turlough, had done his best to propitiate Slaughterhouse, and he cultivated the goodwill of Ingoldesby at every opportunity. But the attitude of his father and sister rendered all his efforts useless. These two were deaf to his complaints and appeals, and Aideen, who was the only one to listen to his ill-humoured speeches, was a weak creature, who wept silently at his threats and revilings.

As he sat sulking in his own room, or wandered about the bit of beach between the sombre cliffs, throwing pebbles in the sea, and longing for a boat to take him to France, he chafed at Aideen's emptied purse, and growled in thought at MacDonogh, who, though he had carried him home in his vessel when Paris had not left him a *sou*, would not, if he arrived again to-morrow, take him back there penniless. Neither would MacDonogh, who was growing rich on his smuggling, lend him money, though he pretended to be a friend of the family. Altogether life had become intolerable. When Ingoldesby invited him to Ardcurragh such pleasure as he tasted there was tinctured with the bitterness of envy ; and yet here he had a ready listener to his repinings in Judkin, who thought it a monstrous thing that a fine, handsome, young gentleman of ancient family should be obliged to lead a slave's life, because of the fad of his people for praying in holes and corners rather than in a decent church.

Judkin's conversation was much more to Turlough's taste than Ingoldesby's, and through an Englishman's eyes he saw the folly of the Irish Catholic in losing this world, which was an undoubtable reality, for the sake of holding on to his own fantastic notions of a world to come, the very existence of which, from any point of view, was problematical.

"Why can't your good father be content to be a Christian, sir?" said Judkin, encouraged to speak his mind. "Look at my master! Look at me! Look at England! All of us Christians!"

"Are you?" said Turlough dubiously. He was only twenty-one, and his catechism was fresh in his mind.

"Of course we are, according to law. We obey the law and don't bother about particulars. Look at Paris! Are we better or worse than Paris?"

"Better and worse are everywhere," said Turlough sullenly. "I'm not better and not worse myself than many a one."

"That's what it is to be a Christian," argued Judkin. "Then why not walk into a Christian church and show yourself? You're losing the sheep for the ha'porth of tar, as the saying is. The sheep's the family property and the tar's nothing but the bad name of Papist."

"You're putting the cart before the horse, as another saying is," said Turlough with a grim smile that looked strange on his young face. "My people would tell you that the sheep is the faith and the property is the tar. But at all events the property and the determination are my father's."

"All might be yours, sir, if you had the courage."

"I haven't," said Turlough, and turned on his heel and left him.

Ingoldesby felt no pleasure in the visits of the discontented youth, yet persisted in giving him the hospitality he so eagerly accepted, with some idea of keeping him out of mischief, and with the intention of relieving his family of his disquieting presence. He easily perceived Turlough's preference for Judkin's society to his own, and often allowed the visitor to choose for himself in the matter. Sometimes he had the impulse to offer him money to take him back to Paris, and keep him there for a time, but prudence withheld him from the step, assuring him that nothing could come of it but greater embarrassment for everybody concerned.

Hugh also felt that his kindness to the restless young man was amply repaid by Morogh O'Loghlin's increasing friendship and trust in himself, by Aideen's gratitude expressed at every opportunity, and above all by the look of restful confidence in Brona's eyes which now met his gladly whenever he appeared. And the fact that Turlough had become a link between him and the family at Castle O'Loghlin, moderated his dislike of the graceless member of the family, and enabled him to tolerate one who under other circumstances he would have carefully shunned.

Occasionally he took solitary walks across the bog and moorland, learning the track through the wilderness, and finding an unaccountable pleasure

in pursuing that devious track, with its strange and lawless purpose, and its double danger to feet that persistently travelled it with a heroism pitiable to the uninitiated. He knew now how to avoid the treacherous bog-hole and the stretch of soft slushy earth that looked solid and trustworthy, but lured to death by suffocation in wells of liquid mud. He desired to be familiar with the way to the spot where the secret Mass was said, and to locate it in his memory, with a feeling that some day occasion might arise for leading a spy or a search party astray, to hinder a surprise of daring lawbreakers, of whom Brona would probably be one.

XV

On a grey October evening, an hour before twilight, Hugh paused on the devious bog path, a little at fault. Dusky clouds were blurring the edges of distant mountains on one side, and white mist-wreaths were winding themselves among the low-lying woods on another. In the west a small lake of lurid gold seemed ready to spill its waters over the brown and purple far-stretching plain of the lonely bog. An air of deep desolation hung over the land, beauty eerie and enchanted was there, wrapped in mourning garments that swept the solitude and trailed across the faint gleam of the water, and dipped into darkness. Here and there a red-gold glare betrayed the cruel bog-hole. Now and again the whimper of a plover broke the stillness. Ingoldesby stood and took a long look around him, feeling intensely the magic of the scene and the hour. Bringing his gaze slowly from one point to another he became aware of a figure approaching from a distance, and waited as it drew nearer,

coming straight to meet him. With a little painful shock he perceived that it was Father Aengus, the friar, the man who was hunted like a wolf, with a price on his head.

"Will he scent danger and run?" asked Ingoldesby of himself. "He says he has many hiding-places. Does he wholly trust me?"

Father Aengus was praying as he walked. His dark eyes were fixed on the golden well in the sombre sky. He started when he saw Ingoldesby, but held out his hand and smiled. Hugh thought he looked like a spirit such as might haunt these wilds, with his pallid face, his eyes holding their strange dream, his spare frame shrouded in the brown garb and bound with the rough cord of the sons of St Francis.

"You are a brave man," said Hugh, after he had clasped the long lean hand.

"Brave? I have nothing to fear from you, even if I were disposed to fear anyone."

"You ought to be under cover at this hour."

"Not if a soul's need keeps me in the open," said Father Aengus smiling. "And to say truth, I never feel so safe as when under God's roof of the sky. Here danger is to myself alone. Under any other roof I am a danger to some of my flock."

Hugh looked at him with a sudden sense of exasperation. Here was the type of creature who was an ideal to certain minds. Here was an

embodiment of the fascination that held Brona enslaved. He felt a swift desire to shock this dreamer out of his dreams, if only for a moment.

"What a madness it all is!" he said, striking the stone under his feet with his oaken stick.

"Ah!" said the priest, "not madness, but the sanity of God."

"Is it not madness to reject the good of life, to court death?"

"Not if God requires it. He makes His appointed uses of our lives. There is no such thing as death for those who do His will. When life appears to cease there is only a happy change, simply the casting of the flesh by the glorified spirit, the vacating of a hovel for entrance into the kingdom of the Father."

"I have heard all this before," said Ingoldesby, "but I do not believe in it. Other creeds than yours make the same claim, and still the world goes on, and men die and no one comes back to verify the statements of prophets, to make good the promises of priests."

"God came on earth and died—and came back," said Father Aengus. "Is that not sufficient verification?"

"So they said seventeen hundred years ago," said Hugh, "and they also said He came to bring peace and love, and yet men have never ceased since

then to torture and persecute each other in His name."

"He brought the cross. He bore it, and we carry it after Him," said the friar. A glow shone on his face, as if the ruddy splendour now spreading along the western horizon had kindled fire in the eyes so deeply sunken under his ivory brows.

"I know your theory, the same that the early Christians held—in their torment! But, granted your faith for a moment. Seventeen hundred years have passed. You say He died and came back. If He did come back for a few days, He went again, and returns no more."

"Nay," said the priest. "He never went—except visibly."

Ingoldesby checked a slight laugh and said, "I am aware that believers hold that the presence of God is everywhere. The universe is filled with it, exists by it."

"True."

"But men believed that before He came, as you say, visibly, and came again, and went again, and returned no more. Why did He go and leave nothing behind for men to hold by, more than the pagan had held by?"

"He never went," said the priest. "He has stayed with us ever since, not merely as that ever-enduring eternal presence of the Creator which

has always been the breath of men, but as an actual human Presence under veils."

Ingoldesby made an impatient movement.

"Wait a moment," said the friar. "He does not walk visibly, as He did for thirty-three years with a few who timidly acknowledged Him, and in a world that counted Him no more than one of its own, gone mad with vain egotism; a world that would not believe in Him even when He quitted the tomb into which they had sealed Him."

"You are wandering from the point," said Hugh. "If, as you say, He came and went and is here no more except as the pagan knew Him, where is His love? If He did come the world has had time to forget Him, and again raises its temples to the unknown God."

"He never went," repeated Father Aengus. "He is here."

"In the vague All-Presence?"

"In His humanity. In His flesh and blood. As the Bread we break from morn to morn. As the unfailing Food of living man. As the Companion Who leads him through the narrow pass called death. As the Medicine that cures the soul of the disease of sin, and strengthens it throughout mortal life to endure mortal suffering."

"This is raving!" cried Hugh.

"He who accepted the help of the humble Cyrenean to carry His cross to Calvary, gives His own strong Arm to carry ours."

"As how?"

"In the Sacrament of His love. In the Mass. In the Communion."

"Madness! madness!" reiterated Hugh. "This is how you terrorise men and poison women's minds. With your dreams and mysteries you scare delicate imaginations, and lure tender hearts into bondage. Why do you not go back to where your dreams are not penalised, and leave people like those who harbour you in their homes to find their way to rational conviction, and to the safety in life which it would ensure them?"

"Why?" said Father Aengus, "because their souls are as precious to me as my own, and my God and their God forbids me to desert them."

Ingoldesby was startled even in his anger by the transfigured appearance of the creature before him, the rapt expression of the face, the form almost visionary in its spareness caught into the light of the western afterglow. But surprise quickly changed to horror of the man and his aspect of supernatural power, and Ingoldesby suddenly felt that as he would not injure him he must remove himself out of the danger of future provocation.

"Unnatural, uncanny, wicked!" he said as he turned away with an abrupt "good evening," and began to pick his way back by the paths that had led him to this very unsatisfactory encounter with a dangerous fanatic.

XVI

AFTER this Ingoldesby's most bitter hatred of Roman superstition was revived, and he was more tolerant of Turlough, looking on him as one in cruel subjection, as a man robbed of his masculine liberty, controlled by the leading strings of a false conscience. His love for Brona was becoming a torture, his sympathy for Morogh changing to contempt. He felt it impossible to go to Castle O'Loghlin, and asked himself would it not be wise to leave this miserable country and try to forget that he had ever seen it. In a passion of rebellion against fate, he strove to hate the woman who preferred this dark bondage to his love, choosing in sorrow and danger rather than live with him in the sunshine of the life he could give her. In this mood he remained aloof from Burren, and after a spell of intolerable loneliness, he left Ardcurragh and went to pay visits to Protestant friends in another part of the country.

His absence was keenly felt in different ways by

all the members of the family at Castle O'Loghlin. On Turlough it had a specially irritating and depressing effect. His frequent sojourns at Ardcurragh and the society of Judkin, had worked up his discontent to a pitch unendurable to his envious nature. Now that the occasional restraining influence of a stronger masculine mind was removed, also the sympathy of Judkin who had departed with his master, young O'Loghlin gave himself up to thoughts which he did not share with anyone concerning the folly of acting on what is called principle, or on the dictates of a narrow conscience. When in Hugh's presence he had been well aware that the man he envied acted on principle and conscience, and then, why did these prompters urge different men to different courses of action? Why should not his own father learn to live by the principle good enough to secure Ardcurragh for the forefathers of its present possessor? Why should not Hugh Ingoldesby's conscience be strict enough to rule the conduct of Turlough O'Loghlin?

As Hugh's absence was prolonged, he grew more and more embittered, learning through letters from Judkin of the society enjoyed by his master, of the honour paid to him as a man of worth and weight taking up his position in the county. There were hints of favour shown him by ladies of birth and beauty, even of a probable marriage, highly desirable

from every point of view. It was evident to Turlough that Hugh had grown tired of stupid people like the O'Loghlins, fools who were content to live the life of the proscribed, when by a slight effort they could shuffle off disgrace and accept what was offered to them, equality with the best, as well as the distinction awaiting those who had understanding and courage to renounce the evils of law-breaking, and rank themselves with the enlightened and emancipated. He felt particularly assured that Hugh had ceased to care for Brona, seeing that he had removed himself from her neighbourhood, to the society of charming women who were in sympathy with him.

Brooding over all these circumstances Turlough made up his mind to remonstrate with Morogh on his apathy as to the downward drifting of the family fortunes, and one morning he rose with a big resolve, which grew smaller and weaker as the day went on, and died before night, leaving him in a state of cowardly irresolution. Then set in another miserable spell of chafing at the stagnation of the life he had to endure, and at his own impotence to play any part that he held worthy of a man, till at last he flung himself into his father's presence, uttering rebellion against all the powers, spiritual and temporal, railing at the state of things that kept him in his youth a prisoner, debarred from entering

a profession, from mixing in society fitting his rank, and calling on Morogh to do the only thing that could save his children from this living death, by rising up like a man and conforming to the religion prescribed by the law of the realm.

Morogh was reading in his library when this storm burst upon him. He did not close his book, but sat in his chair staring at his son, as if he had been some uncanny apparition. The young man's face was flushed, his hair and dress were disordered.

"Turlough, you have been drinking," said his father. "Go to your bed and sleep off this excitement. To-morrow morning you and I will both forget all the wild nonsense you have been talking."

"I shall not forget it," said Turlough. "I have thought about it all too long ever to forget it. If you are satisfied to finish your life in slavery, I am determined that I will not sacrifice the whole of mine to an idea."

He spoke surlily with his eyes on the floor, unable to look Morogh in the face.

"You cannot mean what you say, you unhappy boy."

"Unhappy I am, but I am not a boy. I am twenty-one, with power to take matters into my own hands, and to act for the good of the family."

He looked up now, his handsome features distorted with passion, and glared once at Morogh,

whose white set face seemed to provoke him to greater fury. It is true that he had relied on wine to give him the daring necessary for uttering what was in his mind. Now that he had spoken, he stood up and shook himself like one rising out of a bitter dream, surprised to see things real and familiar around him. Morogh waited a few moments before he answered. An indescribable change passed over his face and his mouth trembled. At last he spoke.

"You cannot mean what your words would seem to hint," he said. "Too many things are involved. I can forgive a great deal of impatience to your youth and your peculiar temperament. But you are not without conscience and intelligence. I shall expect you to retract what you have said as soon as you have returned to your proper senses."

Turlough quailed under his father's look of contempt, and left the room with bowed head, but without an idea of retracting his words or intention. He slunk into his aunt's pretty French apartment, where she sat working at a rare piece of church embroidery in coloured silks and gold, a banner for the Lady chapel of her dear friends of the Convent of the *Annonciades*. She was the only person Turlough was not afraid to bully. He was in her eyes what an only and wilful son often is in the eyes of a weak mother. She adored and screened

him from blame, even while threatening chastisements which were never given him. The only punishment in her power was the tightening of her purse-strings, but only when it was empty had she ever been able to keep his hand out of that small, too-liberal treasury.

As she saw his face at the door now, her first thought was " too much wine," and she prepared to soothe his excitement, to excuse his condition out of the depths of the pity of her heart for his youth and misfortunes. He threw himself on a seat with an air of bravado, and when half an hour later he left the room, Aideen had put away her embroidery out of harm's way from falling tears.

Brona was in the garden, a green acre that sloped away behind the castle in the direction of the sea. The grey mountains had lost their fairy-like opalescent tints, and looked like the bastions reared for defence in some great warfare. She was working in short daylight for the spring to come, never so content as when so working. The sea, the mountains, and the mysteriously fruitful earth were all, to her, visible expressions of God. Real misfortune seemed impossible.

The knowledge that Hugh Ingoldesby wanted to make her happy had realised his desire by making her happy. His love was like an unexpected inheritance dropped down on her, even though it

could bring her nothing, as things and nothings are reckoned by the world. It gave her a spiritual vested right in his soul. The external barrier between them did not exist in the eyes of God Who had sent him across her path, Who was urging her to care and pray for him. The consciousness, the joy of it enveloped her like an atmosphere unperceived by others. Her secret gladness was like the fragrance of hidden violets to one walking solitary, or the faint incense lingering in a sanctuary deserted by all but one watcher.

She had never told anyone that Hugh had asked her to be his wife. It must remain her secret till the end of her life. The idea that she was never to marry had always been present to her. The happiest natural things of life were not for her. Her duty was to her faith and her father, her joy in the promises of God. Having struggled with the disturbing sweetness of his presence, she could be happy in his absence. She could send her winged thoughts and prayers to him by the angels always travelling between soul and soul, ascending and descending by Jacob's ladder to their beneficent God with reports and messages. Her young face, with its glowing tints, heightened and sweetened by her labours, shone in the open air like a beautiful jewel against the grey sky. She looked up, saw Aideen coming, and stood leaning on her hoe.

"O Aideen, you are weeping!"

"Turlough!"

"Turlough again. You take his complaints too much to heart. Let him grumble!"

Aideen stood shedding bitter tears.

"This is worse than grumbling. He threatens to take the property out of Morogh's hands, and rob his father by conforming."

"Silly!" said Brona, but the rose on her face faded a little. "A silly threat. Turlough wouldn't —couldn't."

"He is of age. We are in his power."

Brona did not speak. Aideen's manner urged on her that she had been impressed in an extraordinary degree by the new attitude of her nephew.

"There is only one way of warding off this blow —to get him back to Paris," said Aideen, "and there is only one way of getting money for that—to sell my jewels. I can get it done by taking them to Paris. MacDonogh will take us there—Turlough and myself."

"Monstrous!" said Brona. "Sell your jewels for such a purpose? If Turlough were capable of acting as you suppose, your sacrifice would not prevent him. It would only stave off the worst for a time. But I will not believe——"

"I thought you would have helped," said Aideen. "You have jewels."

"My mother's! Sell to prove Turlough a criminal?" cried Brona indignantly.

"To save him from crime. To save your father from indigence."

Brona's eyes had flashed and her cheeks had burned. She was silent a few moments, and stirred the earth with her hoe. Then she said quietly:

"You are suffering from scare, Aideen. I believe in my brother. He will never take the step you are fearing."

"If Mr Ingoldesby were at home we might ask him to advise Turlough. He respects Ingoldesby, though he envies him. But he tells me that Ingoldesby has tired of this dull part of the country, and that we shall see no more of him. The latest news is that he is engaged to be married to an Englishwoman, who is a visitor at the house where he is staying."

Brona was again silent. Aideen watched her narrowly. Was she really as indifferent to Hugh as she had shown herself to all other men.

"Is it true?" asked Brona carelessly.

"Why not true? Mr Ingoldesby is an admirer of beauty, and I think he is the kind of man who would fall in love in haste. He must feel lonely at Ardcurragh, and would probably think he must marry if he means to stay in this dreary country."

"But why should his movements have anything to do with Turlough? I simply put my faith in my brother's honesty. He is sorely tried, being what he is—but he is honest."

"Then go and talk to him yourself, Brona. I can say no more."

Brona went and talked to him. She found him sitting in his room, leaning his elbows on the back of a tilted chair, his face between his hands, scowling through the window at the fading sky, looking like a sullen schoolboy who had been thrashed. She walked up to him and said simply:

"Turlough, you couldn't do it."

"Couldn't I?" he growled.

"I mean you wouldn't. Look at me, Turlough. Why have you vexed father and frightened Aideen?"

"You to talk to me! You who wouldn't do anything to save the situation! You've left it to me."

She had placed herself before him, and he was obliged to look at her, but against his will, for something in the clear eyes of his young sister was ever a reminder to him of the inferiority of his own nature. If he loved any creature in the world besides himself it was Brona. But the spark of affection was so buried under a mass of selfishness that it only smouldered to no purpose.

"Give me your word, my brother, that you spoke in a moment of irritation. We are all tried."

The tender tone only gave Turlough more courage to be brutal.

"If you had married Ingoldesby things might have righted themselves. You have sent him off to marry another woman, and that chance is lost."

"You don't think of what you are saying," said Brona. "If you look things in the face, you must see that for Mr Ingoldesby, even if he wished it (which you have no right to believe), marriage with a Catholic would mean his ruin, while it would not benefit you or father."

"Not if you were a proper wife, and followed your husband. You would have a year to think about it. But it is too late now. He is engaged to be married to Lady Kitty Carteret."

"And therefore is safe," said Brona.

"You are a piece of cold marble," said Turlough. "I know you care for him. Well, then, if you are obstinate why shouldn't I be the same? Slaughterhouse means to come back and drop down on us at some moment when we are unprepared, with no friend to interfere for us. You were haughty to him, too, and you will be again."

"Turlough, you are mad on this point. If I were to turn coquette, how would it mend matters?

Why do you not join the Brigade under Lord Clare ? "

" I am no soldier," growled Turlough.

" No, indeed," sighed Brona in the depths of her heart.

" I want to inherit the property of my ancestors, to hold up my head in the county, to take rank among my fellows."

" At what cost ? "

" D—— the cost ! " cried Turlough savagely. " Are we always to be slaves ? "

There was a painful silence. Brona turned to go, but turned back and placed her hand gently on his shoulder.

" Turlough," she said, " I thought you loved me a little."

At the soft touch and tone that buried spark stirred under the mass of selfishness and made itself faintly felt.

" Promise me, my brother, that you will not do this thing."

" I am not going to do anything at present," said Turlough surlily. " Tell Aideen to stop whining. I can't bear it."

XVII

ABOUT this time Mrs Delany in Delville received a letter from Miss Jacquetta Ingoldesby.

DEAR FRIEND,—You will see by the above address that I am staying here with friends. I shall remain with them for another week or so, and then I shall go to Ardcurragh, where I hope I may see you soon. The truth is I have been anxious about my nephew, your friend Hugh, on account of certain reports from his trusty man Judkin, and this has been my chief reason for leaving England in acceptance of a long-standing invitation from the Stodarts.

We have here at present a pleasant company, including Hugh, who seems to have forgotten his penchant for that interesting and dangerous Miss O'Loghlin, and who is now attentive in his own way to Lady Kitty Carteret, a charming young widow whom the Stodarts met last year at Bath. She is a pretty and attractive creature, extremely rich, with no encumbrance, and my meeting with her here seems to me quite providential.

You will easily perceive what I mean. I have been a mother to Hugh since he was quite a little boy, and I will not desert him now, just when he requires guidance.

My plan is to carry off Lady Kitty to Ardcurragh, make up a house party, which I hope will include my dearest Mary Delany (and the Dean, if we can induce him to come), give some pleasant entertainments, and make my nephew feel that his lonely house which he inhabits like an owl in a tree-hole, can be turned into a genial and hospitable home. When I see him happily married I shall feel that my responsibilities with regard to him are over.

You, my dear friend, can help me to accomplish my desires. No one admires and esteems you more than Hugh, and your approval of the charming Lady Kitty would influence him more than even mine. Mothers and aunts may be suspected of too great a wish to interfere, but a friend like you (where is there another like you?) is above suspicion.

Mrs Delany at breakfast in her delightful bower-room, from which she could see the ships riding in the harbour, smiled over this letter, and handed it across the table to the Dean.

"Jacquetta is very amusing," she said, "she is never happy unless she can plot and plan for somebody. Hugh Ingoldesby is not the sort of man to be plotted and planned for, and at the best it is risky work making up marriages."

"I agree that the best marriages make themselves," said the Dean, "but if Ingoldesby is really taken with this charming Lady Kitty——"

Mrs Delany shook her head. "Hugh is no lady's man to flit from one to another as Jacquetta would

suggest. If he is really caught by the charming Lady Kitty, he will not require his aunt's assistance in arranging his affairs. And if the situation exists only in her imagination, she will be very likely to do mischief."

"Well, my love, I think you might do some good by just going to see," said the Dean.

"Let us go then!" said his wife.

"Put me out of the question," said the Dean. "I don't think I could bear to look on at life as it is in the county of Clare at present. Your feminine sympathies with the affairs of your friends will distract your mind from things outside your circle, but as a man I could have no such resource, and to be a passive witness of barbarous injustice would be too much for my nerves."

"I shall certainly not enter into the plot against Hugh," said Mrs Delany still pondering her friend's letter. "I have seen him pass unaffected by the charms of many attractive Lady Kittys. I have too much respect for his sense and judgment to try to influence him in such a matter; and I don't wish to lose his good opinion by seeming to interfere in any way in his affairs."

"Spoken like your wise self," said the Dean, smiling approval, while his wife gathered up her letters with a little laugh of enjoyment of the approval, and went to accept the invitation of her

friend Jacquetta; for reasons of her own, which had nothing to do with Lady Kitty.

A fortnight later Miss Jacquetta and her guest, Lady Kitty Carteret, set out on a cold day in January, in the Ingoldesby family coach, to meet Mrs Delany at the last coaching stage of her journey into Clare. Lady Kitty was elated at the prospect of meeting the delightful Mrs Delany, of whom she had heard so much in London, one who had been married in extreme youth to an uncongenial husband, and who as a widow had refused many brilliant offers of marriage to find happiness in circumstances scarcely satisfactory to her relatives and admirers, though perfect to herself.

In the early marriage and the unlovable husband Lady Kitty felt that there was a parallel in her own case with that of Mrs Delany, also in her early widowhood and the subsequent rejection of many suitors. But here she thought the similarity of fortunes must end. In a second marriage she should require something more romantic to her own imagination, and more showy in the eyes of the world than Mary Pendarves had been content with when she settled down in a little demesne in a suburb of Dublin as the wife of an Irish Dean.

Meanwhile Mrs Delany had arrived at the inn of her destination, and was handed out of the coach by a handsome young gentleman, who in courtly

manner introduced himself as the son of an old friend of hers, Morogh O'Loghlin by name. A good fire in the inn's best apartment and tea had been ordered and prepared by his thoughtfulness for her comfort. Pleasantly surprised and charmed by the young man's appearance, manners, and attentions, Mrs Delany asked herself, while she warmed her feet and sipped her tea, whether this could be Turlough, the youth of whose objectionable qualities she had gathered some indistinct impressions.

"I thought there was only one son," she reflected, "but I must have been mistaken. A young man like this will be a comfort to the family." She was in the midst of her genial inquiries for her old friend Morogh and her young friend Brona, when interrupted by the entrance of Miss Ingoldesby and Lady Kitty; on which Turlough immediately withdrew.

"Who is the handsome Spaniard?" asked Lady Kitty, with a degree of interest that rather detracted from her pleasurable excitement at meeting the expected Mrs Delany.

"It is that graceless young man Turlough O'Loghlin," said Miss Jacquetta sharply, not at all pleased at the meeting.

"I am agreeably surprised," said Mrs Delany. "He has been most kind and attentive."

"Rather presumptuous, I think," said Miss Jacquetta.

"His father is an old friend of mine," protested Mrs Delany.

"My dear Mary, your friends are legion, and your charity is for the multitude," said Miss Jacquetta. "My nephew has been very kind to these people."

A shade came over Mrs Delany's face, not unnoticed by Lady Kitty, who turned her sparkling eyes with an air of charming defiance on Miss Ingoldesby, and said with lively emphasis:

"It is one of the most romantic figures and handsomest faces I have ever met with!"

Meanwhile Turlough was glad to escape from the inn before the ladies could observe his sorry mount on one of Morogh's horses, an animal hardly of a breed or style to gratify the rider's vanity. From Judkin he had heard of Mrs Delany's expected arrival, and he had contrived an opportunity to make acquaintance with the friend of his father and sister in a manner likely to find favour for himself. His ride to meet the coach had proved more successful than he had reckoned on in the unlooked-for encounter with the ladies from Ardcurragh; Miss Ingoldesby's frowns were of little account. Mrs Delany had accepted his attentions, and Lady Kitty's glances of approval made his nerves still tingle with pleasure as he jumped on his despised "garron."

While he rode home many cunning schemes jostled each other in his brain, for the improvement of his condition by pleasant, and perhaps even by honest means. In all of them Mrs Delany was an agreeable factor; Hugh Ingoldesby an accommodating tool; Miss Jacquetta was not allowed to count, a sour old spinster who would not be placated by any amount of flattery, or tricked into opening her door to any Papist wolf, even in the whitest of sheep's clothing!

This brilliant Lady Kitty Carteret, the reputed fiancée of Hugh Ingoldesby, was not so devoted to a prig but that she could perceive excellence in a man of different temper and complexion. How must he, Turlough, now contrive to meet her again? Judkin had informed him of Miss Jacquetta's plans for entertaining her visitor. There was always of course the hunt, and Lady Kitty was known to be a plucky follower of the hounds. There were rumours of a fancy ball to which the county was to be invited. For Mrs Delany's sake, his sister and even he himself might be bidden, but Brona would never be induced to go, and Turlough was not at all assured that Miss Ingoldesby would give him a separate invitation. But for the hunt, Judkin would certainly get him a proper mount from the Ardcurragh stables.

XVIII

THE approaching fancy ball at Ardcurragh was the talk of the county, and bidden guests were choosing their characters and preparing their costumes. Mrs Delany had failed to persuade Brona to be of the company, and was satisfied of the girl's wisdom in avoiding the society of the Ingoldesbys. Hugh had provokingly gone to pay another visit after leaving the Stodarts, instead of hastening to Ardcurragh to become engaged to Lady Kitty, but he had promised to return home in proper time for the ball. Mrs Delany had secured an invitation for Turlough, and Aideen was busy with the details of his dress in the character of the Cid Campeador.

The Marquise was happy when she saw her petted boy arrayed in the picturesque costume which was bound to embarrass her financially for at least a year to come. That the gentry of the Ascendancy should behold his physical superiority — the splendour, as she put it, of his health, strength, and masculine beauty—was extremely gratifying to

her, and at one moment she even coveted an invitation for herself that she might witness his triumph.

"I could go as a fortune-telling gipsy," she said, "or as any other——"

A volley of rude words hurled from cruel depths to the surface of Turlough's unwonted good humour silenced her, and the sentence so interrupted was never completed.

At no time of its history had the mansion of Ardcurragh been the scene of so brilliant an entertainment. All the best rooms were thrown open, and the lights of its windows shone in the landscape like the mountainous heap of diamonds in an eastern fable. The very novelty of such a pageant in the wilds of Clare stirred the imagination of the countryside, and as the rooms filled with picturesque figures, it was evident that the affair was to be a success beyond the dreams of the hostess. Hugh Ingoldesby did not disappoint his aunt, but received her guests in the character of the Earl of Essex, while Miss Jacquetta herself made a very fair attempt at an impersonation of Queen Elizabeth. Mrs Delany, unprepared for such doings at Ardcurragh, appeared in the "simple pink damask" and white kerchief edged with gold, mentioned by her in a letter to her sister as having been worn by her at Dublin Castle on an unexpected occasion;

very becoming to her "lovely face of great sweetness, fair curly hair, dove's eyes, and brilliant complexion" as described by her husband, the Dean of St Werbergh's.

Many eyes were turned on the Cid when he made his appearance, and when he and Lady Kitty, in the character of Anne Boleyn, "took the floor" in a stately measure, other dancers were overlooked for the moment, while Turlough achieved the triumph that his ambitions had so cunningly planned and so fiercely desired. His triumph was the more evident as Lady Kitty, the centre of interest of the hour, distinguished him by her marked attentions, partly from a capricious desire to surprise the crowd, partly from genuine admiration of the handsome Spaniard as she called him, and a good deal from pique at the polite indifference of Ingoldesby, who behaved with equal courtesy to all the ladies of the company.

People were asking who he was, and on hearing that he was the son of Morogh O'Loghlin, they concluded that he had broken away from the trammels of Popery and become one of themselves; and in spite of a little jealousy there was a general disposition to welcome him from under his cloud of misfortune into the light of their own prosperity. If the beautiful and wealthy Kitty Carteret were to bestow her coveted hand on him, then indeed

such a partnership would be an acquisition to the country. It was evident, thought some of the onlookers, that such a dénouement was probable, judging by the disturbed countenance of Miss Jacquetta, and also by the sullen looks of young Stodart, the hero of the horse-stealing adventure, who was obliged to stand aside while the charming stranger gave yet another dance to the despised and insulted owner of the stolen Arab.

A few fair ladies, disposed to accord favour to Ingoldesby or to Stodart, were not displeased to see Lady Kitty with all her excelling charms swept out of the running of rivalry, and were more willing to smile on the audacity and good fortune of the Papist O'Loghlin. Glances from bright eyes and whispers caught amid a buzz of voices and the clang of dance music, made Turlough aware of his triumph. Not only had he won favour of Lady Kitty, but that even in the eyes of a social crowd, which did not, however, include his irritated hostess. In truth Miss Jacquetta's sole comfort in the situation was her knowledge of Lady Kitty as a finished coquette, and her belief that she was probably now at play with an unimportant admirer, merely to arouse ardour and jealousy in one more prized.

Turlough's triumph lasted for a few weeks. He went a-hunting, mounted from the Ardcurragh

stables, and had long rides with Lady Kitty on days when there was nothing but pleasure to hunt. Very gratifying were the invitations to dinner from Miss Jacquetta, obliged by the caprice of her guest and the generosity of her impracticable nephew, and a climax was reached when Lady Kitty began to accompany Mrs Delany in her frequent visits to the O'Loghlin family.

When coming to Clare, Mrs Delany had in view the rescuing of Brona from the dreariness of her present existence, and though the girl had refused to return with her to Delville, she still hoped that the little nun, as she called her, would allow herself to be lured back to the world, where good things were certain to be in wait for her. And now the genial lady had a fresh interest in her sympathy and compassion for Turlough. She never doubted that Lady Kitty honestly intended to bestow on him the charms and possessions coveted by many more eligible admirers, and in her kindly judgment the pair were peculiarly well matched, in age, in mutual tastes, and in their worldly fortunes, which by contrast might be considered each as the complement of the other. It did not occur to her that his family were not all of one mind with her on the subject, yet of the persons most concerned, Morogh perceived nothing in the situation, except that Turlough was for the moment giving no trouble,

and that he seemed to be amusing himself. Brona instinctively distrusted the sincerity of Lady Kitty, and Aideen was the only one of the three who could see with the eyes of her brother's early friend, and even far beyond the reach of them into a fortunate future. There came a day, however, when such dreams and fancies, circling around Lady Kitty like the butterflies coming with the white rose of June, vanished suddenly, a day when Turlough poured out his hopes in impassioned raptures, and was listened to by the lady he thought he had won with a cold surprise, and an assurance that he had completely misunderstood her. She had meant to be a sister to him. She would always be his friend, but she had no intention of marrying a second time. She had had enough of marriage, and was passionately in love with her liberty. A few days later she bade a smiling farewell to Ardcurragh, followed by Miss Ingoldesby in a hasty departure, and by Mrs Delany, the term of whose visit had expired, and who left her friends feeling disappointed in all her pleasant hopes of seeing some improvement in their isolated and unhappy position.

When the short play of his imagined good fortune was over, the curtain down and the lights out, Turlough's rage broke in a storm over the household at Castle O'Loghlin. Everyone was to blame for his disappointment, Brona for her cold reserve, his

father for his pride of aloofness from the world, Aideen for everything that could not be laid to anyone else's account. All had conspired to disgust Lady Kitty with a miserable family, and to scare away the prosperity that had been stretching out both hands to the most unhappy and deserving member of it.

A day came when Aideen was weeping in her room and Brona with pale lips sitting silent at her father's knee, holding his cold hand and trying to look in his face with loving eyes of comfort. Turlough had then retired to his own quarters to brood over his incomprehensible failure, to endeavour to read the riddle of it, and to think out some new plan for retrieving his injured fortunes.

XIX

THAT little episode of Miss Jacquetta's hospitality was gone like the summer flowers. The night lights in the windows at Ardcurragh had dwindled to a few in the rooms used by the master, who found himself solitary where late had been a crowd. But if there was little blaze from chandeliers within, flame from eastern skies lit the window panes from without as the nights began to close their eyes earlier, and the winter days stretched out cold hands to implore the spring.

Hugh Ingoldesby felt the place intolerably lonely, and yet did not want any change. He had been out of sympathy alike with the people he had visited, and with the people who had visited him, and he was pleased to be alone. But though glad of the freedom of aloneness, an unreasonable sense of loneliness hindered his enjoyment of solitude. His one desire was to see Brona, and know how things were going on at Castle O'Loghlin, a desire restrained, because he knew that nothing but pain

could come of a renewal of the struggle between two spirits each strong in its own conception of faith and duty, and each bound to war against the convictions of the other. But though keeping aloof he did not want to go far away, especially while Turlough was still in the country. He had seen the young man's soaring hopes and their sudden fall, regretting that the disturber of the peace had not been removed from his family by marriage with a wealthy lady, who would have taken him away and provided for him. He had also caught a glimpse of Turlough's fury, and heard a good deal about it from Judkin, who continued to sympathise with the manly young Papist, bound to suffer for the Papistry of a foolish old father.

Hugh surrounded himself with books in his library, and took long rides in an opposite direction from Castle O'Loghlin, was out by dawn in the woods, where small hardy flowers were already breaking from their green sheaths, rose-veined wild-flowers and their blue-frocked sisters, and the white violets that in their pale chastened faces and their mysterious fragrance reminded him inexplicably of the personality of Brona. Never before had he noticed the movements of nature in the resurrection of life after the long winter's death-like sleep. There had been for him the changes of the seasons, with

their corresponding changes of pleasure and occupation. Each had its practical use for the earth, on and by which men lived, and it was a matter of course that summer did her duty in embroidering man's path with flowers, and autumn in filling his granaries and providing him with the luxury of her fruits. For the rest there were the beauty and awfulness of landscapes, and the discomforts and pleasures alike of heat and cold. But the sweetnesses and tendernesses of spring in her close companionship with humanity were a revelation, threatening to soften his heart into the weakening of a hardy purpose.

The first pipings of song-birds were a new kind of music to him. He had usually spent this time of the year abroad or in London, and the nest building, and courting, and exultant jubilation of married thrush and blackbird had been less known to him than the ways and voices and triumphant world-wide fame of the human singer in concert or oratorio. Now he listened in amazement as to minstrels bearing messages from another world. What did the blackbird talk about when he whispered to his mate just before the first cloud-lift of the dawn? What was that long sweet clarion cry that echoed, reverberating down all the bud-leaved choirs of the yet half-bare sycamores and

chestnut trees ? How could a bird, a small creature with a small heart and a mouth that was nothing but a tiny gold beak, utter such a shout of joy, merely because another feathered creature was close beside him, and there were eggs in the nest ? How different these from the turbulent birds of the cliffs, who shrieked forth defiance of all tender influences, and whose discordant notes voiced the inevitable cruelties of conscience ! The woods became haunted for him by ghosts of all the foregone joys of life, whose existence he had never realised till now when he saw them vanishing out of his reach. And one night when the wind sobbed at his windows, and soughed among the distant trees, he heard again the tolling of the mysterious bell from its unknown belfry (the trunk of some mighty oak or elm that had weathered the storms of centuries), and the eerie notes sounded like a stroke of doom, signalling the futility of all human hopes, and the folly of the jubilant existence of perishable wild-flower and song-bird.

Then he began to realise that he was not leading the life of a healthy and sane man, and that he must make some effort to change the course of his thoughts, and to give himself some kind of companionship, were it to prove ever so uncongenial and even irksome. He delighted Judkin, who was feeling time heavy on his hands, by directing him

to see to the state of the cellar, and to provide several new packs of cards, as he intended to invite a dinner party of masculine friends, such as love good wine and the excitement of a little gambling.

XX

On the evening of his dinner-party Hugh felt like himself again. The men bidden were all his peers in religion and politics, professed haters of Popery and lovers of common-sense. On his arrival in the country he had been welcomed among them as one more golden pillar of the Ascendancy. His round of visits had made him popular, more perhaps with the men than the women, who found him a little cold, the latter impression a good deal modified by his house-warming hospitality under Miss Jacquetta's management. In the hunting field he was popular, and now that he was inaugurating bachelor dinner-parties, his reputation as a giver of good wine was no way in his disfavour. Already some of the guests were in the drawing-room, when Judkin signalled that he wanted to speak a word to him privately.

"Well?" said Hugh, having followed the man out of his room, "has anything awkward happened?"

"It's young Mr O'Loghlin, sir, come to ask for

the loan of one of your best horses to ride to Dublin."

Hugh gave a little laugh. "Cool," he said, "upon my word! What does he mean by it?"

"Well, sir, from words he has dropped, I think he is off to discover on his father and take the property."

"The scoundrel!" said Hugh.

"I don't quite agree with you there, sir," said Judkin. "I confess I'm glad he has got the pluck."

"Stay!" said Hugh. "Where is he? I must ask him to stop and join us at dinner, and remain the night. Set another place at the table, and have a room prepared. And, Judkin, let my best horse be got ready by daybreak and breakfast on the table at the same moment."

He found Turlough in the library carefully dressed under his riding-coat, and assuming airs of assurance and self-satisfaction. Having formed his plan and thought his means of working it, Turlough relied on Ingoldesby for sympathy, if not for admiration like to Judkin's, seeing that he was naturally taking a step in the right direction.

"You are riding to Dublin?" said Hugh.

"Yes, I am going to arrange the affair of my family at last, to put things on a solid basis. It ought to have been done long ago, but I am only just of age, and so——"

" You mean to discover on your father and take the property ? "

" I intend to do it."

" Ah, I see. Well, meantime, stop and dine. I happen to have a few bachelor friends to dinner. It's weary work travelling the roads by night. Stay and have a pleasant evening, and in the morning you can have the pick of my horses for your journey."

Turlough hesitated. He felt restless till the deed was done. And these men who had seen him thrown over by Lady Kitty. He was not inclined to face them till he could do so as a respectable Protestant, and the legal owner of a property in the county.

" You are a judge of wine," said Hugh. " I have some that I would like you to test. And you have no dislike to a game of cards."

Turlough was conquered.

" Come to my dressing-room," said Hugh. " I will give my orders to Judkin for the morning.

As dinner proceeded Turlough forgot his objection to antedating his success and popularity with the gentlemen of the county, and dropped many hints apologetic for father's old-fashioned obstinacy, and suggestive of his own more wise intention of taking up a proper position at the earliest opportunity. By some of the men present he was

approved and applauded, by others distrusted and disliked. Wine flowed, and Turlough's self-conceit grew and burst into flower. He already saw himself entertaining such a party as this, with Lady Kitty (who would certainly listen to his next proposal) at the head of his table. Cards were discussed, and he won some money. Wine flowed again, and when all was done Turlough was intoxicated and had to be put to bed. Ingoldesby sat down to write letters, after which he went to breakfast at the hour of dawn as ordered.

"The horse is ready, sir," said Judkin, "but the young man is asleep, and the last trump wouldn't awaken him."

"Let him be," said Hugh. "When he comes to his senses give him what he wants, and the mount he came for. I am going myself to Dublin to prepare the way for him. You can tell him so if he asks for me."

As he rode out in the fair dawn, Hugh's thoughts were with Brona. Indignation at the ruffianism he was outwitting gave place to pleasure at the opportunity for serving her and hers even in a manner so remote from his own more intimate desires as the saving of her father's property from the covetous grip of her father's son. Before rounding a certain curve of the road, obliterating the more familiar landscape, he turned in his

saddle to take a long look across the bog he was leaving behind him. At that very moment Brona might be hieing by intricate and hardly discoverable paths out to the Mass rock, where she might be tracked on any morning by Slaughterhouse or his men when they happened to make a raid on the country. Nothing, he told himself, but the urgency of his present mission ought to take him out of reach in case of her distress; but after a few minutes of bitter uneasiness he remembered that Slaughterhouse was in his own way a gentleman, and that he had given a sort of promise not to harm the family at Castle O'Loghlin—even to forbear to hunt the priest so long as he kept within the walls.

It was near noon when Turlough, still stupid and red-eyed, arrived in the breakfast-room. The other night-guests, victims of the bottle, had breakfasted and gone their ways, and the table was arrayed for service of one only. Turlough rang for Judkin, and asked to see his host.

"Gone to Dublin, sir, since daybreak. Left a message for you in case you wanted him."

"He said nothing last night about going," growled Turlough. "He promised me a horse. I was a confounded ass to wait here for his dinner party."

"Well, sir, I heard him promise you the horse, and my master never goes back on his word. He

gave me orders that you were to have everything you want. And if you were curious about his going off so sudden, I was to say that he had just gone on to Dublin to prepare the way for you. You will find him at Daly's."

Turlough stared. He was still stupefied by his experience of the quality and variety of Hugh's wines from an old and well-stocked cellar.

"I think, sir," said Judkin, whose manner had become more deferential to O'Loghlin since he was about to become a legalised gentleman, "I believe my master thought he could make matters easier for you."

A cup of strong coffee cleared Turlough's brain a little, and he proceeded to make ready for his journey. The fact that Hugh had given orders about the horse, and that it was ready for him, restored his satisfaction with the present state of affairs, and Judkin having mounted him in superior style, saw him ride off in super-excellent spirits. As he pricked along, his brains restored to their normal condition by the invigorating airs of spring, Turlough congratulated himself on his pluck in this adventure, and especially on having gained the countenance of Ingoldesby, who had of late so shown disfavour by avoiding the rest of the family. He saw his future as O'Loghlin of Castle O'Loghlin opening before him in shining light and in glowing

colours. His father and Brona were to be provided for somewhere, and Aideen was to be sent back to her friends in Paris. Lady Kitty's money was to rebuild the Castle and to improve and extend the lands. He would bring the fellows who had despised him to their knees, take a high hand over them, and probably obtain a title in recognition of his services to the King in conforming to the established religion, and planting one more loyal family in the county. It was perhaps with intention of representing all this to the Lord-Lieutenant, who was a friend of his, that Ingoldesby had preceded him to Dublin at this crisis. If he had not been an idiot to allow himself to be overpowered with wine, he might have enjoyed the companionship of the master of Ardcurragh in his ride, but Ingoldesby was a man of the world, and no doubt had arranged the affair with a view to the most satisfactory results.

In high good humour Turlough halted at the first stage of his journey, and entered the inn, calling for refreshment of the best that could be afforded him. The money won at cards the night before enabled him to swagger, and to dazzle the inn-keeper's eyes with a sight of gold, and continuing the same course all along the way, his journey was prolonged beyond his first intention. Finding the journey so pleasant, he slept at hostelries two nights on the way, and only on the third day arrived

in Dublin. After refreshing himself and arranging his dress at an hotel he proceeded at once to the Castle, and after some delay he obtained an audience with the authorities and made his errand known.

The reply to his application stunned him.

"We are sorry to say you are late, Mr O'Loghlin. Mr Ingoldesby of Ardcurragh has been before you in this matter, and is already registered as the legal owner of the O'Loghlin property."

XXI

A FEW days later Hugh went to breakfast at Delville.

" Well ? " said Mrs Delany. " What has become of him ? "

" I have shipped him off to France," said Hugh. " He made a shocking scene, cursed me for having robbed and ruined him, said he had written to his father to denounce me as a treacherous friend, more hateful than an open enemy, warned his sister and aunt that they were to be left without a roof over their heads, and that he himself was obliged to take refuge in Paris."

" They will soon learn the truth," said Mrs Delany.

" In time they will understand that I have made myself nominally owner of the property in order to hold it safely for Morogh O'Loghlin, the suspected and proscribed. But the lie will get a start of the truth. I cannot write to denounce the scapegrace son of his worthy father. The young rascal mis-

represented the real state of things, describing himself as having rushed to Dublin to try to hinder my unneighbourly act in taking advantage of the law."

"He can certainly pose as an admirable person," said Mrs Delany. "Of that I have had some experience. But at home they must know him."

"I am not sure whether they would believe him capable of such thoroughly rascally and dastardly conduct," said Hugh, thinking of Brona's shame and grief for her brother's vices. "But at all events I must allow things to take their course for the moment. Truth will out, but it has a way of choosing its own hour."

"Was the young man willing to go?" asked Mrs Delany.

"Pretending to be unwilling, but unable to hide his impatient eagerness to be off. Lamented his inability to move for want of means."

"You gave him money."

"Enough to start him in some kind of new life in Paris. I fear it will be spent on his pleasures, but further I cannot follow him."

"What are you going to do with yourself, Hugh? You hinted sometime ago in a letter that you thought of a return to your old life of wandering."

"The truth is I am like a fish out of water in Ardcurragh. I am out of touch with the sympathies

of those who interest me, and I have no inclination for the society of those who claim me as one of themselves. It is mere perverse humour that makes me wish to sit at the fire with Morogh O'Loghlin, and smoke and talk books with him, and that takes me to potter about the bog where the mysterious Mass is said, rather than attend wine and card parties with my neighbours approved by the law."

Mrs Delany looked a little troubled. She thought he avoided her eye while he spoke.

"I suppose," he went on, "I may be coming to a time of life when a man's tastes change, or when experience gives his preconceived or educated views a shake, and he feels an interest in seeing further into things he has despised, and putting things he has sworn by on their trial."

"It may be so. It is a phase I can imagine. Even the woman of thirty-five is often a more large-minded creature, though she may feel her wings clipped, than the girl who thinks she sees illimitably and feels her wings growing. I have always believed in liberality of judgment myself, and I am not sorry you should feel that change you describe, as an opening up of wider sympathies. But I hope you will cultivate the growth of new views anywhere rather than in the loneliness of Ardcurragh. You are too warm-blooded a man to live like a fish, in water or out of water as you

put it. As for haunting the Mass-bog and sitting at the fire with Morogh O'Loghlin, I have already warned you against both."

"I think I have proved myself sufficiently prudent to require no warnings. I avoid Castle O'Loghlin and smoke in solitude. As for the bog—I confess the religion of these people fascinates me—I mean the idea of it. I no longer want to hunt and hang. I would let them pray their own way, and even hope that God may hear them. They have taught me to believe that there is really a God, seeing their ardent devotion and unshakable fidelity. The religion of common-sense as I have known it, as I find it still among legalised religionists, dwindles before it like a candle before the sun. It is the shadow of the substance."

"I have heard men who have lived in the East speak in the same way of Buddhism, Mohammedanism."

"No, no. Contrast their women with——"

"Brona O'Loghlin?" said Mrs Delany. "Ah, Hugh, your prudence has not yet saved you. Don't turn Papist even for such a woman. You could only injure yourself as well as her. Forgive my bluntness. A minute ago I could not have believed that I should give you such a blow in the face."

"I am not hurt. I love Brona. It harms no

one that you should know it. But having said so much I have said everything, except that she has utterly rejected my appeal to be allowed to take her out of so sad a home and make her happy."

"It has come to that?"

"Some time ago. Latterly I have not seen her. As to turning Papist, I am not a man to pretend to worship my Creator while conscious of nothing in my heart but worship of a woman."

"No."

"It is simply that I am unfortunate in this, being a man who loves only one woman in his lifetime. Only for the barrier of proscription she would be my wife. Seeing her living faith I have ceased to wish to force her to abjure it. The change has come to me in absence from her, in days and nights of thought. It seems there is nothing for us but the sadness of separation. God made us man and woman for each other, but the dissension of creeds has parted us."

"I wish I had never asked her to come here!" said Mrs Delany impetuously.

"Don't regret it, dear lady," said Hugh, smiling. "We should have met on the bog. My fate was drawing me to Ardcurragh, and that movement you had nothing to do with. My good aunt is the

only person to blame besides myself for bringing me to Ireland. How scared she would be if she could hear me say it ! But do not be uneasy about me. I am happier in loving Brona, even in separation, than I could have even been without knowing her."

" You are a very strange man, Hugh," said Mrs Delany.

" Odd ? " said Hugh. " The world is full of odds and evens, and I suppose some of us are bound to take the odds."

" Well, go to the East and study Buddhism, and don't frighten me with your admiration of Papistry. Liberality can go a little too far. You know I am a friend of Catholics, and always take their part. But the Dean——"

" Is also liberal, but draws a line, and his line is yours."

" A safe and reasonable line. I have always wished that you could hear him often at St Werbergh's."

" Before or after going to the East ? "

" Now you are ceasing to be serious and beginning to tease. I am afraid you are bent on going back to Ardcurragh."

" I shall probably feel in a few days that I must go back and explain my conduct to Morogh O'Loghlin."

" Will not writing do ? "

" A cold means where so much may depend on warmth of assurance. Next to crimes, misunderstandings are, to my mind, the very worst evils of life."

XXII

THERE was some talk in the servants' hall about Turlough's sudden departure and prolonged absence; no notice given to his family, only a casual remark to Thady Quin that he was riding to Ardcurragh to spend the evening.

"That he may stay away!" said Thady Quin. "He has the two eyes cried out of the Marquee's head (and more's the pity, for there's no finer eyes in the world for their time of life), and Miss Brona wore as thin as a sally rod, and the masther starin' at the wall over the edge of his book, right at the misthress' picture (the light o' heaven to her!) as if he was sayin' to her, 'Why did you let the devil get a hoult of him, an' you at hand so convenient to put in a good word for him in the ear of God?'"

"I've heard there's a black sheep turnin' up in every old family some time or other," said Mrs MacCurtin apologetically.

"Not in mine," said Thady, "as old as any of

them, the Quins of Quin Abbey that was called for them and for Quinchy, the arbutus tree. Father Aengus explained it to me. His own Order lived in it before it was wrecked an' ruinated. What's older than the trees, barrin' the mountains ? "

" Bother you and your family ! " said Mrs MacCurtin. " What do I ever say about the MacCurtins ? I'm as old as yourself any day, Thady Quin."

" Faith then, ma'am, you haven't the appearance of it," said Thady gallantly.

" Don't try to be more of a fool than you look, my good man ! There's the Marquise ringin' for me ! Bother the bells in this house that's all broke ! "

" If they weren't Catholic bells they'd be ringing," said Thady. " But if all the Marquees in Christianity, bells or no bells, were on the stairs, I will say, Honor MacCurtin, that anybody seein' the pair of us this minute would give ye ten years younger by your looks than Thady Quin."

" I don't think Mr Turlough will be at home for dinner," said the Marquise as she gave her housekeeping orders for the day. " Mr Ingoldesby usually keeps him for a week or two when he goes to Ardcurragh."

" True for you, my lady," said Mrs MacCurtin, " and we needn't be unneighbourly in refusin' to

lend a loand of him. The best in the world can be done without, whiles——"

"He needs a change sometimes. 'Tis a dull life here for one accustomed to Paris," said the Marquise with a lift of her chin. "See that his bed is kept aired."

"Oh, and that he may not be sleepin' in the same bed for long enough to come!" muttered Honor MacCurtin to herself, as the lady turned away, holding her handsome white head unusually high for one who was ever genial and "homely" with the humblest of the retainers of the family.

"My lady, Mr MacDonogh's in the library with the master," said Thady meeting her in the hall.

Aideen breathed a sigh of relief that was almost contentment. Turlough returning to his usual ways, and MacDonogh coming on the scene, were two good happenings after weeks of misery. The bluff, good-natured MacDonogh was always welcome for his leal fidelity to the unfortunate, and for his optimistic cheerfulness which was like an invigorating breeze blowing the miasma out of stagnant places. A daring lawbreaker, and of a nature somewhat coarse in the grain, neither smuggling nor a plain-spoken word was a crime in his eyes, and those who had proved his worth were fain to take him at his own estimate, warming themselves at the glow of his very human virtues.

Aideen finished her household business, and arranged her dress for lunch with the accustomed care of a French woman, and took her way to the morning-room. She paused in the doorway with a sudden sense of shock. The pleasant looks of welcome always accorded to MacDonogh were not to be seen. Her brother sat with his head drooped, his hands grasping the arms of his chair. Brona stood behind him, gazing at MacDonogh with an expression in her eyes of fixed denial of belief in what he was saying. MacDonogh stood erect on the hearth, one arm extended, denouncing something or some one, an angry frown on his good-natured countenance.

"Turlough again!" she thought, with a rush of impulse to defend him at any cost.

Morogh and Brona took no notice of her entrance. MacDonogh bowed low over the hand she extended to him.

"This is a sad business, my lady. Ill luck to me to be the bearer of bad tidings."

"Is Turlough dead?" gasped Aideen.

MacDonogh almost smiled at the question. It would not have pained him much to announce such a catastrophe as the removal of the graceless young man from the possibility of further tormenting his family.

"As far as I know, your nephew's health is excellent," he said.

"Tell me what is wrong," said Aideen. "What are your evil tidings?"

"Evil enough, madam. It grieves me to tell of the treachery of one who has passed as the friend of this family. Ingoldesby of Ardcurragh has formally 'discovered on' Morogh O'Loghlin as a proscribed and obstinate Catholic, persisting in Popish practices, encouraging Romish superstitions, and known to harbour a priest. And as a reward for his zeal he is now registered as the legal owner of the O'Loghlin property of Burren, as well as the Ingoldesby property of Ardcurragh."

"Impossible!" said Aideen. "He is a gentleman and has shown much sympathy."

"More scoundrel he!" cried MacDonogh. "It is the talk of Dublin. The bribes offered by the Government are too big to be resisted. With two such properties he will be a magnate in the county. A title will probably be his reward."

"It has always been possible," said Aideen, "but not even Stodart—and Ingoldesby of all men."

"Nothing so likely as the unexpected," said MacDonogh grimly.

"It has not happened. It is not true," said Brona firmly, the denial in her face growing more intense as she flatly contradicted the ill-omened messenger.

"If it were not true I should not be here with an

alarming lie, my dear young lady. My anxiety has been to know what my friends intend to do, and to offer them any help in my power. Rumour says the robber intends throwing the two properties into one, rebuilding the Castle, and that he is promised an earldom for his services to the King."

"Falsehood every word of it!" said Brona, leaning her elbows on the back of her father's chair, her chin in her hands, and her eyes flashing indignation at MacDonogh.

"That's how he did it," was MacDonogh's thought, startled by the steeled expression of those tender eyes. "Wormed himself into the family confidence and the girl's affection, that he might learn all about their affairs and be able to sell the whole of them, root and branch—the ruffian!"

Morogh had not spoken. "Where is Turlough?" he said now, raising his bent head with an effort.

"Oh, he's in Dublin, or was when I saw him. Said he followed Ingoldesby to try to stop him. He may be in Paris now for all I know. Ingoldesby was shipping him off with money in his pocket, to get rid of a likely row from his interference."

Here the door opened, and Thady announced himself with a little modest cough.

"It's a word I have for the Marquee," he said. "If it's a thing that she's expecting Mr Turlough,

she needn't. Myself met Judkin on the road, and he says his master went off to Dublin a week ago for the extinguishment of Papishes, and Mr Turlough hot foot after him, and neither of them has come back. I didn't wait to hear more, for fear I would throttle the rascal for the grin he had."

"Thank you, Thady. That will do," said Morogh, and Thady retreated, standing outside in the hall and shaking his fist at the solid door, that had no chinks to enable him to learn something more of the misfortune that had fallen on the family.

"If this is true it must be borne," said Morogh. "We have lived in expectation of it. At the present moment all we have to do is to await more positive information. Some kind of official notice will be given to us. So far as we know," he added with a faint smile, "I am still, for to-day at least, O'Loghlin of Burren. Let us live accordingly, as if nothing had happened. Have you other business on hand, MacDonogh? You did not come down to Clare merely to being us this news."

"Only the usual business of the Brigade," said MacDonogh ruefully. "I am sorry, O'Loghlin, to be the first to rush this on you."

"No, my friend. You have prepared us for what may be to come. You will return to sup this evening. On your next visit we may not be able to offer you hospitality. You know the saying—

'seize life's glad moments when you can'—they are ever on the wing."

"To-night or to-morrow," said MacDonogh, and took his departure, downcast.

"Now, no tears, no repining!" said Morogh looking at his sister and daughter with calm eyes, "and leave me alone for a while to arrange this affair with God. Such an event does not arrive without His knowledge. If we are Christians and Catholics, we must be prepared to receive with welcome all that He sends."

"You are not natural, Morogh!" burst forth Aideen.

Brona knelt and buried her face in her father's shoulder for a moment.

"It's impossible, father. Don't believe it," she whispered. "Ingoldesby is our friend."

She kissed his hand and stood up.

"Come, Aideen!" she said; and the Marquise, half-suffocated with suppressed wrath and grief, followed her from the room.

They put their heads together over the wood fire in Aideen's chamber.

"Is this revenge for your rejection of Ingoldesby as a lover?" asked Aideen. "If you had conformed and married him, it would have been a pleasanter way for him to attain his object, though not so direct or so rapid."

"Hush, Aideen," said Brona. "Whoever has done this thing it is not Hugh Ingoldesby. As well tell me that the hills of Burren have taken a walk to Killarney, and that this moment our sky is void of them."

"Ah, you care for him! You love the traitor. Be loyal to your father, Brona!"

"Am I not loyal to him? Shall I not travel the world with him?" said Brona. "As for lovers, I have often told you that such are not for me. But I would be just. Can you not be loyal to anyone but Turlough?"

"What has Turlough to do with it?" asked Aideen angrily. "Why must he always be the scapegoat?"

Then they were both silent, remembering Turlough's threat of some months ago. Brona believed that her father had been remembering it when he sat so silent.

"It were better that any stranger should do this thing than that a Catholic should forswear his religion to do it," whispered Brona, "even if he were not the son of the man he wronged."

Aideen groaned. In her heart she feared that it was Turlough who had done it. So did Brona.

The two women could talk no more for their tears.

XXIII

SOME time later came the official announcement to Morogh O'Loghlin of the confiscation of his property in the county of Clare, which had been transferred to Hugh Ingoldesby of Ardcurragh in that county. Almost at the same moment came Turlough's letter, written on the eve of his sailing for France, denouncing Ingoldesby, and misrepresenting the circumstances of his own departure from home.

The letter was to Aideen. With all his callousness and audacity and his recklessness of truth, he had not the temerity to address a tissue of falsehood to his wronged father, whose strength of character inspired him with awe, while he despised his resignation and fortitude. He had gone (he said) to dine with Ingoldesby, and found him on the eve of starting for Dublin to discover on his Catholic neighbour, Morogh O'Loghlin. He had tried to dissuade him, but without avail. Ingoldesby had set out at daybreak on his journey, and Turlough, on finding him gone, had borrowed a horse from

Judkin to ride after him, to make another attempt to save the property. Before he could make any such attempt the deed was done.

"I had gained some money by cards," he wrote, "and I am getting away to Paris, where I must try to live by my wits as best I can. I don't know what is to become of you and father and Brona. Perhaps the new master may allow you to remain as tenants at will, unless he wants to pull down the old house and build, when perhaps he would grant you a hovel somewhere. When I think of his prosperity and style, and his cool superiority, and my own miserable existence, I could poison him! Perhaps you will forgive him, and dutifully accept him as your master since the law has given you to him; even Brona who didn't think enough of him to save us through his favour! This is his revenge."

Turlough's raving continued to much greater length. The truth of the gist of his communication might have been doubted but for the cold official document which accompanied and corresponded with it.

There followed at Castle O'Loghlin a spell of the silent endurance of undeserved affliction, known to many souls who suffer this life in large degree as purgatory. To Morogh this deprivation of all his earthly possessions was as a call to the inner courts of spirituality, and invitation to closer union with

his God. *I will draw thee with the cords of love.* These cords were cords of chastisement. With a severe countenance he set himself to consider what steps to take for the future of himself and his daughter, undaunted by the knowledge that indigence and penury awaited them.

"Don't be uneasy about me, father," said Brona. "If we must go to France, I can teach English in a convent school, and you and I can live happily together on a pittance. Aideen has her own little income. It will only be the pain of leaving the dear old place, the home, the hills, and the sea."

She did not venture to breathe her suspicion of the truth, that Turlough's treachery somehow lay at the base of their misfortune. Though her faith in Ingoldesby's honour and rectitude were akin to her trust in Providence, she was keenly aware that it was easier for Morogh to suffer from the avowed ill-will of a stranger than from a stab in the dark from his unworthy son. She spoke no more in defence of Hugh, even to Aideen whose occasional angry denunciations of the enemy sometimes seemed to her to cover the same unacknowledged suspicion as her own. And so the days went on, the cloud of suspense and uncertainty intensifying as no further intimation reached them of the intentions of the man who appeared to have so basely injured them.

"He will not come back to the country at present," said Aideen, "not till we are gone. He will be ashamed to look on the ruin he has made. Nor will he write. How could he find words to give a plausible reason for his conduct? Probably the next thing we shall hear will be an official warning to get out of our premises before a certain date."

To all this Brona said nothing. She was praying for Turlough. Asking forgiveness and amendment for her brother, she offered thanksgiving for Hugh, the friend whom she felt sure he had calumniated. But of this no word could be said, neither to her father to increase his sorrow perhaps beyond his endurance, nor to Aideen, whose scared eyes betrayed her fear of worse news to come, and her desperate determination to fight for one wrongdoer, no matter to what depths of degradation he might have sunk. The suspicion in the women's minds was turned to certainty in a moment by a sudden outburst of the feelings of Thady Quin. The Marquise found him stamping his feet with passion in the garden.

"Sure flesh an' blood can't bear it, my lady! Mrs MacCurtin says I'm to hold my tongue, an' I can't. Bad as he was I couldn't ha' believed it of Turlough—no more will I mister or master him. Hadn't we him here like a bird in a nest, and all of us makin' much of him?"

Aideen stood pale and speechless.

" I'm not lookin' at you, my lady, for I couldn't bear your eyes. I've spoke now, and on speakin' I'll go. It was Judkin that I met on the road ridin' one of his master's horses, an' he stops and says he :

" ' Hello ! when are yez goin' to clear out o' yonder and let decent law-abidin' people get their own ? My master's your master now,' says he ; an' can sell the whole of ye root an' branch, and a good riddance of Papishes out of the country ! And your own young rascal,' says he, ' that wanted it for himself done out of it for all his tricks. And well it is, for one that would rob his own father and make a beggar of him is no good for honest Protestants to have to do with.'

" ' What do you mean, you ruffian ? ' says I. ' Mr Turlough tried to stop your master's robberly grabbin '.'

" With that Judkin let a laugh and an oath that I couldn't repeat to your ladyship, and then he let another not so heavy—second-courselike, and says he :

" ' By King George, that's a good one ! Didn't he come beggin' the best horse to take him to Dublin Castle to discover on his father for a Papish, an' take the property for himself as an honest Protestant ? And not the first time he said it to

me, but the first my master heard of it. An' didn't Ingoldesby fill him with wine an' put him to bed, and go off at break of day an' take all for himself? And better it is for yez all to be at the heel of Ingoldesby than at the mercy of yon Turlough!'

"O good Lord, my lady, my blabbin' tongue has killed you!" cried Thady, breaking his narrative short, and rushing to support the stricken lady, who, after a fit of trembling, recovered her presence of mind, and gave him her hand with a piteous movement, allowing him to lead her to the house.

"I told her the truth, bad manners to me!" he cried to Brona, "and sure it had to be known, though it needn't have come out so suddint!"

Aideen had a headache that evening, and remained in her room. The truth, though hardly a surprise, had fallen on her as things silently known to the mind will strike at the heart when put into words and hurled unexpectedly from the unsparing tongue of another. It was agreed between her and Brona that nothing should be said to Morogh of this fresh sting added to the bitterness of the moment. He remained devoted to the effort of winding up his affairs, with a view to relinquishing the ownership of his house and lands as required by the mandate of the law. Only a week had elapsed since the blow had fallen, and to the family at Castle O'Loghlin it seemed to have been months in passing.

XXIV

HUGH was still detained in Dublin by formalities of the law, unwilling to write to Morogh O'Loghlin, seeing the difficulty of explaining his own action without informing him of the evil behaviour of his son. To Mrs Delany's entreaties that he would write a plain statement of his own act and intentions, and avoid the society of the O'Loghlins for some years to come, he persisted in replying that he felt urged and obliged to see Morogh and talk to him on the matter. The thought that they must meanwhile see him in the light of a treacherous friend was intolerable to him. When he said, "they," Mrs Delany knew that he was thinking of Brona.

"If you really want to benefit them, go away," said the sensible woman. "If you turn Papist or Brona marries you, remaining obstinate, you and they are all brought to ruin together."

"Your woman's imagination is at work now," said Hugh. "I am not likely to turn Papist, nor,

I grieve to say, is Brona likely to marry me. We are both as firm as the Burren Mountains."

"I hope you will remain so, and with a view to that, I again advise you to make your visit short, and go to Burmah or Egypt to learn more about Eastern religions. They will be a safer study for you at present than the follies of Popery."

"That is a less liberal speech than I ever heard from you before," said Hugh smiling.

"I want to save you, and I want to save Brona," said Mrs Delany warmly. "You are not the only person to find her a lovable creature. I can love without harming her."

"So can I," said Hugh boldly. But Mary Delany shook her head.

"As soon as you are out of the British Isles," she said, "I will have her here again, and try to give her a little peace and pleasure."

"She will not leave her father. Less likely now than ever," said Hugh.

"Then Morogh must come with her. The aunt will be bent on following Turlough to Paris."

"You speak as if I were going to turn them out," said Hugh.

"Perhaps you may have to do so. Who can tell how all this is going to end?"

"No, no," said Hugh. "I am seeing this matter solidly arranged. If I am owner of the O'Loghlin

property I can do what I please with it. And I please to leave Morogh O'Loghlin as undisturbed in it as though I had no existence."

"Then write and tell him so and depart to Egypt," said Mrs Delany.

"I intend to go and tell him so, and afterwards to live where I may find it convenient to live," said Hugh.

"You had better give it up," said Dr Delany when his wife complained to him. "As well try to turn the mill-stream by shaking a switch at it, as persuade Hugh Ingoldesby against his judgment."

"I want to save them both," said Mary Delany.

"You can't, my love, unless they want to save themselves. Every man has to dree his own weird, as the Scotch say, and every woman too. You have given good counsel, and have no further responsibility."

Meanwhile Hugh had received an audacious letter from Turlough in Paris, demanding more money.

"You have robbed my father of everything," he wrote, "and you are bound to make a provision for me, his heir. Please to let me have a remittance as soon as convenient to you."

Hugh threw the letter in the fire, and felt more than ever sure of the necessity for his visiting Clare, and of having a thorough understanding with Morogh O'Loghlin, let come what might.

XXV

INGOLDESBY was met at the last stage of his ride home by Judkin with the news that Colonel Slaughterhouse had arrived at Ardcurragh.

"He's anxious to congratulate you, sir. He didn't know the whole story, though he got a sketch of it at Ennis, till I told him how you got up early and circumvented Turlough."

"The less talk about it the better," said Hugh, and he felt that he did not want to be congratulated by Slaughterhouse on the covetousness of which he would think him guilty.

He found the Colonel watching for him on the doorsteps, and was greeted by him with loud laughter and an unusually ardent grip of the hand.

"Well done, Ingoldesby! Did your trick cleverly when you kept me out of the business you were doing for yourself!"

"No," said Ingoldesby.

"What?"

"You know I acted by surprise—to prevent the ruin of my friend by another. I need hardly say I do not intend to take advantage of the law to disturb the O'Loghlins."

"Hum. You tell me that? Dangerous, isn't it? What are you going to do with the priest?"

"Nothing."

"You leave all the nasty part of the affair to me? Don't you know that I can oblige you to act up to the spirit as well as the letter of the law?"

"If you can I know you won't," said Ingoldesby, smiling.

"You ought to take possession of your new property. Marry that charming Miss O'Loghlin, and let all keep house together."

"She would not accept me," said Hugh, trying to speak lightly.

"Then I shall try to persuade her, myself."

"She would not listen to you," said Hugh. "She is a nun, and her father's house is a convent to her. I intend that it shall remain so as long as it pleases her. For that purpose I have ventured to take an extreme step. I may be in her eyes a godless man, but I am not an inhuman monster."

"I'm afraid you would consider me as a monster if you knew all my views of this matter. I don't urge you to marry the girl, because I have a fancy for her myself. The old man can be provided for

in France, where all these rebelly gentry have plenty of friends. The rascal Turlough has been got rid of already, and his precious aunt is getting ready to follow him, lest a hair of his head should come to further grief. I don't know that I can suggest anything more to help you to clear off the encumbrances on your property."

Ingoldesby's eyes showed fire.

"Look here, Slaughterhouse!" he said, "your tone is flippant, but I believe you are at heart an honest and honourable soldier."

Slaughterhouse gave a short laugh.

"At all events," continued Hugh, "I have placed these people safely out of your reach. The law is hard, but it is not always intentionally wicked in the way of working, and I intend to make just such uses as I please of the property it has unjustly awarded me."

"Take care," said Slaughterhouse, "or you may find yourself under suspicion, even you, some of these days, and of all things beware of connecting yourself with the priest."

"Don't trouble about me," said Hugh; "come in and have some lunch. Try to believe that you are not half as bad a fellow as you amuse yourself by pretending to be."

Later in the day Hugh went to Castle O'Loghlin, bent on the interview which he felt to be necessary

for reassuring Morogh, and for the clearing of his own character in the eyes of all the family. Thady gave him black looks as he led him to his master's library.

"You have come to look on the ruin you have made," said the old servant's stern eyes as he threw open the door; after closing which Thady stood outside in the attitude of listening, though he could hear nothing.

"If it was a thing that there would be a row," he murmured, "I would not like to be out of hearin' of the first of it. The arms on me are strong yet, though Hugh Ingoldesby's a sight younger than Thady Quin; an' if my blood was up I wouldn't swear but I might punish him."

Morogh, writing at a table, turned his head when the visitor entered, and Hugh was struck by the change already made on him by sorrow and anxiety. But his dignity was equal to the occasion.

"How do you do, Mr Ingoldesby?" he said, rising and holding out his hand.

Hugh took the hand reverently and bent over it.

"You do not look on me as an enemy?" he said.

"No. Why should I?" said Morogh. "You acted according to the law. I have persisted in living lawlessly, and have no one to blame for what has happened but myself."

"All honour to the man who bravely lives by his conscience, Mr O'Loghlin. I came, sir, not to apologise for my act, for my motive needs no apology. You will believe, I am sure, that the claim I have put on your property is a mere form, which will make no difference whatever to you or yours. An unjust and irrational law has made it easy for any non-Catholic to rob one of your religion, and without knowing it you have lived in immediate danger of dispossession. To avoid such a catastrophe I have assumed the hateful attitude of a treacherous friend in order to ensure your safety. You will believe me." Morogh looked at him piercingly.

"I will not ask you if you are in earnest in making this statement," he said, "I cannot disbelieve you, though I confess I am amazed. I have always lived on friendly if not intimate terms with my neighbours of the county. I have not known that anyone among them harboured a desire to injure me. By a little prudence I have escaped too much attention even from the emissaries of persecution. It has surprised me that such a calamity as being ruled out by the law should have been prepared to drop down on me, and that it should have so fallen."

Hugh was struck by something in the old man's tone even more than his words, an undernote of inquiry—a suggestion of desire to know who the

enemy might be whose plot had been defeated by the effort of a man now before him, whom the law had made his master. He had felt unsure of whether or not Morogh was aware of Turlough's evil behaviour in the matter. Now, seeing that evidently the father knew nothing of the true source of his misfortune, he resolved that from him he should never hear of it.

" We walk in the dark, all of us, Mr O'Loghlin," he said. " We are surrounded with the unknown and unguessed. Even in the full noonday light what we see is not always what we are looking at. All we can do is to help each other to the best of our ability—my intention towards you,—and to be charitably-minded towards others, which I trust is your own intention with regard to me."

" I believe in you and I trust you," said Morogh. "An hour ago I could not have credited you with so much unselfish devotion to me and mine, who must appear mere abject outcasts in your eyes and in the eyes of your world. But I will ask you to believe me also when I say that at my age a man must take all blows as not from unkind fate, but from the hand of God, Who knows by what strokes He means to hammer us best into the shape in which He intends us to leave this world. It matters little to me after all where I may have to spend the last years of my probation before He calls

me into His presence. Nothing is of consequence except His countenance. St Francis says: 'What a man is in the Eye of God, that he is and no more.'"

The listener was silent. For a moment Morogh seemed to have forgotten his presence. When the rapt look passed off his face (noted with a certain half-shame as if something sacred were intruded upon, by Hugh), he said gently:

"You have others to care for. You have children, Mr O'Loghlin."

"They, too, have the hill to climb," said Morogh. "My daughter, who is my chief care, will always have harbour with her aunt, or failing that, in a convent. My son——"

Hugh held his breath.

"My son had little prospect here. France suits him better. He has gone there, and I shall not allow him to misunderstand your benevolence in protecting us."

"Well, sir," said Hugh, cheerfully, "I am glad you are assured that no changes are to be feared because of a formality which an unreasonable law has required. It is a law that may not always stand. In the meantime rest satisfied that Providence does not mean to deal you the particular blow that was threatening you, and that you are to remain securely fixed in your home."

"Thank you; I am indeed grateful, though I have not said enough of that."

The two men stood up and clasped hands; and then Ingoldesby took his leave. He had hoped to catch a glimpse of Brona, but she was nowhere to be seen, and he went on, comforting himself with the reflection that she would soon learn the meaning of his conduct and believe in his determination to protect her father, even if she had not put a blind faith in him before. As he rode on he slacked his rein and let his thoughts drift back to the old man, Morogh, and his courage in adversity. Not alone courage, he admitted, but a something indefinable which defied ill-fortune and made capital out of destitution.

"Where do these Catholics get their strength to endure—and not alone that, but their absolute callousness to the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune? How and why is it that what appears folly to me and crime to Slaughterhouse is to them illimitable wisdom? The gate closed on them by the law opening on the other side to fields of Asphodel basking in the smile of God! Had I been the treacherous friend condemned by the eyes of the old servant, who admitted me as if I were the ancient dragon, and he a powerless Michael the Archangel, if I were that traitor Brona would simply exchange her mountains and cliffs for the walls of

a convent; her prayers would go on ascending, and the name of Hugh Ingoldesby would not be forgotten in those prayers. She, in her youth, values this world as little as does her father in his advancing years. With her aunt's friends and connections, and her own beauty, Paris would accept her as one of its queens, and yet she would rather scrub convent floors, or gather flowers to crown a statue of her heavenly Mother, than stoop to pick up the laurels that Parisian society would throw at her feet. Aye, and teach the little children to hate sin and bless Supreme Goodness in their Maker! Why, I wonder, was I not born with this faith, that I might have lived with her, were it only in a garret? Why, why, and why? Life is one endless 'why' to me. But these Catholics will have nothing of such questioning. To them all life is a path that, however tortuous, will one day, not very distant, end in God."

He shook off his thoughts with a shake of his rein, and reached his house feeling for the moment like his usual self, and pleased with his morning's work for many reasons, one of which was that the result of it would certainly make for his own future peace of mind.

XXVI

HUGH now tried to settle down to some kind of practical living at Ardcurragh. He must find occupation and make his existence of use to his fellow-creatures; feeling sure that his presence as well as his name was necessary for the continued protection of Morogh, he resolved to stay in his own place, keeping watch. Slaughterhouse was not by nature altogether cruel, but bribes were large and temptation was strong, and the men under his leadership were not always manageable. On the morning after his visit to Morogh O'Loghlin, he set his mind to consider how best he might spend his time. A ride over his property, with eyes open to facts, showed him that a good deal could be done to improve the condition of the most wretched of the poor. Hovels could be made more habitable, land more productive, industry encouraged, and the materials for it provided or sought for. Judkin totally disagreed with him on these points.

"What have you got to do with them, sir, but

to let the heathens die there? It's what the law and the King lays down for them. You're Ingoldesby of Ardcurragh, but you can't be counted better than the law and the King. Everything done to help them is flyin' in the face of civilisation and the Bible."

Ingoldesby laughed.

"How much of the much-maligned Bible did you ever know, Judkin?"

"I learned my taxes when I was at school, sir, and I got a prize for them, and I know a lot of them yet."

"For instance."

"You take me up a little short, sir." Judkin cleared his throat, coughed, and ransacked his memory.

"Here it is, sir! 'That their lands might be given up to desolation and to perpetual hissing: as a burning wind will I scatter them before the enemy.'"

"Jeremias!" said Ingoldesby.

"Who was he, sir? I don't remember much about him, only the name, but I know he was cursed for a heathen idolater."

"I'll buy you a new Bible, Judkin, if you will read a little more of it."

"Well, sir, I'm not a man for books, and I didn't know you were a gentleman to hold much by that one."

"I hold by knowing something of what I talk about," said Ingoldesby, wincing at his own words; for were they true?

Ingoldesby proceeded with his investigations and his plans, and Judkin wondered whether he ought not to give notice to the authorities that his master was either going mad or turning traitor. But innate fidelity restrained and kept him steady. To Slaughterhouse he would have sworn that the owner of Ardcurragh was as big a persecutor for the King's sake (if he had the opportunity) as any in the country. And the curious obverse of the situation was that the people who were getting a chance of benefit, distrusted the hand extended to them as the hand of the man who had discovered on and grabbed from the O'Loghlin.

As the spring days lengthened Hugh thus made occupation for them abroad, and also found it at home. A much-neglected library engaged his attention. The books that were there and the books that were not there caused him to wonder. He was aware that his forefathers had not been bookish people, and it was with some pleasure that he set about supplying wants and filling gaps, making out lists to be sent to booksellers and publishers. In the midst of this work he was interrupted one morning by an intimation that the winter rain had come through the roof to the ceiling of part of the

attic story of the house, and that probably slates were off, but that he had better come up and see. He went and he saw. There was a slight drip in the highest passage, and he gave orders at once for workmen to be summoned from Ennis to make the necessary repairs. And then a few words were said by one of the servants, such words as, utterly common-sounding in themselves, are destined to become as keynotes of a new strange music in a soul.

"The worst spot of all is in the Papist's room, sir."

"Where is the Papist's room?" asked Hugh, surprised.

"Oh, sir, the Papist lady that was shut up there long ago," said the old housekeeper, who had been in the house as caretaker for many years.

"I never heard of her," said Hugh.

"I suppose not, sir. Miss Ingoldesby wouldn't think of telling it to you. But she bid me leave the room just as it was, for a curiosity. Nothing in it was worth making use of in any other part of the house, sir."

"Who was the lady, and how did she come to be here?" asked Hugh.

"She was a friend of your good mother in her young days, sir; that was in England, and she went into one of their convents there and was a nun. And when the Papists were hunted and the

nuns turned out, the lady was given a hiding-place here by your father and mother, who were then young married people and were sorry for the unfortunate."

"What became of her afterwards?" asked Hugh.

"She got away to France, and I believe she lived the rest of her life in one of their convents. The times were even harder on Papists then than they are now."

"Let me see the room," said Ingoldesby.

The housekeeper led the way down a narrow passage, and threw open a door at the end of it, and Hugh went in. It was a small room under the eaves, an attic room, sparely furnished like the cell of a nun.

"Your good mother had a great pity for her, sir, and she never disturbed anything she left here, Papist or not, for she said there's no harm in anybody's prayers, and that poor creature sure enough was always praying."

Hugh was strangely affected by the story, also by the knowledge that its happening had been in his house, and that he had never heard of it. Stranger still was the faint stirring of memory, suggesting now that in his childhood he had caught some whisper of the tale. His mother evidently had not cherished the absolute hatred of Papistry which

perhaps was due in himself to the early instruction of Miss Jacquetta Ingoldesby.

"It is very interesting," he said to the old housekeeper, and dismissed her. But he lingered some time longer in the room, examining everything that was to be found in it. If he had never known Brona there would have been little charm for him in such a place, but the aspect of the room and the character of the woman who had lived in it forced him to think of one he knew who was her sister in faith. He imagined that in such a room and with such surroundings Brona was living and praying in Castle O'Loghlin, and he felt a rush of heart warmth towards his dead mother for her charity in harbouring the hunted soul whose only crime was her "praying," her invincible fidelity to her own conception of God and of what He required of her. A small bedstead, a desk-table, a chair, and a few shelves were all the furniture of this cell of the spirit of an anchorite. On the highest shelf, pushed far back out of sight against the wall, he found a few books in worn leather bindings, two in Latin, the other in French; and the books being much in his mind at the moment, he gathered them up and took them with him to the library.

"How did she happen to forget her books?" he thought as he wiped the dust off them and opened them. "They may now prove an interesting

addition to my store as samples of old Catholic literature."

The first he examined was a book in two small volumes, the text crude and old-fashioned, the pages stiff and yellow. The title was *The Living Flame of Love,* and the author was St John of the Cross. Neither the author nor his book had ever been heard of by Ingoldesby. Who was the man? A note deciphered with difficulty told that he was a Spanish Carmelite priest, a laborious server of God who lived in the sixteenth century. What had he to say?

"The Living Flame of Love" was the title of a poem of only four stanzas, read eagerly now by Hugh, so attractive were the mystical words to him who knew nothing of any love that was not merely natural to the human heart of man.

> O Living Flame of Love
> That woundest tenderly
> My soul in its inmost depth!
> As Thou art no longer grievous
> Perfect Thy work, if it be Thy will.
> Break the web of this sweet encounter.

Hugh was startled. Was not this the human love of which he himself had knowledge? What had the old sixteenth-century priest to do with it? He read and re-read, "*Thou art no longer grievous.*"

That were sweet indeed if one could take it as one's own experience.

After some pondering he passed to the second stanza.

O sweet burn !
O delicious wound !
O tender hand ! O gentle touch !
Savouring of everlasting life,
And paying the whole debt.
By slaying Thou hast changed death into life.

" Everlasting life ! Death into life ! " Then it was the love-song of a Catholic to his God and Redeemer ! Further :

O lamps of fire
In the splendour of which
The deep caverns of sense,
Dim and dark,
With unwonted brightness,
Give light and warmth together to their Beloved.

How gently and how lovingly
Thou wakest in my bosom,
Where alone Thou secretly dwellest ;
And in Thy sweet breathing
Full of grace and glory,
How tenderly Thou fillest me with Thy love.

Ingoldesby put his finger in the book to mark the place, and sat staring at nothing, or rather at something he could not see. This raving mysticism —what did it mean ? Did this strange song give

the key to the enigma of the Catholic's indifference to material goods of this world, his absorption in things to come in the life eternal? Was this the love that held Brona in bondage, which neither law nor loss could break, of which human love could not ease the durance, not effect the ransom. The words

As Thou art no longer grievous

recalled Morogh's saying that the pains and injuries and losses of life no longer troubled him. He was travelling fast towards the great Elsewhere, in which abode that mighty all-sufficient Love of the enraptured saint and poet.

Reading further into the book he found that it was all written in explanation of this curious mystical song of the bond between earth and heaven, time and eternity, the created heart of man and the Being creating it. For some hours he continued this novel and strange study, more and more amazed and enthralled by the fervour of the writer of the little brown book, and his incredible realisation of spiritual things beyond the ken of thoughtless man.

Examining the other volumes he found the name of St Thomas Aquinas and St Augustine on the title-page. From one to another he turned, reading a little, and assured that he must read the whole. So the night passed like one hour, and seeing the

spring dawn looking in at the window he put the books aside and threw open the sash to gaze at the waking earth and the opening heavens, with a vague unacknowledged feeling that some kind of a spiritual light was at the dawn in his soul. A breeze lifted his hair and stirred the tree-tops. At the same moment a few clear notes of the mysterious bell hid in the wood came on the wind and swung across his ear. Was it a warning or a summons? It sounded like an echo of the eon,

O living flame of love.

He shook off his fancies and tried to call himself a fool for dwelling on the dreams of a possible madman. But the words of the poet, as they came back again and again, were all too wise and sweet to savour of anything but sanity.

XXVII

MOROGH'S interview with the supposed grabber of the property had brought relief to troubled souls at Castle O'Loghlin. Morogh was unutterably thankful that his son was innocent of the evil threatened by him in his sullen mood, and that heaven had sent a protector from enemies unknown and unexpected. The others of the household who knew exactly all that had happened were glad of Ingoldesby's silence as to Turlough, which left the father in ignorance of the ingrate's guilt. There was also for all the return of peace occasioned by the absence of the restless spirit whose angry discontent had embittered their days, and for Brona there was over and above a secret joy in the fact that her undoubting trust in the good faith of Ingoldesby had been justified, and that the disinterested generosity of his conduct had been made evident to all. Before many days this peace was broken for Aideen by her intense desire to know

what had become of Turlough, and she resolved to follow him to Paris.

"I know where to look for him," she said, "and I will save him from destruction."

No one tried to prevent her. Brona knew that if anyone could save her brother it would be Aideen, who could give him a little money along with her good advice. And Morogh said:

"God bless your motherly solicitude, my sister. Now that he is free from a haunting temptation it may be possible for you to influence him."

"Yes," said Aideen cheerfully, ignoring her better knowledge; and she went on her lonely journey with all a mother's forlorn hopes and cruel fears pent in her adoring heart.

She had not been long gone when MacDonogh came again to Castle O'Loghlin, returning from his recruiting visitation of the county. He arrived one morning, blowing wrath from his nostrils, and strode into the library where Morogh sat reading.

"So we wronged a good neighbour," he said, "instead of putting the saddle on the right horse! I always suspected the rascal. We may thank heaven that Ingoldesby's wine put him under the table, and that Ingoldesby's horse did not let the grass grow under his feet till he landed his master in Dublin Castle yard."

Morogh's face had turned white.

"What do you mean, MacDonogh?" he asked.

"Mean? Do you think that if Turlough had had his will you or I would be sitting here this morning. You would have had a Protestant O'Loghlin hunting the Papists out of his house, and handing over the priest to be shot at the altar. That's what."

"Cease hinting, and tell me the truth of what happened," said Morogh, controlling his trembling voice and limbs.

"I thought you knew all the particulars," said MacDonogh; "would be the first to hear them. You expected it long ago. Long threatening came at last. But do you tell me that Ingoldesby took the action on himself? Oh, good Lord, Morogh, have I hurt you? How could I——"

Morogh had risen up, staggered, and fell forward.

MacDonogh stretched him on the floor, and ran to the door shouting for Thady.

"Oh, then the troubles has murdered him at last!" cried Thady in tears, and big MacDonogh sobbed like a baby as they hung over the old man, applying restoratives. The worst was feared, but after some time Morogh recovered from what proved to have been a dangerous fainting fit, and was carried to bed, where Brona and Father Aengus watched beside him. The doctor from Ennis, who knew the story of the "discovery"

and the cause of the illness, was sympathetic with Brona.

"The heart is weak," he said, "and you must try to save him from anxieties and shocks. He will recover from this attack, but you will have him in a weaker state of health. Let him not leave this room till the season is more advanced and the weather milder, and cheer and amuse him as much as possible."

Brona needed no urging to careful nursing. While her father's life was in danger, all other fears and sorrows seemed to grow shadowy and unreal. And of earthly comfort there was none except the genuineness of the friendship of Ingoldesby. There was a little satisfaction in the absence of Aideen, and the feeling that if anything could be done to save Turlough from himself, Aideen was on the spot, and was the person to do it.

As days went on Morogh gained a little return of strength, and became more like himself. Once he spoke of Turlough, and then mentioned him no more.

"We must forgive him," he said, "and leave him to God and to Aideen. You and I can do nothing."

Brona felt with a chill dread that the patient was turning his face more and more away from this world, and directing it towards the mysterious East where the sun of his hope was rising. Father

Aengus spent many an hour alone with him, while the girl took some rest or breathed the open air, hours in which no one might hear the conversation that passed except God and the angels in waiting. Ingoldesby learned of the illness of O'Loghlin from MacDonogh, who stopped him on the road to pour out his thanks for the protection given to O'Loghlin, to confess his own mistaken judgment, and to denounce his rashness in rushing a bitter truth on the man who had been saved from such knowledge by his own household.

"I must go back to France now," he said, "and my only consolation in leaving these afflicted friends is that you have taken them under your protection."

"May I come to see Mr O'Loghlin? Is he permitted a visitor?" asked Hugh.

"I believe he will be glad to see you," said MacDonogh. "He has absolute trust in you."

Hugh had many reasons for accepting the invitation to visit the house as a friend. He wanted to see Brona. It seemed a lifetime since he had looked on her face or heard her voice. Not since the evening when he fled in disgust from the presence of the friar who had talked to him like a madman on the moor, had he approached her. He had after that sought the society of sensible persons, and tried to forget the follies of Papists and the fatal bewitch-

ment of the woman he loved. He had persuaded himself that he cared for her no more, and that he wished her to forget him. Since then he had mixed in the society of people of common-sense, talked with the worldly wise, and listened to condemnation by good men and women of the extravagances of Popish idolatry. Yet he had not found entire satisfaction in the hearing of it. He had set himself to admire charming girls, whose natural gaiety of heart was not overcast by too much thoughtfulness or by supernatural dreams, and still his mind had persisted in swinging back to Brona as the one woman to be revered and adored by him, despite her provoking conscientious obstinacy. Then, when he still held long absence as the one plank to save him and her from disaster, had come the evil movement of Turlough to throw him into her life again by obliging him to act as her champion. He wanted to see her now if only to assure her of his unabated friendship, to know from her that she believed in his worthiness of trust, and to see with his own eyes how she had borne the heavy blows that must have tortured her heart. There had also been in his mind for some days past a latent desire to tell her of his discovery of the little brown books in the Papist's room at Ardcurragh, to know if she was familiar with such books, and to hear her opinion of them. With a feeling that fate, or

whatever else men may call the inevitable force that drives them into grooves or leads them by strange paths where it will, was again fingering his bridle-rein, he rode to pay yet one more visit to Castle O'Loghlin.

XXVIII

HUGH was shown into the library. The place had a deserted look; Morogh's chair empty, books all in their places, no litter about, the writing-table pushed aside as if no longer in use.

"The master does be always in his own room now, sir," said Thady, deferential and communicative to mark the change in his feelings towards Ingoldesby, who on his last appearance had been received as a traitor, but was now to be accepted as a friend.

"And Miss Brona does be always with him there, and the Marquee has gone to France. But I will tell Miss O'Loghlin that you are here, sir."

"What would he say if he knew the priest was with the master this blessed minute?" said Thady as he went up the stairs. "Friend and all as they say he is, sure don't I know the whole of us is in Ingoldesby's power? To keep us where we are or to throw us out of the windows as the humour takes him!"

Brona met him with a simple and friendly

welcome. There was no embarrassment in her manner to remind him of other meetings and partings. She had put all that out of mind among the dead things that have no resurrection. The value of this man's loyalty to her father was all that she allowed herself to realise concerning him, when she gave him her hand and frankly thanked him for coming to a house of sorrow and sickness.

"I wanted to hear from your own lips that you have understood my action, and to get your promise that you will always trust me," said Hugh.

"We trust you. If proof of your friendship were needed, you gave it by your screening my unhappy brother to save my father the worst of the blow. He knows all now," said Brona.

"Is he willing to see me? If not I will come again," said Hugh, almost hoping that he might spend all the hour of his visit alone with Brona.

"Father Aengus is with him," she said. "I tell you frankly because I trust you for him, as for ourselves."

"As this is now supposed to be my house he is safe within its walls, though outside of them I have no more power to protect him," said Hugh. "I would wish to warn him of this. I was rude to him a few months ago when I met him on the moor."

"He will not remember it, nor will it be of any use to warn him. Father Aengus takes heed of

neither insults nor injuries, nor of warnings. He will go on doing his duty till God has no more work for him to do."

Hugh drew a book from his pocket.

" This," he said, " I found in a room in my house which I hear has been known as the Papist's room."

" I have heard of the room and its story," said Brona.

" This book contains a poem which I have been poring over ever since I found it. I want you to explain its meaning to me."

" St John of the Cross ! " cried Brona in surprise.

" Do you know him ? Here are two closely-printed books in one volume. Their titles have affected me strangely : *The Dark Night of the Soul,* and *The Living Flame of Love.* I want to know more about them. You can tell me."

" What can I tell you of a Saint and his teaching and his experiences ? If you have read his works and they have told you nothing, how can I hope to explain them ? " said Brona.

" You know the poems ? "

" Yes."

" Do you understand them ? "

" They are not difficult to understand for one who believes in a supremely loving and lovable God. Our approach to Him may be through a

dark and dreadful night—when we reach Him He is the Living Flame of Love."

"I have gathered that in this is the pith of the Catholics' faith," said Hugh.

A light flashed on him from Brona's eyes.

"Don't mistake me," Hugh hastened to say. "You must not suppose that my interest in what I have read has been more than an intellectual apprehension of the workings of a very beautiful mind. But I am rid of my suspicion of idolatry—for which I ask forgiveness of your tolerance and patience."

"I knew you were suffering from ignorance," said Brona, "and for all who suffer we are bound to have compassion."

"I must tell you how these poems affected me," said Hugh. "First I was caught in the Living Flame —a sudden flash of light dazzled me. But it soon went out; and I turned to the Dark Night, which seemed more symbolic of my rayless state. 'If I have a soul it is truly existing in darkness,' I thought.

In a dark night
With anxious love inflamed
O happy lot!
Forth unobserved I went,
My house being now at rest.

This, with the exception of the one line 'O happy lot!' seemed to be for me. Going further in the

strange poem, I was soon lost in its mysticism. Yet here and there were words that applied to me forcibly. I could not resist their fascination. I altered and substituted words for myself. For 'In that happy night' I read,

> In that lonely night
> In secret seen of none,
> Seeing naught myself,
> Without other light or guide
> Save that which in my heart was burning.

"What it means I know not, but something of a strange light has been burning in my heart ever since. I return to the poem again and again, uncertain whether to take John of the Cross as a mystic poet, or as one inspired—what you call a saint."

"I have no such uncertainty," said Brona smiling, "but that does not affect you. I can only advise you to read further and ponder more deeply."

"I want help. Another mind to show me the way and to point out meanings that I fail to see."

"You have only to read the poems," said Brona. "The books were written to explain their meaning. If you need more light upon them Father Aengus——"

Hugh shrank from the thought of seeking aid from the priest he had scorned. Brona saw it.

"I will not urge you into danger," she said. "This fancy of yours may not be more than just a fancy. You may have already endangered yourself by your sympathy with us. Even these books in your house, in your hands, may do you harm. Leave them with me. I will keep them in a safe place—with other books of the kind in the priest's cell."

"No," said Hugh, "I will keep them and study them as you bid me."

And then the door opened, and Thady announced that the master was ready to receive Mr Ingoldesby. Hugh returned the book to his pocket, and they went together to Morogh's room.

XXIX

HUGH was gone, and Brona was in her room on her knees before the crucifix. "*O happy lot!*" These were the words of the stanza of the poem of the Dark Night that Hugh was not able to take as applying to himself. Was he yet to read the riddle? Might he not discover what was meant by that happy lot, and make it his own? He was a resolute man, and if he found that he was called to the faith of the proscribed, he would walk to meet his worldly ruin. Such ruin would, of course, include that of Morogh O'Loghlin, but her father's tent was already pitched in heaven, and she herself was of no account, except in as far as she could minister to the needs and the comfort of his remaining years. God would provide a harbour for them. But Hugh Ingoldesby, the young man with his life to live, the friend who had protected them, was he to lose everything in the world through his generous sympathy with the oppressed?

If he had never met her, he would have gone on

conscientiously disbelieving in the creed condemned by his church (if he had a church), by what he called common-sense, and by the State. He was not accountable for invincible ignorance. And, now, might not his irresponsible attitude change to one of unbelief no longer irresponsible? A mere doubt, while effecting his worldly overthrow, might fail to bring him actual conviction of the truth of the faith that was so difficult to him? Thus she would have on one side ruined him, and on the other only brought him into danger.

Tortured by these thoughts, Brona felt that the cup of her sorrow was indeed filled to the brim. The peace and sweetness preached by the Saint of the Cross, out of his own experience, was far from her. At the moment the Living Flame seemed to give her no light, and the shadows of the dark night were upon her. Memory brought to her mind familiar words of the Saint, of which she had tried to make a motto for her life.

My soul is detached
From everything created,
And raised above itself
Into a life delicious,
Of God alone supported.
And therefore I will say,
That what I most esteem
Is that my soul is now
Without support, and with support.

All that had been done in her soul seemed now undone. Could she say,

God alone and I
God alone in my spirit to enlighten it,
God alone in my acts to sanctify them,
God alone in my heart to possess it ?

Turning over the pages of the book, looking for some help, she fastened on the Saint's explanation of the words, " In darkness and concealment," a line in one of the poems which had fascinated Hugh, and she tried to apply the lesson to her own heart in the silent suffering which her tongue could confide to no one.

" When God visits the soul Himself the words of the stanza are then true, for in perfect darkness, hidden from the enemy, it receives at such times the spiritual graces of God. . . . A work wrought in the dark, in the hiding-place, wherein the soul is confirmed more and more by love ; and therefore the soul sings

In darkness and concealment."

Had the promised grace been now denied her, so that her faith seemed gone ? And had she in darkness and concealment been only working the undoing of the man who loved her ? She had prayed for him, and was his uncertainty of mind the answer to her prayers ? Was she now doubting

Then the terror left Brona, and her prayers were once more sweet with the confidence that had been her joy during many months of the past, when Hugh appeared to have forgotten her, making himself happy with other friends, and when she had believed herself separated from him for ever, except by spiritual links of the forging of God which neither time nor distance would ever have power to weaken. Her face was bright, and her voice and words sweet, as she came and went in her father's sick-room. She found him serenely at peace, thanking God for Ingoldesby's protection, and making no complaint of the blow dealt him by his unworthy son, the knowledge of whose heartlessness was draining the life from his own heart. Turlough's name was not mentioned between them, though a letter from Aideen passed from one to the other, in which she told of her efforts to find her nephew and of the success which had brought her little comfort.

XXX

As the summer approached and advanced, Ingoldesby continued in the way of life he had marked out for himself, busy with improvements on his estate, such as required long rides and the thinking out of plans, with the interviewing of experienced workers necessary for the realising of his own tentative ideas. A visit to Castle O'Loghlin often filled the afternoon. Morogh was now able to come down to the library, and sat in his old chair by his writing-table at the window overlooking the sea, appearing not so much like the shadow of himself as like the spirit within him made more visible by the wasting of its material wrappings. Brona was always found near him, to read or to talk as he might desire. Hugh never saw her alone, and he had no opportunity of making further confidences to her. This was as Brona's resolution had arranged it. Her fear of injuring him was stronger than her desire to know the working of his mind on certain subjects of which he had given

her a hint, and which might end either in his triumph or his undoing.

She longed to know whether the old books found concealed in the high room of his house had been thrown aside as full of incomprehensible extravagances, or had maintained their fascination, and led him on by the new light that had shone on him momentarily. Had the light come again, or had it gone out and left him in a deeper darkness? He talked cheerfully to her father about his doings on his lands, in a manner that caught the old man's attention, and suggested new interests in life were it only for an hour. She herself was all alive to these doings of Ingoldesby, both for his own sake and for the poor who had her most tender compassion. Religion was never touched upon lest difference of views should lead to dissension, marring to peace and to that harmony so necessary to Christian charity.

Brona planned her walks at hours when she knew that Hugh's self-appointed duties had taken him far from home in a quite opposite direction from the paths she selected for her own rambles. One morning when she believed him to be at least five miles away, she saw a figure on horseback coming towards her over the brow of a hill, and for a moment thought it might be Hugh. Coming nearer, however, the rider sprang from his horse, and she

perceived that it was Colonel Slaughterhouse who was walking to meet her. He threw his reins to the servant who followed him, and bade him take the horses to Ardcurragh, as he intended to see Miss O'Loghlin safely back to Castle O'Loghlin. Brona shrank from his greetings, but quickly took pains to conceal her dislike of this man whom she had last seen on the occasion of his search visit to her father's house, and whose bold notice of herself had given her anything but pleasure. His manner now was respectful, if a little too friendly.

"I am delighted to see you, Miss O'Loghlin," he said, "if only to congratulate you on being safe from such intrusions as that which first gave me the occasion of making your acquaintance. As you are now under the protection of Mr Ingoldesby, I have no longer the power to annoy you. That I ever had the will to do so, I hope you will believe——"

"Certainly," said Brona, "I know the law, and that you are bound by your duty. We have long been accustomed to live in fear of the law. Even now we live only at the sufferance of a good neighbour. But it is kind of you to let us know that you wish us well."

"Miss O'Loghlin, I wish more than that," said Slaughterhouse. "I wish to make your welfare one with my own."

Brona felt a thrill of dread. What did this speech portend? Was one danger escaped only that another might be encountered?

"Pray do not be uneasy about us," she said. "As you say, we are safe for the present, and my father is enjoying a spell of peace."

"But will it last?" persisted Slaughterhouse. "Ingoldesby is a good fellow, but human nature is human nature, and after all if he should change his mind you are at his mercy."

"Even so," said Brona, "but I think he will not change. Meanwhile let us live our lives in some kind of security, even if it be only short or imaginary."

"I would make it real and lasting," said the Colonel. "I am a blunt soldier, Miss O'Loghlin, "but I must beg you to give me a hearing. Marry me, and I engage that you shall have no further trouble."

"You mean to be very good, Colonel Slaughterhouse," said Brona, "and I am grateful for your thought about me. But what you ask me to do is impossible. I have promised to remain with my father."

"I will take care of your father, with you, as no other can take care of him. Ingoldesby means well, but his power is not sufficient. On several accounts he is likely to fall under suspicion himself."

"I hope not," said Brona. "That would be a sad result of his protection of us. And you, sir, if

protecting the oppressed brings suspicion on the protector, then why should you subject yourself to a like misfortune ? "

" Mine is a different position from Ingoldesby's. I am employed and trusted by the authorities. I have friends in power. As my wife you may keep your own religion without fear of harm to anyone. I shall be able to arrange for that. Marriage with any other Protestant would be the ruin of your husband, unless you were to conform within a year. I should cease to admire you if I thought you could be induced to forswear your conscience. I can promise you freedom in this as in every other matter of importance. I have wealth enough to ensure you indulgence of all the pleasures you have had to forgo in this detestable country. You shall live anywhere you please."

Brona began to feel a dread of the urgency of the man's manner, and the masterful haste with which he continued to put before her the advantages of her consent to his wooing.

" You are very good, but indeed it cannot be," she kept repeating at each pause in his argument, and began to walk more quickly, hoping to reach home and escape from him before she lost patience and provoked him to anger by betraying her dislike of him. He showed more forbearance, however, than she had expected.

"I see I have startled you," he said at last. "I meant to have approached you more delicately, but, as I have said, I am a blunt soldier, and the temptation of an unlooked-for opportunity has been too much for me. I will not accept your denial now. I beg you to consider all I have said, and at some future time to give me another hearing. I will now venture to present myself to your excellent father, merely to congratulate him on his return to health, and on his present position of some degree of security."

Brona did not dare to refuse the visit to her father, putting his safety before all feelings of her own, not knowing what evils might be the consequence of defiance of this man who claimed to have power which her ignorance could not measure or estimate.

"O good Lord! here's Slaughterhouse! Where's the priest?" said Thady as he saw his young mistress approaching the house with her strange escort.

"The Father's in his cell safe enough," said Mrs MacCurtin, "and sure let him come. He can't do harm to us now; we all belong to Ingoldesby!"

"O wirra!" said Thady, "it's myself that doesn't believe in e'er a mother's son o' them all, that would burn the whole of us one by one, and laugh at the fun of it."

"Go and open the door to him, an' don't be a

fool," said Mrs MacCurtin, "and look as glad to see him as if he was Michael the Archangel instead of Satan himself."

Thady obeyed this order to the best of his ability, and that evening in the servants' quarters told how he had perceived that Slaughterhouse had jaws like a tiger and the eyes of a wolf, which was drawing largely on his imagination, seeing that the Colonel was rather a fine-looking soldier, and that Thady had never seen in the flesh either wolf or tiger.

The Colonel approached Morogh with an assumption of deference and sympathy, and was received with such gentlemanly courtesy as made him feel that his visit was understood to be merely a graceful act expressive of conciliation. Brona gave her father no hint of his embarrassing proposals to herself. On this, as on many other disturbing matters, she was bound to be silent, and her father rested in the belief that amiability of the formidable Slaughterhouse was an unexpected and agreeable consequence of the friendship of Ingoldesby.

XXXI

HUGH continued his study of the books which he had refused to leave in Brona's keeping, and every night in the still hours before the dawn, he gave his mind to the fascination exercised over it by the radiant spirit gone centuries ago from amidst the earth's clouds and perplexities. With the first whisper and pipe of birds and gush of fragrance from waking wild-flowers, with the earliest gleam of pale eastern lights that grew to golden flame, he began to associate such joys of the soul of man as he had never imagined to exist. Every time he rose from his reading and pondering, he was as a man different from the man he had hitherto known himself to be. Of what it meant, of how anything real was to come of the change, he had no clear perception.

The lights in the east grew to flame, the birds shouted their matins, the air breathed of flowers from which sunbeams were drinking the dew. Inanimate nature rejoiced. For him, the man,

was no rapture. Nothing but the desire to rest after a strange and unsatisfying vigil. He wanted another thinking and understanding mind with which to discuss his growing impression of knowledge to come, of light destined to intensify, revealing to him things that he had never yet seen. He could not talk to Brona, as he never found her alone. He began to suspect that she was trying to protect him from himself, and the thought sounded an alarm to his courage. The suggestion that a talk with Father Aengus would help him was rejected several times before he decided to act on it. But at last one day he said to Brona :

" Could I be permitted to see the Father in his cell ? I should be glad to have a little conversation with him, and there is no other way. Will he trust me ? "

" He will trust you. He is there now," said Brona. " Shall I speak to him ? "

The Father's response to the request was a warm invitation.

Hugh was led by Brona, by the secret stairs and passages that led to the little dungeon where the humble Franciscan lived with his God. He found him writing at a small table on which were some books and a crucifix. At sight of the spare brown figure and the pallid face, Hugh remembered vividly his encounter with this man in the bog,

and felt wonder and remorse sting and touch him keenly. With a passing thrill of amazement at his own conduct, Ingoldesby stood with bent head as Brona left and closed the door on him.

" You are welcome, Mr Ingoldesby," said the friar. " Not everyone would care to pay a visit to this dark little den."

" You believe it is a friendly visit ? " said Hugh. " I am anxious to make you feel that I am worthy of your brave trust. Not every man would have courage to receive me here considering all the circumstances."

" Have I not every reason for such trust ? " said Father Aengus. " You are the saviour of this family from misfortune which they do not deserve. As for me I am nothing but a casual, a tramp in the service of God. I live only to help others. If I can help you in any way, or in any degree, let me know how to do it."

" I will go to the point at once," said Hugh. " I have come across these books by accident, and have been reading them. I would like to talk to you about them. Will you tell me what kind of a man he was who wrote them ? Was he a mere poet and dreamer, or did he do anything of service to the world ? "

" He was certainly no useless dreamer ; he did very noble service to the world of his days, service

for the lasting benefit of the world of all days. He was a man of active life and practical abilities, industrious, energetic in business, shrewd, prudent, and courageous. To form an idea of his character you should study all his writings—these books are only a part of them. You will find him neither a dreamer of fantastic dreams, nor a stern taskmaster, but a saint with a passionate love of his God, and, for God's sake, of his neighbour ; besides being, as I have said, a man of eminent common sense, whose life was full of useful and very practical work."

" How can I get these other writings ? " asked Hugh. " I am greatly attracted by his luminous thought. It impresses me with a power which no mere poet ever exerted over me. The noblest speculations of pagan philosophy, and the deepest wisdom of the Scriptures, have evidently fed his lofty mind. It amazes me that he should have been also a worker in practical affairs."

" Ah, yes," said the friar, " the world has a false conception of the mind of a saint, who may be at once poet and philosopher, religious and contemplative, yet fit for the ordinary duties of life, and in full possession of practical and social virtue and capacity."

" I confess I have known nothing of the saints," said Ingoldesby. " A mind such as the mind of

this man attracts my admiration. That is all. I would like to see deeper into it."

"I can lend you his books," said Father Aengus, "if you venture to have them in your house."

"I think I am above suspicion," said Hugh, "and may be allowed as a well-rooted Protestant to read what I please. And about the other saints of whom I have not the slightest knowledge, except as I have seen them in church windows or in the paintings of the old masters prized for the sake of art, can you afford me also a little insight into the meanings of their strange lives and teachings?"

"St Thomas Aquinas, for instance," said the priest. "St Augustine?"

"These I know by name, and I possess a volume of each, unread. I would be glad to begin with them," said Ingoldesby.

"Here are more to begin with. But remember I have not pressed them on you, nor have I invited you here. I have laid no plot to lead you to my own way of thinking. Faith is of God. If He is drawing you nearer to Him, He will do it in His own way. Meanwhile I say again be careful. You may be beyond suspicion, but a man so straight and sincere may have dangerous enemies in quite unexpected quarters."

This was only the beginning of a conversation which lasted for some hours, and when Hugh

departed he carried his loan of dangerous books as openly under his arm as though they had been the works of the most approved ancient pagans, or the latest production of that then rather rare *littérateur*, the English novelist. Evening after evening he gave his mind to the reading of these books, and one night was sitting rapt in the study when he was interrupted by Colonel Slaughter-house, claiming hospitality, declaring that he was tired and hungry, that his life was worse than a dog's life, and that he was not going to bear it much longer.

"My men are all over the country," he said, "and in ill-humour because they have been finding little to do, and have been earning no rewards. Truth is I have tried to restrain them, but it is little use. Some other man will have to lead them soon—some fresh hand."

Hugh supplied all his wants of the hour, and afterwards the two men sat at the open window, while the moon rose over the mysterious bog, and the night mists flitted across it, like penitential spirits, in the ghostly gleam. The lamplight from within the room fell on the open book laid down by Hugh on the visitor's entrance, and Slaughter-house threw the end of his cigar out of the window and took up the volume.

"Hello!" he said; "Popish books!" and then

he looked through the pages for some minutes, while Hugh sat tranquilly watching him.

At last the Colonel closed the book with a slap and threw it on the table.

"Now look here, Ingoldesby," he said; "I've come here to you as a friend to a friend. You have given me meat and drink, and I will give you what is better, a word of advice. You are a proud, independent fellow, and as such I admire you. But don't let your pride run away with you in a conceit that you can be supposed to do no wrong in the eye of the law, and that you can dabble as much as you like in the mire of Popery without suspicion of defilement."

"I don't," said Ingoldesby smiling. "Am I not the model of a law-abiding gentleman? My hands are clean of mire of any sort, whether of Popery or of a law in a state of corruption."

"Corruption on both sides. Keep out of it all."

"I have not found any between the covers of the book you are condemning. Nothing but the highest thought, the noblest teaching that the heart and brain of man have ever conceived. If I may not think such thoughts or examine such teaching, what then do you provide for me? Is a man not the master of his own conscience?"

"Not in this country. How can you ask such a

question in a land where the air is hissing with the promises of bribery? Where the ultimate penalty of disobedience to the law is death?"

"My neck is safe, however," said Hugh laughing. "Have another glass of wine, Slaughterhouse, and a good night's sleep, and you will have no more nightmares."

"I see you will not take me seriously," said the Colonel. "Yet I am giving you a friendly warning. You have associated yourself in an extraordinary manner with Catholics, and at the same time retired from the society of your Protestant neighbours. And now, if you are caught studying Papistical literature, you may find yourself an object of suspicion, which a false word from an enemy may change into certainty in the judgment of those who can strip you of everything."

"Well, you see, I have you between me and the danger," said Hugh with another confident smile.

"You may not have me long. I am sick of the work I have to do. I think of getting out of it all, marrying and going to live in some less miserable country. Another man who will have his fortune to make (rot who will, to manure his own new possessions) will take my place. When I have left the service, I shall have to wash my hands of you."

" I am sorry for that," said Ingoldesby.

" Think over what I have said. Now I will take your hospitable offer and go to bed. Don't sit up all night reading this dangerous trash," said Slaughterhouse going.

XXXII

On a radiant midsummer morning Brona set out for the Mass Rock, arriving there at sunrise to find a congregation waiting for the coming of Father Aengus, who had not appeared. The priest had gone the evening before to give the last Sacraments to a dying man, at a considerable distance from the Castle. He had not expected to return that night, but had intended to meet the people at the Mass Rock by sunrise on the following morning.

As time passed and the familiar brown figure was not seen hastening across the bog, the people became uneasy and began to disperse. It was dangerous to linger there. Slaughterhouse's men were known to be abroad. The priest might have had a timely warning to lie by in some of the hiding-places, in hollow tree, or ruined wall, or cave under rocks, which were his refuge when in fear of a surprise. It were safer for him and for them that they should separate and get back to their homes. And so they crept away, in ones and twos and threes,

by cuttings in the bog, by passages between rocks, and by stepping-stones and planks of bogwood across pools and lake-like sheets of bog-water.

Brona waited long, and was the last to turn her face towards home, where she hoped to find the Father in his cell. But Father Aengus had not returned to the Castle. He was not in his cell, nor had he been seen or heard of by anyone in the house or in the neighbourhood since the previous evening. Such an unexpected absence was not quite unusual, and yet was always a cause for great anxiety to his friends and clients. In some one of his lonely hiding-places, scarcely known even to his friends, he might lie, starved and chilled, till illness from exhaustion might seize him, and death put an end to his sufferings before aid could find him.

"Ah," said Thady, "sure the bell isn't more buried in the heart of a tree than himself maybe this minute. An' ne'er a shout out of him like the ringin' of the same bell, though nobody can find it."

"Don't be a false prophet, Thady Quin," said Mrs MacCurtin. "The Father will be back in his cell safe and sound, as many a time he was, after the hearts had been squez out of us with fright about him."

Brona could not rest, and Hugh met her crossing the bog alone in search of the object of so much general anxiety.

"What is the matter?" he asked. "Is your father ill? Or you yourself?"

"We are ill with anxiety about Father Aengus. That is all. But it is an ill that means much. How terrible if we were to lose our only friend in God!"

"I do not believe that Slaughterhouse would allow him to be harmed."

"I trust not," said Brona; but her faith in Slaughterhouse was hardly so absolute as Ingoldesby's.

It was a glorious midsummer day. The brown and golden moor, with its seams of purple and flashes of watery light, the grey violet hills, the darkling woods, the ripening fields, the blue sea with its fringes of green, all lay under a benediction of brooding sunshine, like the approving smile of an infinitely loving God. Going by unfrequented paths they met no living creature. Hugh found a longed-for opportunity for talking to Brona of many things which he did not care to discuss in the presence of others, and Brona listened, thrilling with hopes and fears which she did not dare to put into words. Thus many hours passed while they travelled an area of some miles, visiting hovels and cabins where lay the sick and needy, who were the particular objects of the charity of Father Aengus. But no one had seen the Father or heard from him.

At last they found the dying man to whom he had administered the last Sacraments on the previous evening. The visit of consolation had been happily paid, and the Father had departed as usual just at nightfall. He had been seen to cross the bog by the light of the rising moon, but further than a shadowy fold in the land nobody had tracked him. Coming to a group of ruined walls with a half-fallen tower, Hugh made his way up a narrow winding stair to a hiding-place among tumbled stones to which Brona directed him.

"He may be lying there, stricken with illness," she said. "I have always feared that some day we should so find him."

Hugh reached the spot with difficulty, but it was empty, and a call of the Father's name produced no answer. A hollow tree, a cave under rocks, were explored, the name of Father Aengus was whispered in silent, almost inaccessible places, and all to no purpose, till at last Ingoldesby insisted on Brona's returning home, saying that in all probability the hours they had spent in their quest had brought the friar back safely to Castle O'Loghlin. That expectation was disappointed however. The priest was still absent, and had not been heard of.

After a sleepless night Brona was on the moor again, and again was met by Hugh bent on accompanying her. Turning their faces in a

different direction from that travelled the day before, they followed the same plan of search, Brona going into the cabins, and asking questions of everyone she met on the way. The only information she gained was of the fact that a band of soldiery had been seen hanging about the countryside during the last few days. They had made raids on some of the better class of houses. It was hoped that they had now passed on elsewhere, but the terrified people spoke of their doings in whispers. That day's search also proved unavailing, and on the third morning Hugh came early to the Castle to beg that Brona would not undertake another such long fatiguing quest, but would stay at home with her father and try to divert his thoughts from the anxiety of the moment.

"Alas!" said Brona, "he cannot take any comfort till the truth is known. He will be better satisfied if he is assured that every effort is being made. That our friend is lying ill and desolate somewhere is certain, and I may possibly be, of all the searchers, the one to find him."

And so another day's travel began. Brona tried in vain to persuade Ingoldesby that he was endangering his own safety by displaying such open sympathy with a felon, and with the friends whom he was supposed to have condemned and betrayed to the executors of the law. He per-

sisted in supporting her throughout this hour of increasing tribulation.

"My lot is my own," he said. "I have drawn it. Let me take it. There are things that must be done without thought of danger. If not, your resolute priest would never have set foot in this cruelly misgoverned country."

So they set out again, Hugh heavy-hearted, dreading a further impending trial for Brona, and Brona weighted with sorrow and fear for everyone concerned but herself. Occasionally they met people pretending to be gathering turf or cutting heather, or dragging bog-wood out of the water, all eagerly on the search for Father Aengus. A whisper with averted eyes was their greeting of Brona. Slaughterhouse's men might be lurking on the watch behind some rock or bush, and words that the wind might carry were better unspoken. There had been scarcely a breeze all day. Radiant sunshine transfigured every feature of the land. The mountains seemed absorbed in a rapture of worship, the motionless sea raised blue eyes dim with dreams to the sky, a mantle of glory had descended on the darkling woods. All nature was lost in adoration of the Creator of so much splendour.

"As if in prevision of what is to come, never yet sighted by mortal eyes, never felt by

creature or things," said Brona, pausing to rest against a thorn tree that looked at the moment like the Scriptural burning bush that hid the Lord.

As the "westering wheel" of the sun, having made heaven's descent, reached the mountains' brow, and seemed to rest there, the wind began to rise in short gusts, and clouds that had hung about all day in golden laziness shook off their languor and hurried about the sky, making for the west, as if obeying some mysterious mandate to signal the end of so much magnificence by veiling the glory so soon to become extinct. By the time these gusts of wind had freshened, and the clouded western sky had taken the appearance of a gory battlefield after the fray, Brona and Hugh had reached a spot skirting the bog, on its distant side from Castle O'Loghlin. They had passed the spot before, and had seen nothing unusual in the rough stems and thick growth of the branching trees hanging over their heads. Suddenly Brona uttered a piercing cry, and fell with her face to the sod.

"O God! O God, he is there!"

Hugh stooping to support her raised his eyes to the trees and saw what she had seen—the flutter of a brown gown, the swing of a sandalled foot as the wind swept the boughs aside; and

for a moment the pallid face of the Franciscan gleamed on him, and vanished as the boughs closed again and hid it. Slaughterhouse's men had not left the neighbourhood without earning their money.

XXXIII

At midnight by the glimmer of a watery moon Father Aengus was taken down from the tree of his martyrdom into reverent arms, and laid in the grave hastily dug for him, his crucifix on his breast, his brown robe folded about his limbs; no coffin, no shroud, lest delay should see the return of the executioners to desecrate this holy resting-place, and to dishonour the mortal shell that had housed the soul of a saint and a Christian soldier. Ingoldesby and Thady were present at the strange funeral.

"I seen him put in," said Thady hanging over the fire in the small hours with Mrs MacCurtin. "He's close to the old Mass Rock, as he has a right to be. Oh, then when will the Mass be said there again, now he's gone? An' nobody to come after him till God sends us another warrior to fight for Him, and the masther dyin' without the priest, an' no Sacraments to comfort him. An' that'll be the sore end to his troubles. For dyin' he is, an'

no wonder after one thing and another that has happened to him. Turlough to have turned out a rascal on him, and the Protestant to have got the estate, and Miss Brona to be left desolate, and himself to be dyin' without a priest to bring the Lord to him."

"Whisht now, Thady," said Mrs MacCurtin, wiping her eyes. "Sure you know well that Morogh O'Loghlin lyin' on his bed up there is well able to die without the priest. If he wasn't wouldn't God have waited a bit for Father Aengus, bad as He might have wanted to get him in heaven? And didn't the Father tell us that the Lord Himself will come to us dyin' without e'er a one to bring Him, or give Him the whisper that He's wanted? Do y' think it is the doctor we're talkin' about that needs a word to be sent to him, or how would he know a body was sick? And for Miss Brona, it's easy to have a guess about who's goin' to take care of her. The Protestant that has us owned at present is not goin' to be a Protestant long."

"Tush, my good woman!" said Thady. "If you want to know an honest man's real mind about that—I don't believe in one o' them. Is it two estates down to his name and throw them both over his shoulder? Do y' want to put him even with the masther that's a dying saint, and Father Aengus that's a martyr?"

"I'm takin' nothin' to do with either odds or evens," said Mrs MacCurtin, "only sayin' plain what I see, an' I with my two eyes open."

"Well, my two eyes is gettin' shut," said Thady, "an' small blame to them, between salt tears an' never a wink o' sleep this many a night; besides the sight I seen at the Mass Rock a couple of hours ago, that nearly cut the light out o' them, lavin' you blind, Thady Quin, for the rest of the time you have to be in it."

Brona knew that her father was on his deathbed. The cruel martyrdom of his tender comforter and spiritual friend and counsellor had dealt him a final blow, and he lay prostrate in the death sickness of gradual heart failure, a little weaker every day, with no hope from his physician of his recovery. Ingoldesby stood by Brona, coming every day to relieve her watch, undeterred by her protests as to his danger, or by the warnings of Slaughterhouse. Sometimes he stayed the night, if immediate death seemed imminent. In those quiet hours alone with the dying man, listening to his murmured prayers of resignation and thanksgiving, the latent convictions of his own mind and heart forced their way to their place in his most living thoughts, and a resolution was taken which at that time he confided to no one.

"How these Catholics die!" he said to himself.

"How they bear to live, and how they die!" And he began to pray in the words he had learned from St Augustine.

Mrs MacCurtin was right when she said that Morogh was able to die without the priest, since God had deprived him of all spiritual help.

"Brona," he said, "I know you are grieving because I have to die without the Sacraments. But have good heart. I always thought I should have our dear saint beside me at this hour; but God has taken all such anxious desire away from me. He is coming Himself Who is the Sacrament. Already I hear His approach. He is coming across the bog. He is at the Mass Rock. Father Aengus is with Him, and others. I see Columba and the Culdee. Patrick and Bridget, and the Holy Mother herself will be of the company. Already this room is filling with the angels in waiting for them."

Brona was holding his hand and watching the smile as of great bliss brightening on his face.

Presently they heard him say with a loud and happy cry:

"Welcome, a hundred thousand times welcome, my Divine Master! Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!"

With the last word his soul passed.

They made his grave in the ancient ruined Corcomroe Abbey, in the open windswept chancel,

near the sculptured tomb of King Conor O'Brien. And after all was done Brona stood like the shadow of herself, alone of all her family, in Castle O'Loghlin.

Aideen had not been able to come to her. Turlough had fought a duel in a gaming-house, and was ill of a mortal wound. She had left her harbour in the convent and was nursing him, striving to save his useless life, and to bring peace to his soul. Her letter to Brona breathed of anguish which was little tempered by hope. Of all who had been hers in her home, Brona had no one by her except the faithful and affectionate old servants. But outside her walls there was still the devotion of Ingoldesby.

XXXIV

MARY DELANY hastened from her garden to her husband in his study.

" Morogh O'Loghlin is dead," she said. " They have hanged the priest who was his comforter, and the shock has killed my friend. Hugh Ingoldesby has written to me. The girl is alone at Castle O'Loghlin, and Hugh is concerned about her."

Dr Delany joined his finger-tips together as if about to pray or preach, and looked mildly over his spectacles.

" My dear love," he said, " this is sad news. But there is nothing that you or I can do in the circumstances. The girl is already a nun, and will find a home in a French convent. Don't let us follow Hugh's lead by entangling ourselves in Catholic movements. Rumour says that he has greatly injured his reputation as an upholder of the State by his interest in Papists and their affairs."

A slight frown crossed Mrs Delany's sunny face, and she said quickly, " I love Brona O'Loghlin for

her own sake, and be she Papist or Hindoo, I will show her any kindness I can in her day of need."

"Right, right, my love," said the Dean. "But what is her need? Where are the French aunt and the troublesome brother? What occasion can you have to interfere?"

"The graceless Turlough is ill from his own folly, and his adoring aunt is nursing him."

The Dean shook his head. "Pity Hugh had not allowed the young man to step into his father's shoes. The estate would have been saved for the family and the name carried on, and the county at the same time would have secured another good Protestant landholder."

"At the sacrifice of conscience!" said Mrs Delany reproachfully.

"My dear, don't speak like that to anyone but me, or you may be quite misunderstood. There is an extreme, an exaggerated conscience that leads persons astray, and which ought not to be taken into consideration. But do as you please, my love, and I trust that your husband's reputation and position will shield you from the consequences of your too good-natured action."

An hour later Hugh presented himself in person to Mrs Delany, who received him with even more than her usual kindness.

"Tell me all about it," she said.

When she had heard the details of the O'Loghlin tragedy, she proceeded to act with the good nature which her husband had disapproved and yet sanctioned.

"Any service I can do Miss O'Loghlin shall be done for her own sake," she said, "but after that, when we have seen her safely into a French convent, you will, I hope, cease your dangerous association with the Catholics of your county. Already you are under some suspicion."

"I have had a letter from Slaughterhouse," said Hugh smiling, "warning me that I am known to have assisted at the cutting down and at the burial of the long-hunted and finally-captured priest, the Franciscan friar who for some years had infested the district of Burren. Also, that under pretence of discovering on a Papist property-holder, I have mixed myself up with the affairs of his family, and have been present at his godless deathbed."

"Well?" said Mrs Delany, "does it not prove that I am right? I will go to Clare and fetch Miss O'Loghlin here to stay with me till she can make her own arrangements. And you, I beg of you, leave the country at once, and avoid trouble that is evidently impending."

"According to Slaughterhouse, it has been impending for a long time," said Hugh. "I will reply to him that I intend to save him the trouble

of doing his worst by the step I am about to take. To-morrow morning I shall be received into the Catholic Church."

"Are you quite mad?"

"If I were ever mad, at all events I am now sane. In the kingdom of God is sanity, on earth as it is in heaven."

"You will lose everything for love of a woman!" cried Mary Delany.

"On the contrary, it is the love of a woman that has saved me. Dear friend, I am grieved to distress you, for I know that your distress is as genuine as my own would have been some time ago if one I loved had told me what I tell you to-day."

"I am indeed bitterly distressed. You will marry Brona?"

"If she will take me now. At present she is in ignorance of the decision I have arrived at by the grace of God, and that only. No one, not you, nor Slaughterhouse, nor any of my friends or well-wishers, has been as anxious as she has been to shield me from worldly ruin by her warnings, and by her avoidance of my company. But that was when she feared I might not be thorough from any point of view—that I might lose the shadow without gaining the substance, if I may be allowed to reverse the order of the fable."

"Your worldly ruin!" echoed Mary Delany ruefully.

"Not that either," said Hugh smiling. "It will, indeed, be good-bye to the county of Clare. Some lucky fellow will pick up two nice properties no doubt, and there will be some laughter at the fool who threw them both out of his hands for the sake of a woman, or, granting me sincerity of conscience, then for the sake of a dream. I know it all so well, because I was in the swim of it myself so recently. But my wife and I will have sufficient means left for a happy life in some country where a man is allowed to live by his conscience, and to follow, if he will, in the footsteps of the saints."

"Which saints?" asked Mrs Delany sadly.

"A large question," said Hugh brightly. "I have known some saints already on this side of the great boundary. I shall have one by my side. And now, dear friend, so interested for me, so patient with me, I know what your eyes are looking at, and I know what they cannot see. But let us join hands in Christian charity, which in itself is a communion of saints, and let nothing break our friendship."

"Nothing, indeed, on my side," said Mrs Delany. "As I have said, I should wish to go to Clare and bring Brona here."

"You are good," said Hugh. "Will you come back with me to Ardcurragh?"

"What will Miss Ingoldesby say if she comes to save you from ruin, and finds me countenancing you?"

"No fear of that. My good narrow-minded aunt will avoid me in future as she would fly a pestilence."

XXXV

BRONA was packing to leave her home, sitting on a trunk already filled, a mournful letter from Aideen in her hand. Turlough was still alive, and Aideen could not leave him, so Brona must prepare to come to her. MacDonogh was to sail in a few days, and would bring her safely to France.

" Your old friends in the convent will be glad to receive you," wrote Aideen, " and I have enough of my little fortune left to enable us to live here till we see further."

Hugh was in Dublin. The lonely girl asked herself whether she ought to wait for his return, or depart without saying farewell to him, perhaps for ever. She must, at all events, be ready to start as soon as MacDonogh should call for her.

Reading the letter yet once again, clinging to it as a link between the past of love and the present of desolation, she was interrupted by the arrival of Hugh. She went to him with the letter in her hand.

"I am glad you have come," she said. "I did not like going without saying good-bye to you."

"You would not have done that," he said. "But Mrs Delany has a better way arranged for you. She has come to take you to Delville. She has written to your aunt and to MacDonogh. She is coming to see you this afternoon. Meanwhile, will you come for a walk with me, a farewell walk? For I too am leaving the county of Clare, perhaps never to return."

"Oh, no," said Brona, "it is doubly your home now, and all difficulties are cleared from your path. But, yes, I would like to take that walk with you."

They walked through the sunshine towards the Mass Rock. Both knew that they were going to pay a farewell visit to the grave of the murdered Franciscan.

"Let us rest here awhile," said Hugh, finding her a seat on a ridge of stone, "and let us have a little talk. You said just now that difficulties have been cleared from my path."

"Yes," said Brona. "We shall all be gone. And I am glad, as we have had to be blotted out, that it is you who are to stand in my father's place. You have no longer that prejudice against the faith of the people which you used to have, and you will

be kind to them. You will have much power, being the owner of two properties instead of one."

"All that would be of no kind of benefit to me unless I could share it with you."

Brona's eyes darkened with pain.

"Don't!" she said. "Why will you spoil the last hour we have to be together?"

"I don't want to spoil this happy hour," he said, "but I must ask you once more, and for all—Brona, will you marry me?"

"You are not generous. You know the sad difference that keeps us apart."

"I do not know it. We are one in heart, and one in faith."

"Faith?"

"Yes, faith. I have been received into the Catholic Church. No, don't look so shocked, my dearest. I have done it from no unworthy motive."

"For me?" said Brona, with a white light on her face, her lips trembling. "Oh, no, God will not be played with."

Hugh took her hands, and held them while he smiled in her eyes.

"My dear, you have not been the cause, only the instrument. God has taken so absolute a grip of me that I could not escape Him if you were not in the world. As you are in the world, and as we may

live in it together henceforward, I am most devoutly thankful."

Brona had bowed her head on the hands that were holding hers so tightly.

"You must give me time to realise it," she said. "It is too amazing."

"You are not more amazed than I have been, but already it seems so natural that I feel as if I had been born and baptised into the Catholic Church. For the rest, we shall not starve. We can live frugally in Italy."

Mrs Delany was waiting for them when they returned to Castle O'Loghlin. Seeing the two bright faces that met her troubled eyes, she marvelled at that supernatural Something which was so radiantly real for them, and had no kind of existence for her.

She did not venture to speak of it, only said:

"You will come and make your home with me, my dear, until things are settled."

Brona made no objection. She was in Hugh's hands now. The next day another visit of farewell was paid to the grave of Morogh O'Loghlin in the ancient abbey, Brona's favourite haunt in the days of her sad and meditative girlhood. Arrangements were made with the old servants to stay in the Castle until directed to join their mistress in her new home after her marriage.

They were wedded in the little secret chapel of Miss Crilly's " nunnery " in Dorset Street, and left Ireland for Italy immediately afterwards.

Hugh Ingoldesby's conversion to Popish ways remained for ever an enigma to Mary Delany, but she delighted in her visits to the modest little home at Fiesole, where the Ingoldesbys, in the small house and large garden which was the ideal of Horace, found ample scope for the doings of an active as well as an intellectual life. For which curiously inconsistent and scandalously liberal conduct she had to suffer the loss of the friendship of Miss Jacquetta Ingoldesby.

A few years later Hugh's old acquaintance, Colonel Slaughterhouse, wrote to him:

> I am glad to hear you are so happy in your own peculiar fashion, and I am sure you will feel no displeasure at the fact that the estates of Ardcurragh and Castle O'Loghlin have devolved on me. You know how often I warned you of danger, and until you had quite cut yourself off I had no intention of stepping into your shoes. For the rest, someone had to do it, and the someone might as well be me.
>
> You had heard that the title of Earl of Donegore is to go with the estates. I do not care much for titles myself, but my wife (whom you knew as Lady Kitty Carteret) fancies it, and naturally I am pleased to gratify her.

It may be noted here that a certain Hon. Captain Slaughterhouse who distinguished himself in the

Boer War boasts of his descent from an ancient and honourable family in the county of Clare.

But (as the people pray) " the light of heaven to them "—the ancients whose mortality sleeps in the sanctuary at Corcomroe, and in the heart of the Burren bog beside the old Mass Rock under the tree of the martyr,—the last of the O'Loghlins, Kings of Burren, and the Franciscan who lived and died in the service of his Lord !

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