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Author: Gilbert Parker

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NO DEFENSE

By Gilbert Parker

Volume 1.

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BOOK I

CHAPTER I

THE TWO MEET

"Well, good-bye, Dyck. I'll meet you at the sessions, or before that at the assizes."

It was only the impulsive, cheery, warning exclamation of a wild young Irish spirit to his friend Dyck Calhoun, but it had behind it the humour and incongruity of Irish life.

The man, Dyck Calhoun, after whom were sent the daring words about the sessions and the assizes, was a year or two older than his friend, and, as Michael Clones, his servant and friend, said, "the worst and best scamp of them all"—just up to any harmless deviltry.

Influenced by no traditions or customs, under control of no stern records of society, Calhoun had caused some trouble in his time by the harmless deeds of a scapegrace, but morally—that is, in all relations of life affected by the ten commandments—he was above reproach. Yet he was of the sort who, in days of agitation, then common in Ireland, might possibly commit some act which would bring him to the sessions or the assizes. There never was in Ireland a cheerier, braver, handsomer fellow, nor one with such variety of mind and complexity of purpose.

He was the only child of a high-placed gentleman; he spent all the money that came his way, and occasionally loaded himself with debt, which his angry father paid. Yet there never was a gayer heart, a more generous spirit, nor an easier-tempered man; though, after all, he was only twenty-five when the words with which the tale opens were said to him.

He had been successful—yet none too successful—at school and Trinity College, Dublin. He had taken a pass degree, when he might have captured the highest honours. He had interested people of place in the country, but he never used promptly the interest he excited. A pretty face, a fishing or a shooting expedition, a carouse in some secluded tavern, were parts of his daily life.

At the time the story opens he was a figure of note among those who spent their time in criticizing the government and damning the Irish Parliament. He even became a friend of some young hare-brained rebels of the time; yet no one suspected him of anything except irresponsibility. His record was clean; Dublin Castle was not after him.

When his young friend made the remark about the sessions and assizes, Calhoun was making his way up the rocky hillside to take the homeward path to his father's place, Playmore. With the challenge and the monstrous good-bye, a stone came flying up the hill after him and stopped almost at his feet. He made no reply, however, but waved a hand downhill, and in his heart said:

"Well, maybe he's right. I'm a damned dangerous fellow, there's no doubt about that. Perhaps I'll kill a rebel some day, and then they'll take me to the sessions and the assizes. Well, well, there's many a worse fate than that, so there is."

After a minute he added:

"So there is, dear lad, so there is. But if I ever kill, I'd like it to be in open fight on the hills like this—like this, under the bright sun, in the soft morning, with all the moor and valleys still, and the larks singing—the larks singing! Hooray, but it's a fine day, one of the best that ever was!"

He laughed, and patted his gun gently.

"Not a feather, not a bird killed, not a shot fired; but the looking was the thing—stalking the things that never turned up, the white heels we never saw, for I'm not killing larks, God love you!"

He raised his head, looking up into the sky at some larks singing above him in the heavens.

"Lord love you, little dears," he added aloud. "I wish I might die with your singing in my ears, but do you know what makes Ireland what it is? Look at it now. Years ago, just when the cotton-mills and the linen-mills were doing well, they came over with their English legislation, and made it hard going. When we begin to get something, over the English come and take the something away. What have we done, we Irish people, that we shouldn't have a chance in our own country? Lord knows, we deserve a chance, for it's hard paying the duties these days. What with France in revolution and reaching out her hand to Ireland to coax her into rebellion; what with defeat in America and drink in Scotland; what with Fox and Pitt at each other's throats, and the lord-lieutenant a danger to the peace; what with poverty, and the cow and children and father and mother living all in one room, with the chickens roosting in the rafters; what with pointing the potato at the dried fish and gulping it down as if it was fish itself; what with the smell and the dirt and the poverty of Dublin and Derry, Limerick and Cork—ah, well!" He

threw his eyes up again.

"Ah, well, my little love, sing on! You're a blessing among a lot of curses; but never mind, it's a fine world, and Ireland's the best part of it. Heaven knows it—and on this hill, how beautiful it is!"

He was now on the top of a hill where he could look out towards the bog and in towards the mellow, waving hills. He could drink in the yellowish green, with here and there in the distance a little house; and about two miles away smoke stealing up from the midst of the plantation where Playmore was—Playmore, his father's house—to be his own one day.

How good it was! There, within his sight, was the great escarpment of rock known as the Devil's Ledge, and away to the east was the black spot in the combe known as the Cave of Mary. Still farther away, towards the south, was the great cattle-pasture, where, as he looked, a thousand cattle roamed. Here and there in the wide prospect were plantations where Irish landlords lived, and paid a heavy price for living. Men did not pay their rents. Crops were spoiled, markets were bad, money was scarce, yet—

"Please God, it will be better next year!" Michael Clones said, and there never was a man with a more hopeful heart than Michael Clones.

Dyck Calhoun had a soul of character, originality, and wayward distinction. He had all the impulses and enthusiasms of a poet, all the thirst for excitement of the adventurer, all the latent patriotism of the true Celt; but his life was undisciplined, and he had not ordered his spirit into compartments of faith and hope. He had gifts. They were gifts only to be borne by those who had ambitions.

Now, as he looked out upon the scene where nature was showing herself at her best, some glimmer of a great future came to him. He did not know which way his feet were destined to travel in the business of life. It was too late to join the navy; but there was still time enough to be a soldier, or to learn to be a lawyer.

As he gazed upon the scene, his wonderful deep blue eyes, his dark brown hair thick upon his head, waving and luxuriant like a fine mattress, his tall, slender, alert figure, his bony, capable hands, which neither sun nor wind ever browned, his nervous yet interesting mouth, and his long Roman nose, set in a complexion rich in its pink-and-cream hardness and health—all this made him a figure good to see.

Suddenly, as he listened to the lark singing overhead, with his face lifted to the sky, he heard a human voice singing; and presently there ran up a little declivity to his left a girl—an Irish girl of about seventeen years of age.

Her hat was hanging on her arm by a green ribbon. Her head was covered with the most wonderful brown, waving hair. She had a broad, low forehead, Greek in its proportions and lines. The eyes were bluer even than his own, and were shaded by lashes of great length, which slightly modified the firm lines of the face, with its admirable chin, and mouth somewhat large with a cupid's bow.

In spite of its ardent and luscious look, it was the mouth of one who knew her own mind and could sustain her own course. It was open when Dyck first saw it, because she was singing little bits of wild lyrics of the hills, little tragedies of Celtic life—just bursts of the Celtic soul, as it were, cheerful yet sad, buoyant and passionate, eager yet melancholy. She was singing in Irish too. They were the words of songs taught her by her mother's maid.

She had been tramping over the hills for a couple of hours, virile, beautiful, and alone. She wore a gown of dark gold, with little green ribbons here and there. The gown was short, and her ankles showed. In spite of the strong boots she wore they were alert, delicate, and shapely, and all her beauty had the slender fullness of a quail.

When she saw Dyck, she stopped suddenly, her mouth slightly open. She gave him a sidelong glance of wonder, interest, and speculation. Then she threw her head slightly back, and all the curls gathered in a bunch and shook like bronze flowers. It was a head of grace and power, of charm and allurements—of danger.

Dyck was lost in admiration. He looked at her as one might look at a beautiful thing in a dream. He did not speak; he only smiled as he gazed into her eyes. She was the first to speak.

"Well, who are you?" she asked with a slightly southern accent in her voice, delicate and entrancing. Her head gave a little modest toss, her fine white teeth caught her lower lip with a little quirk of humour; for she could see that he was a gentleman, and that she was safe from anything that might trouble her.

He replied to her question with the words:

"My name? Why, it's Dyck Calhoun. That's all."

Her eyes brightened. "Isn't that enough?" she asked gently.

She knew of his family. She was only visiting in the district with her mother, but she had lately heard of old Miles Calhoun and his wayward boy, Dyck; and here was Dyck, with a humour in his eyes and a touch of melancholy at his lips. Somehow her heart went out to him.

Presently he said to her: "And what's your name?"

"I'm only Sheila Llyn, the daughter of my mother, a widow, visiting at Loyland Towers. Yes, I'm only Sheila!"

She laughed.

"Well, just be 'only Sheila,'" he answered admiringly, and he held out a hand to her. "I wouldn't have you be anything else, though it's none of my business."

For one swift instant she hesitated; then she laid her hand in his.

"There's no reason why we should not," she said. "Your father's respectable."

She looked at him again with a sidelong glance, and with a whimsical, reserved smile at her lips.

"Yes, he's respectable, I agree, but he's dull," answered Dyck. "For an Irishman, he's dull—and he's a tyrant, too. I suppose I deserve that, for I'm a handful."

"I think you are, and a big handful too!"

"Which way are you going?" he asked presently.

"And you?"

"Oh, I'm bound for home." He pointed across the valley. "Do you see that smoke coming up from the plantation over there?"

"Yes, I know," she answered. "I know. That's Playmore, your father's place. Loyland Towers is between here and there. Which way were you going there?"

"Round to the left," he said, puzzled, but agreeable.

"Then we must say good-bye, because I go to the right. That's my nearest way."

"Well, if that's your nearest way, I'm going with you," he said, "because—well, because—because—"

"If you won't talk very much!" she rejoined with a little air of instinctive coquetry.

"I don't want to talk. I'd like to listen. Shall we start?"

A half-hour later they suddenly came upon an incident of the road.

It was, alas, no uncommon incident. An aged peasant, in a sudden fit of weakness, had stumbled on the road, and, in falling, had struck his head on a stone and had lost consciousness. He was an old peasant of the usual Irish type, coarsely but cleanly dressed. Lying beside him was a leather bag, within which were odds and ends of food and some small books of legend and ritual. He was a peasant of a superior class, however.

In falling, he had thrown over on his back, and his haggard face was exposed to the sun and sky. At sight of him Dyck and Sheila ran forward. Dyck dropped on one knee and placed a hand on the stricken man's heart.

"He's alive, all right," Dyck said. "He's a figure in these parts. His name's Christopher Dogan."

"Where does he live?"

"Live? Well, not three hundred yards from here, when he's at home, but he's generally on the go. He's what the American Indians would call a medicine-man."

"He needs his own medicine now."

"He's over eighty, and he must have gone dizzy, stumbled, fallen, and struck a stone. There's the mark on his temple. He's been lying here unconscious ever since; but his pulse is all right, and we'll soon have him fit again."

So saying, Dyck whipped out a horn containing spirit, and, while Sheila lifted the injured head, he bathed the old man's face with the spirit, then opened the mouth and let some liquor trickle down.

"He's the cleanest peasant I ever saw," remarked Sheila; "and he's coming to. Look at him!"

Yes, he was coming to. There was a slight tremor of the eyelids, and presently they slowly opened. They were eyes of remarkable poignancy and brightness—black, deep-set, direct, full of native intelligence. For an instant they stared as if they had no knowledge, then understanding came to them.

"Oh, it's you, sir," his voice said tremblingly, looking at Dyck. "And very kind it is of ye !" Then he looked at Sheila. "I don't know ye," he said whisperingly, for his voice seemed suddenly to fail. "I don't know ye," he repeated, "but you look all right."

"Well, I'm Sheila Llyn," the girl said, taking her hand from the old man's shoulder.

"I'm Sheila Llyn, and I'm all right in a way, perhaps."

The troubled, piercing eyes glanced from one to the other.

"No relation?"

"No—never met till a half-hour ago," remarked Dyck.

The old man drew himself to a sitting posture, then swayed slightly. The hands of the girl and Dyck went out behind his back. As they touched his back, their fingers met, and Dyck's covered the girl's. Their eyes met, too, and the story told by Dyck in that moment was the beginning of a lifetime of experience, comedy, and tragedy.

He thought her fingers were wonderfully soft, warm, and full of life; and she thought that his was the hand of a master-of a master in the field of human effort. That is, if she thought at all, for Dyck's warm, powerful touch almost hypnotized her.

The old peasant understood, however. He was standing on his feet now. He was pale and uncertain. He lifted up his bag, and threw it over his shoulder.

"Well, I'm not needing you any more, thank God!" he said.

"So Heaven's blessing on ye, and I bid ye good-bye. You've been kind to me, and I won't forget either of ye. If ever I can do ye a good turn, I'll do it."

"No, we're not going to leave you until you're inside your home," said Dyck.

The old man looked at Sheila in meditation. He knew her name and her history. Behind the girl's life was a long prospect of mystery. Llyn was her mother's maiden name. Sheila had never known her father. Never to her knowledge had she seen him, because when she was yet an infant her mother had divorced him by Act of Parliament, against the wishes of her church, and had resumed her maiden name.

Sheila's father's name was Erris Boyne, and he had been debauched, drunken, and faithless; so at a time of unendurable hurt his wife had freed herself. Then, under her maiden name, she had brought up her daughter without any knowledge of her father; had made her believe he was dead; had hidden her tragedy with a skilful hand.

Only now, when Sheila was released from a governess, had she moved out of the little wild area of the County Limerick where she lived; only now had she come to visit an uncle whose hospitality she had for so many years denied herself. Sheila was two years old when her father disappeared, and fifteen years had gone since then.

One on either side of the old man, they went with him up the hillside for about three hundred yards, to the door of his house, which was little more than a cave in a sudden lift of the hill. He swayed as he walked, but by the time they reached his cave-house he was alert again.

The house had two windows, one on either side of the unlocked doorway; and when the old man slowly swung the door open, there was shown an interior of humble character, but neat and well-ordered. The floor was earth, dry and clean. There was a bed to the right, also wholesome and dry, with

horse-blankets for cover. At the back, opposite the doorway, was a fireplace of some size, and in it stood a kettle, a pot, and a few small pans, together with a covered saucepan. On either side of the fireplace was a three-legged stool, and about the middle of the left-hand wall of the room was a chair which had been made out of a barrel, some of the staves having been sawn away to make a seat.

Once inside the house, Christopher Dogan laid his bag on the bed and waved his hands in a formula of welcome.

"Well, I'm honoured," he said, "for no one has set foot inside this place that I'd rather have here than the two of ye; and it's wonderful to me, Mr. Calhoun, that ye've never been inside it before, because there's been times when I've had food and drink in plenty. I could have made ye comfortable then and stroked ye all down yer gullet. As for you, Miss Llyn, you're as welcome as the shining of the stars of a night when there's no moon. I'm glad you're here, though I've nothing to give ye, not a bite nor sup. Ah, yes—but yes," he suddenly cried, touching his head. "Faith, then, I have! I have a drap of somethin' that's as good as annything dhrunk by the ancient kings of Ireland. It's a wee cordial that come from the cellars of the Bishop of Dunlany, when I cured his cook of the evil-stone that was killing her. Ah, thank God!"

He went into a corner on the left of the fireplace, opened an old jar, thrust his arm down, and drew out a squat little bottle of cordial. The bottle was beautifully made. It was round and hunched, and of glass, with an old label from which the writing had faded.

With eyes bright now, Christopher uncorked the bottle and smelled the contents. As he did so, a smile crinkled his face.

"Thank the Lord! There's enough for the two of ye—two fine tablespoonfuls of the cordial that'd do anny man good, no matter how bad he was, and turn an angel of a woman into an archangel. Bless yer Bowl!"

When Christopher turned to lift down two pewter pots, Calhoun reached up swiftly and took them from the shelf. He placed them in the hands of the old man, who drew a clean towel of coarse linen from a small cupboard in the wall above his head.

She and Dyck held the pots for the old man to pour the cordial into them. As he said, there was only a good porridge-spoon of liqueur for each. He divided it with anxious care.

"There's manny a man," he said, "and manny and manny a lady, too, born in the purple, that'd be glad of a dhrink of this cordial from the cellar of the bishop.

"Alpha, beta, gamma, delta is the code, and with the word delta," he continued, "dhrink every drop of it, as if it was the last thing you were dhrinking on earth; as if the Lord stooped down to give ye a cup of blessing from His great flagon of eternal happiness. Ye've got two kind hearts, but there's manny a day of throuble will come between ye and the end; and yet the end'll be right, God love ye! Now-alpha, beta, gamma, delta!"

With a merry laugh Dyck Calhoun turned up his cup and drained the liquid to the last drop. With a laugh not quite so merry, Sheila raised her mug and slowly drained the green happiness away.

"Isn't it good—isn't it like the love of God?" asked the old man. "Ain't I glad I had it for ye? Why I said I hadn't annything for ye to dhrink or eat, Lord only knows. There's nothing to eat, and there's only this to dhrink, and I hide it away under the bedclothes of time, as one might say. Ah, ye know, it's been there for three years, and I'd almost forgot it. It was a little angel from heaven whispered it to me whir ye stepped inside this house. I dunno why I kep' the stuff. Manny's the time I was tempted to dhrink it myself, and manny's the time something said to me, 'Not yet.' The Lord be praised, for I've had out of it more than I deserve!"

He took the mugs from their hands, and for a minute stood like some ancient priest who had performed a noble ritual. As Sheila looked at him, she kept saying to herself:

"He's a spirit; he isn't a man!"

Dyck's eye met that of Sheila, and he saw with the same feeling what was working in her heart.

"Well, we must be going," he said to Christopher Dogan. "We must get homeward, and we've had a good drink—the best I ever tasted. We're proud to pay our respects to you in your own house; and goodbye to you till we meet again."

His hand went out to the shoulder of the peasant and rested there for a second in friendly feeling. Then the girl stretched out her hand also. The old man took the two cups in one hand, and, reaching

out the other, let Sheila's fingers fall upon his own. He slowly crooked his neck, and kissed her fingers with that distinction mostly to be found among those few good people who live on the highest or the lowest social levels, or in native tents.

"Ah, please God we meet again! and that I be let to serve you, Miss Sheila Llyn. I have no doubt you could do with a little help some time or another, the same as the rest of us. For all that's come between us three, may it be given me, humble and poor, to help ye both that's helped me so!"

Dyck turned to go, and as he did so a thought came to him.

"If you hadn't food and drink for us, what have you for yourself, Christopher?" he asked. "Have you food to eat?"

"Ah, well—well, do ye think I'm no provider? There was no food cooked was what I was thinking; but come and let me show you."

He took the cover off a jar standing in a corner. "Here's good flour, and there's water, and there's manny a wild shrub and plant on the hillside to make soup, and what more does a man want? With the scone cooked and inside ye, don't ye feel as well as though ye'd had a pound of beef or a rasher of bacon? Sure, ye do. I know where there's clumps of wild radishes, and with a little salt they're good—the best. God bless ye!"

A few moments later, as he stood in his doorway and looked along the road, he saw two figures, the girl's head hardly higher than the man's shoulder. They walked as if they had much to get and were ready for it.

"Well, I dunno," he said to himself. "I dunno about you, Dyck Calhoun. You're wild, and ye have too manny mad friends, but you'll come all right in the end; and that pretty girl—God save her!—she'll come with a smile into your arms by and by, dear lad. But ye have far to go and much to do before that."

His head fell, his eyes stared out into the shining distance.

"I see for ye manny and manny a stroke of bad luck, and manny a wrong thing said of ye, and she not believing wan of them. But oh, my God, but oh!"—his clenched hands went to his eyes. "I wouldn't like to travel the path that's before ye—no!"

Down the long road the two young people travelled, gossiping much, both of them touched by something sad and mysterious, neither knowing why; both of them happy, too, for somehow they had come nearer together than years of ordinary life might have made possible. They thought of the old man and his hut, and then broke away into talk of their own countryside, of the war with France, of the growing rebellious spirit in Ireland, of riots in Dublin town, of trouble at Limerick, Cork, and Sligo.

At the gate of the mansion where Sheila was visiting, Dyck put into her hands the wild flowers he had picked as they passed, and said:

"Well, it's been a great day. I've never had a greater. Let's meet again, and soon! I'm almost every day upon the hill with my gun, and it'd be worth a lot to see you very soon."

"Oh, you'll be forgetting me by to-morrow," the girl said with a little wistfulness at her lips, for she had a feeling they would not meet on the morrow. Suddenly she picked from the bunch of wild flowers he had given her a little sprig of heather.

"Well, if we don't meet—wear that," she said, and, laughing over her shoulder, turned and ran into the grounds of Loyland Towers.

CHAPTER II

THE COMING OF A MESSENGER

When Dyck entered the library of Playmore, the first words he heard were these:

"Howe has downed the French at Brest. He's smashed the French fleet and dealt a sharp blow to the revolution. Hurrah!"

The words were used by Miles Calhoun, Dyck's father, as a greeting to him on his return from the day's sport.

Now, if there was a man in Ireland who had a narrow view and kept his toes pointed to the front, it was Miles Calhoun. His people had lived in Connemara for hundreds of years; and he himself had only one passion in life, which was the Protestant passion of prejudice. He had ever been a follower of Burke—a passionate follower, one who believed the French Revolution was a crime against humanity, a danger to the future of civilization.

He had resisted more vigorously than most men the progress of revolutionary sentiments in Ireland. He was aware that his son had far less rigid opinions than himself; that he even defended Wolfe Tone and Thomas Emmet against abuse and damnation. That was why he had delight in slapping his son in the face, whenever possible, with the hot pennant of victory for British power.

He was a man of irascible temperament and stern views, given to fits of exasperation. He was small of stature, with a round face, eyes that suddenly went red with feeling, and with none of the handsomeness of his son, who resembled his mother's family.

The mother herself had been a beautiful and remarkable woman. Dyck was, in a sense, a reproduction of her in body and mind, for a more cheerful and impetuous person never made a household happier or more imperfect than she made hers.

Her beauty and continual cheerfulness had always been the joy of Dyck's life, and because his mother had married his father—she was a woman of sense, with all her lightsome ways—he tried to regard his father with profound respect. Since his wife's death, however, Miles Calhoun had deteriorated; he had become unreasonable.

As the elder Calhoun made his announcement about the battle of Brest and the English victory, a triumphant smile lighted his flushed face, and under his heavy grey brows his eyes danced with malicious joy.

"Howe's a wonder!" he said. "He'll make those mad, red republicans hunt their holes. Eh, isn't that your view, Ivy?" he asked of a naval captain who had evidently brought the news.

Captain Ivy nodded.

"Yes, it's a heavy blow for the French bloodsuckers. If their ideas creep through Europe and get hold of England, God only knows what the end will be! In their view, to alter everything is the only way to put things right. No doubt they'll invent a new way to be born before they've finished."

"Well, that wouldn't be a bad idea," remarked Dyck. "The present way has its demerits."

"Yes, it throws responsibility upon the man, and gives a heap of trouble to the woman," said Captain Ivy with a laugh; "but they'll change it all, you'll see."

Dyck poured himself a glass of port, held it up, sniffed the aroma, and looked through the beautiful red tinge of the wine with a happy and critical eye.

"Well, the world could be remade in a lot of ways," he declared. "I shouldn't mind seeing a bit of a revolution in Ireland—but in England first," he hastened to add. "They're a more outcast folk than the Irish." His father scoffed.

"Look out, Dyck, or they'll drop you in jail if you talk like that!" he chided, his red face growing redder, his fingers nervously feeling the buttons on his picturesque silk waistcoat. "There's conspiracy in Ireland, and you never truly know if the man that serves you at your table, or brings you your horse, or puts a spade into your ground, isn't a traitor."

At that moment the door opened, and a servant entered the room. In his hand he carried a letter which, with marked excitement, he brought to Miles Calhoun.

"Sure, he's waiting, sir," he said.

"And who's he?" asked his master, turning the letter over, as though to find out by looking at the seal.

"Oh, a man of consequence, if we're to judge by the way he's clothed."

"Fit company, then?" his master asked, as he opened the heavily sealed letter.

"Well, I'm not saying that, for there's no company good enough for us," answered the higgledy-piggledy butler, with a quirk of the mouth; "but, as messengers go, I never seen one with more style

and point."

"Well, bring him to me," said Miles Calhoun. "Bring him to me, and I'll form my own judgment—though I have some confidence in yours."

"You could go further and fare worse, as the Papists say about purgatory," answered the old man with respectful familiarity.

Captain Ivy and Dyck grinned, but the head of the house seemed none too pleased at the freedom of the old butler.

"Bring him as he is," said Miles Calhoun. "Good God!" he added, for he just realized that the stamp of the seal was that of the Attorney-General of Ireland.

Then he read the letter and a flush swept over his face, making its red almost purple.

"Eternal damnation—eternal damnation!" he declared, holding the paper at arm's length a moment, inspecting it. He then handed it to Dyck. "Read that, lad. Then pack your bag, for we start for Dublin by daylight or before."

Dyck read the brief document and whistled softly to himself.

"Well, well, you've got to obey orders like that, I suppose," Dyck said. "They want to question us as to the state of the country here."

"I think we can tell them something. I wonder if they know how wide your travel is, how many people you see; and if they know, how did they come to know? There's spies all over the place. How do I know but the man who's just left this room isn't a spy, isn't the enemy of all of us here?"

"I'd suspect Michael Clones," remarked Dyck, "just as soon as Mulvaney."

"Michael Clones," said his father, and he turned to Captain Ivy, "Michael Clones I'd trust as I'd trust His blessed Majesty, George III. He's a rare scamp, is Michael Clones! He's no thicker than a cardboard, but he draws the pain out of your hurt like a mustard plaster. A man of better sense and greater roguery I've never met. You must see him, Captain Ivy. He's only about twelve years older than my son, but, like my son, there's no holding him, there's no control of him that's any good. He does what he wants to do in his own way—talks when he wants to talk, fights when he wants to fight. He's a man of men, is Michael Clones."

At that moment the door opened and the butler entered, followed by a tall, thin, Don Quixote sort of figure.

"His excellency," said Mulvaney, with a look slightly malevolent, for the visitor had refused his name. Then he turned and left the room.

At Mulvaney's words, an ironical smile crossed the face of the newcomer. Then he advanced to Miles Calhoun. Before speaking, however, he glanced sharply at Captain Ivy, threw an inquisitive look at Dyck, and said:

"I seem to have hurt the feelings of your butler, sir, but that cannot be helped. I have come from the Attorney-General. My name is Leonard Mallow—I'm the eldest son of Lord Mallow. I've been doing business in Limerick, and I bring a message from the Attorney-General to ask you to attend his office at the earliest moment."

Dyck Calhoun, noting his glance at a bottle of port, poured out a glass of the good wine and handed it over, saying:

"It'll taste better to you because you've been travelling hard, but it's good wine anyhow. It's been in the cellar for forty years, and that's something in a land like this."

Mallow accepted the glass of port, raised it with a little gesture of respect, and said:

"Long life to the King, and cursed be his enemies!" So saying he flung the wine down his throat—which seemed to gulp it like a well—wiped his lips with a handkerchief, and turned to Miles Calhoun again.

"Yes, it's good wine," he said; "as good as you'd get in the cellars of the Viceroy. I've seen strange things as I came. I've seen lights on the hills, and drunken rioters in the roads and behind hedges, and once a shot was fired at me; but here I am, safe and sound, carrying out my orders. What time will you start?" he added.

He took it for granted that the summons did not admit of rejection, and he was right. The document contained these words:

Trouble is brewing; indeed, it is at hand. Come, please, at once to Dublin, and give the Lord-Lieutenant and the Government a report upon your district. We do not hear altogether well of it, but no one has the knowledge you possess. In the name of His Majesty you are to present yourself at once at these offices in Dublin, and be assured that the Lord-Lieutenant will give you warm welcome through me. Your own loyalty gives much satisfaction here. I am, sir,

Your obedient servant,
JOHN MCNOWELL.

"You have confidence in the people's loyalty here?" asked Mallow.

"As great as in my own," answered Dyck cheerily. "Well, you ought to know what that is. At the same time, I've heard you're a friend of one or two dark spirits in the land."

"I hold no friendships that would do hurt to my country," answered Dyck sharply.

Mallow smiled satirically. "As we're starting at daylight, I suppose, I think I'll go to bed, if it may be you can put me up."

"Oh, Lord, yes! We can put you up, Mr. Mallow," said the old man. "You shall have as good a bed as you can find outside the Viceregal Lodge—a fourposter, wide and long. It's been slept in by many a man of place and power. But, Mr. Mallow, you haven't said you've had no dinner, and you'll not be going to bed in this house without your food. Did you shoot anything to-day, Dyck?" he asked his son.

"I didn't bring home a feather. There were no birds to-day, but there are the ducks I shot yesterday, and the quail."

"Oh, yes," said his father, "and there's the little roast pig, too. This is a day when we celebrate the anniversary of Irish power and life."

"What's that?" asked Mallow.

"That's the battle of the Boyne," answered his host with a little ostentation.

"Oh, you're one of the Peep-o'-Day Boys, then," remarked Mallow.

"I'm not saying that," answered the old man. "I'm not an Ulsterman, but I celebrate the coming of William to the Boyne. Things were done that day that'll be remembered when Ireland is whisked away into the Kingdom of Heaven. So you'll not go to bed till you've had dinner, Mr. Mallow! By me soul, I think I smell the little porker now. Dinner at five, to bed at eight, up before daylight, and off to Dublin when the light breaks. That's the course!" He turned to Captain Ivy. "I'm sorry, captain, but there's naught else to do, and you were going to-morrow at noon, anyhow, so it won't make much difference to you."

"No difference whatever," replied the sailorman. "I have to go to Dublin, too, and from there to Queenstown to join my ship, and from Queenstown to the coast of France to do some fighting."

"Please God!" remarked Miles Calhoun. "So be it!" declared Mallow.

"Amen!" said Dyck.

Once again Dyck looked the visitor straight in the eyes, and back in the horizon of Mallow's life-sky there shone the light of an evil star.

"There's the call to dinner," remarked Miles Calhoun, as a bell began ringing in the tower outside. "Come with me, Mr. Mallow, and I'll show you your room. You've had your horse put up, I hope?"

"Yes, and my bag brought in."

"Well, come along, then. There's no time to lose. I can smell the porker crawling from the oven."

"You're a master of tempting thoughts," remarked Mallow enthusiastically.

"Sheila—Sheila!" said Dyck Calhoun to himself where he stood.

CHAPTER III

THE QUARREL

The journey to Dublin was made by the Calhouns, their two guests, and Michael Clones, without incident of note. Arrived there, Miles Calhoun gave himself to examination by Government officials and to assisting the designs of the Peep-o'-Day Boys; and indeed he was present at the formation of the first Orange Lodge.

His narrow nature, his petty craft and malevolence, were useful in a time of anxiety for the State. Yet he had not enough ability to develop his position by the chances offered him. He had not a touch of genius; he had only bursts of Celtic passion, which he had not mind enough to control.

Indeed, as days, weeks and months went on, his position became less valuable to himself, and his financial affairs suffered from his own and his agent's bad management. In his particular district he was a power; in Dublin he soon showed the weaker side of his nature. He had a bad habit of making foes where he could easily have made friends. In his personal habits he was sober, but erratic.

Dyck had not his father's abstention from the luxuries of life. He drank, he gamed, he went where temptation was, and fell into it. He steadily diminished his powers of resistance to self-indulgence until one day, at a tavern, he met a man who made a great impression upon him.

This man was brilliant, ebullient, full of humour, character and life, knowing apparently all the lower world of Dublin, and moving with an assured step. It was Erris Boyne, the divorced husband of Mrs. Llyn and the father of Sheila Llyn; but this fact was not known to Dyck. There was also a chance of its not becoming known, because so many years had passed since Erris Boyne was divorced.

One day Erris Boyne said to Dyck:

"There's a supper to-night at the Breakneck Club. Come along and have a skinful. You'll meet people worth knowing. They're a damned fine lot of fellows for you to meet, Calhoun!"

"The Breakneck Club isn't a good name for a first-class institution," remarked Dyck, with a pause and a laugh; "but I'll come, if you'll fetch me."

Erris Boyne, who was eighteen years older than Dyck, laughed, flicked a little pinch of snuff at his nose with his finger.

"Dear lad, of course I'll come and fetch you," he said. "There's many a man has done worse than lead a gay stripling like you into pleasant ways. Bring along any loose change you have, for it may be a night of nights."

"Oh, they play cards, do they, at the Breakneck Club?" said Dyck, alive with interest.

"Well, call it what you like, but men must do something when they get together, and we can't be talking all the time. So pocket your shillings."

"Are they all the right sort?" asked Dyck, with a little touch of malice. "I mean, are they loyal and true?"

Erris Boyne laid a hand on Dyck's arm.

"Come and find out. Do you think I'd lead you into bad company? Of course Emmet and Wolfe Tone won't be there, nor any of that lot; but there'll be some men of the right stamp." He watched Dyck carefully out of the corner of his eye. "It's funny," he added, "that in Ireland the word loyal always means being true to the Union Jack, standing by King George and his crowd."

"Well, what would you have?" said Dyck. "For this is a day and age when being loyal to the King is more than aught else in all the Irish world. We're never two days alike, we Irish. There are the United Irishmen and the Defenders on one side, and the Peepo'-Day Boys, or Orangemen, on the other—Catholic and Protestant, at each other's throats. Then there's a hand thrust in, and up goes the sword, and the rifles, pikes, and bayonets; and those that were ready to mutilate or kill each other fall into each other's arms."

Erris Boyne laughed. "Well, there'll soon be an end to that. The Irish Parliament is slipping into disrepute. It wouldn't surprise me if the astute English bribe them into a union, to the ruin of Irish Independence. Yet maybe, before that comes, the French will have a try for power here. And upon my

word, if I have to live under foreign rule, I'd as leave have a French whip over me as an English!" He came a step nearer, his voice lowered a little. "Have you heard the latest news from France? They're coming with a good-sized fleet down to the south coast. Have you heard it?"

"Oh, there's plenty one hears one doesn't believe is gospel," answered Dyck, his eyes half closing. "I'm not believing all I hear, as if it was a prayer-meeting. Anything may happen here; Ireland's a woman—very uncertain."

Dyck flicked some dust from his waistcoat, and dropped his eyes, because he was thinking of two women he had known; one of them an angel now in company of her sister angels—his mother; the other a girl he had met on the hills of Connemara, a wonderfully pretty girl of seventeen. How should he know that the girl was Erris Boyne's daughter?—although there were times when some gesture of Boyne, some quick look, some lifting of the eyebrows, brought back the memory of Sheila Llyn, as it did now.

Since Dyck left his old home he had seen her twice; once at Loyland Towers, and once at her home in Limerick. The time he had spent with her had been very brief, but full of life, interest, and character. She was like some piquant child, bold, beautiful, uncertain, caressing in her manner one instant, and distant at another.

She had said radiant things, had rallied him, had shown him where a twenty-nine-pound salmon had been caught in a stream, and had fired at and brought down a pheasant outside the covert at Loyland Towers. Whether at Loyland Towers, or at her mother's house in Limerick, there was no touch of forwardness in her, or in anything she said or did. She was the most natural being, the freest from affectation, he had ever known.

As Erris Boyne talked to him, the memory of Sheila flooded his mind, and on the flood his senses swam like swans. He had not her careful composure. He was just as real, but he had the wilfulness of man. She influenced him as no woman had ever yet done; but he saw no happy ending to the dream. He was too poor to marry; he had no trade or profession; his father's affairs were in a bad way. He could not bring himself to join the army or the navy; and yet, as an Irishman moved by political ideals, with views at once critical and yet devoted to the crown, he was not in a state to settle down.

He did not know that Erris Boyne was set to capture him for the rebel cause. How could he know that Boyne was an agent of the most evil forces in Ireland—an agent of skill and address, prepossessing, with the face of a Celtic poet and the eye of an assassin?

Boyne's object was to bring about the downfall of Dyck Calhoun—that is, his downfall as a patriot. At the Breakneck Club this bad business began. Dyck had seen many people, representing the gaiety and devilry of life; but it was as though many doubtful people, many reckless ones, all those with purposes, fads, and fancies, were there. Here was an irresponsible member of a Government department; there an officer of His Majesty's troops; beyond, a profligate bachelor whose reputation for traitorous diplomacy was known and feared. Yet everywhere were men known in the sporting, gaming, or political world, in sea life or land life, most of whom had a character untouched by criticism.

It was at this club that Dyck again met that tall, ascetic messenger from the Attorney-General, who had brought the message to Miles Calhoun. It was with this man—Leonard Mallow, eldest son of Lord Mallow—that Dyck, with three others, played cards one afternoon.

The instinctive antipathy which had marked their first introduction was carried on to this later meeting. Dyck distrusted Mallow, and allowed his distrust exercise. It was unfortunate that Mallow won from him three-fourths of the money he had brought to the club, and won it with a smile not easy to forgive.

Dyck had at last secured sudden success in a scheme of his cards when Mallow asked with a sneer:

"Did you learn that at your home in heaven?"

"Don't they teach it where you live in hell?" was Dyck's reply.

At this Mallow flicked Dyck across the face with his handkerchief.

"That's what they teach where I belong."

"Well, it's easy to learn, and we'll do the sum at any time or place you please." After a moment Dyck continued: "I wouldn't make a fuss over it. Let's finish the game. There's no good prancing till the sport's ready; so I'll sit and learn more of what they teach in hell!"

Dyck had been drinking, or he would not have spoken so; and when he was drunk daring was strong in him. He hated profoundly this man—so self-satisfied and satanic.

He kept a perfect coolness, however. Leonard Mallow should not see that he was upset. His wanton wordiness came to his rescue, and until the end of the game he played with sang-froid, daring, and skill. He loved cards; he loved the strife of skill against skill, of trick against trick, of hand against hand. He had never fought a duel in his life, but he had no fear of doing so.

At length, having won back nearly all he had lost, he rose to his feet and looked round.

"Is there any one here from whom I can ask a favour?"

Several stepped forward. Dyck nodded. One of them he knew. It was Sir Almeric Foyle.

"Thank you, Sir Almeric," he said; "thank you. Shall it be swords or pistols?" he asked his enemy, coolly.

"Swords, if you please," remarked Mallow grimly, for he had a gift with the sword.

Dyck nodded again.

"As you will. As you will!"

CHAPTER IV

THE DUEL

It was a morning such as could only be brought into existence by the Maker of mornings in Ireland. It was a day such as Dublin placed away carefully into the pantechicon of famous archives.

The city of Dublin was not always clean, but in the bright, gorgeous sun her natural filth was no menace to the eye, no repulse to the senses. Above the Liffey, even at so early an hour, the heat shimmers like a silver mist. The bells of churches were ringing, and the great cathedral bells boomed in thrilling monotony over the peaceful city. Here and there in the shabby yet renowned streets, horsemen moved along; now and then the costermonger raised his cry of fresh fruit, flowers, and "distinguished vegetables."

People moved into church doorways on their way to mass or confession—some bright and rather gorgeous beings, some in deep mourning, shy, reserved, and obscure. Here and there, also, in certain streets—where officials lived or worked—were soldiers afoot; soldiers with carbines and long bayonets, with tall, slightly peaked hats, smart red coats, belts crossing their breasts, knee-breeches and leggings, and all with epaulets shining. They were in marked contrast to the peasant folk with the high-peaked soft hat, knee-breeches, rough tail-coat, and stockings, some with rifles, some with pikes, some with powder-horns slung under their arms or in the small of the back.

Besides this show of foot-soldiers—that is, regulars and irregulars of the Cornwallis Regiment, and men of the Defenders and the Peep-o'-Day Boys—there were little groups of cavalry making their way to the parade-ground, the castle, the barracks, or the courts.

Beyond these there was the jaunting-car trundling over the rough cobblestone street, or bumping in and out of dangerous holes. Whips cracked, and the loud voices of jarveys shouted blatant humour and Irish fun at horse and passenger. Here and there, also, some stately coach, bedizened with arms of the quality, made its way through the chief streets, or across the bridges of the Liffey.

Then came the general population, moving cheerfully in the inspiring sun; for Irishmen move so much in a moist atmosphere that on a sunshiny day all tristesse of life seems changed, as in a flash, into high spirits and much activity. Not that the country, at its worst, is slow-footed or depressed; for wit is always at the elbow of want.

Never in all Ireland's years had she a more beautiful day than that in which Dyck Calhoun and the Hon. Leonard Mallow met to settle their account in a secluded corner of Phoenix Park. It was not the usual place for duels. The seconds had taken care to keep the locale from the knowledge of the public;

especially as many who had come to know of the event at the Breakneck Club were eager to be present.

The affair began an hour after sunrise. Neither Dyck nor Leonard Mallow slept at home the night before, but in separate taverns near Phoenix Park. Mallow came almost jauntily to the obscure spot. Both men had sensitiveness, and both entered the grounds with a certain sense of pleasure.

Dyck moved and spoke like a man charged with some fluid which had abstracted him from life's monotonous routine. He had to consider the chance of never leaving the grounds alive; yet as he entered the place, where smooth grass between the trees made good footing for the work to be done, the thrill of the greenery, the sound of the birds, the flick of a lizard across the path, and the distant gay leap of a young deer, brought to his senses a gust of joyous feeling.

"I never smelled such air!" he said to one of the seconds. "I never saw the sun so beautiful!" He sniffed the air and turned his face towards the sun. "Well, it's a day for Ireland," he added, in response to a gravely playful remark of Sir Almeric Foyle. "Ireland never was so sweet. Nature's provoking us!"

"Yes, it's a pity," said Sir Almeric. "But I'm not thinking of bad luck for you, Calhoun."

Dyck's smile seemed to come from infinite distance. He was not normal; he was submerged. He was in the great, consuming atmosphere of the bigger world, and the greater life. He even did not hate Mallow at the moment. The thing about to be done was to him a test of manhood. It was a call upon the courage of the soul, a challenge of life, strength, and will.

As Mallow entered the grounds, the thought of Sheila Llyn crossed Dyck's mind, and the mental sight of her gladdened the eyes of his soul. For one brief instant he stood lost in the mind's look; then he stepped forward, saluted, shook hands with Mallow, and doffed his coat and waistcoat.

As he did so, he was conscious of a curious coldness, even of dampness, in the hand which had shaken that of Mallow. Mallow's hand had a clammy touch—clammy, but firm and sure. There was no tremor in the long, thin fingers nor at the lips—the thin, ascetic lips, as of a secret-service man—but in his eyes was a dark fire of purpose. The morning had touched him, but not as it had thrown over Dyck its mantle of peace. Mallow also had enjoyed the smell and feeling of it all, but with this difference—it had filled him with such material joy that he could not bear the thought of leaving it. It gave him strength of will, which would add security to his arm and wrist. Yet, as he looked at Dyck, he saw that his work was cut out for him; for in all his days he had never seen a man so well- possessed, so surely in hand.

Dyck had learned swordsmanship with as skilled a master as Ireland had known, and he had shown, in getting knowledge of the weapon, a natural instinct and a capacity worthy of the highest purpose. He had handled the sword since he was six, and his play was better than that of most men; but this was, in fact, his first real duel. In the troubled state of Ireland, with internal discord, challenge, and attack, he had more than once fought, and with success; but that was in the rough-and-tumble of life's chances, as it were, with no deliberate plan to fight according to the rules. Many times, of course, in the process of his training, he had fought as men fight in duels, but with this difference—that now he was permitted to disable or kill his foe.

It was clear that one or the other would not leave this ground—this verdant, beautiful piece of mother earth—exactly as he entered it. He would leave it wounded, incapable, or dead. Indeed, both might leave it wounded, and the chances of success were with the older man, Mallow, whose experience would give him an advantage.

Physically, there was not a vast deal to choose between the two men. Mallow was lank and tall, nervously self-contained, finely concentrated, and vigorous. Dyck was broad of shoulder, well set up, muscular, and with a steadier eye than that of his foe. Also, as the combat developed, it was clear that he had a hand as steady as his eye. What was more, his wrist had superb strength and flexibility; it was as enduring and vital as the forefoot and ankle of a tiger. As a pair they were certainly notable, and would give a good account of themselves.

No one of temperament who observed the scene could ever forget it. The light was perfect—evenly distributed, clear enough to permit accuracy of distance in a stroke. The air was still, gently bracing, and, like most Irish air, adorably sweet.

The spot chosen for the fight was a sort of avenue between great trees, whose broad leaves warded off the direct sun, and whose shade had as yet no black shadows. The turf was as elastic to the foot as a firm mattress. In the trees, birds were singing with liveliness; in the distance, horned cattle browsed, and a pair of horses stood gazing at the combatants, startled, no doubt, by this invasion of their pasturage. From the distance came the faint, mellow booming of church-bells.

The two men fighting had almost the air of gladiators. Their coats were off, and the white linen of their shirts looked gracious; while the upraised left hand of the fighters balancing the sword-thrust and the weight of the body had an almost singular beauty. Of the two, Dyck was the more graceful, the steadier, the quicker in his motions.

Vigilant Dyck was, but not reckless. He had made the first attack, on the ground that the aggressor gains by boldness, if that boldness is joined to skill; and Dyck's skill was of the best. His heart was warm. His momentary vision of Sheila Llyn remained with him—not as a vision, rather as a warmth in his inmost being, something which made him intensely alert, cheerful, defiant, exactly skilful.

He had need of all his skill, for Mallow was set to win the fight. He felt instinctively what was working in Dyck's mind. He had fought a number of duels, and with a certain trick or art he had given the end to the lives of several. He became conscious, however, that Dyck had a particular stroke in mind, which he himself was preventing by masterful methods. It might be one thing or another, but in view of Dyck's training it would perhaps be the Enniscorthy touch.

Again and again Dyck pressed his antagonist backward, seeking to muddle his defence and to clear an opening for his own deadly stroke; but the other man also was a master, and parried successfully.

Presently, with a quick move, Mallow took the offensive, and tried to unsettle Dyck's poise and disorganize his battle-plan. For an instant the tempestuous action, the brilliant, swift play of the sword, the quivering flippancy of the steel, gave Dyck that which almost disconcerted him. Yet he had a grip of himself, and preserved his defence intact; though once his enemy's steel caught his left shoulder, making it bleed. The seconds, however, decided that the thrust was not serious, and made no attempt to interrupt the combat.

Dyck kept singularly cool. As Mallow's face grew flushed, his own grew paler, but it was the paleness of intensity and not of fear. Each man's remarkable skill in defence was a good guarantee against disaster due to carelessness. Seldom have men fought so long and accomplished so little in the way of blood-letting. At length, however, Dyck's tactics changed. Once again he became aggressive, and he drove his foe to a point where the skill of both men was tried to the uttermost. It was clear the time had come for something definite. Suddenly Dyck threw himself back with an agile step, lunged slightly to one side, and then in a gallant foray got the steel point into the sword-arm of his enemy. That was the Enniscorthy stroke, which had been taught him by William Tandy, the expert swordsman, and had been made famous by Lord Welling, of Enniscorthy. It succeeded, and it gave Dyck the victory, for Mallow's sword dropped from his hand.

A fatigued smile came to Mallow's lips. He clasped the wounded arm with his left hand as the surgeon came forward.

"Well, you got it home," he said to Dyck; "and it's deftly done."

"I did my best," answered Dyck. "Give me your hand, if you will."

With a wry look Mallow, now seated on the old stump of a tree, held out his left hand. It was covered with blood.

"I think we'll have to forego that courtesy, Calhoun," he said. "Look at the state of my hand! It's good blood," he added grimly. "It's damned good blood, but—but it won't do, you see."

"I'm glad it was no worse," said Dyck, not touching the bloody hand. "It's a clean thrust, and you'll be better from it soon. These great men"—he smiled towards the surgeons—"will soon put you right. I got my chance with the stroke, and took it, because I knew if I didn't you'd have me presently."

"You'll have a great reputation in Dublin town now, and you'll deserve it," Mallow added adroitly, the great paleness of his features, however, made ghastly by the hatred in his eyes.

Dyck did not see this look, but he felt a note of malice—a distant note—in Mallow's voice. He saw that what Mallow had said was fresh evidence of the man's arrogant character. It did not offend him, however, for he was victor, and could enter the Breakneck Club or Dublin society with a tranquil eye.

Again Mallow's voice was heard.

"I'd have seen you damned to hell, Calhoun, before I'd have apologized at the Breakneck Club; but after a fight with one of the best swordsmen in Ireland I've learned a lot, and I'll apologize now—completely."

The surgeon had bound up the slight wound in Dyck's shoulder, had stopped the bleeding, and was now helping him on with his coat. The operation had not been without pain, but this demonstration

from his foe was too much for him. It drove the look of pain from his face; it brought a smile to his lips. He came a step nearer.

"I'm as obliged to you as if you'd paid for my board and lodging, Mallow," he said; "and that's saying a good deal in these days. I'll never have a bigger fight. You're a greater swordsman than your reputation. I must have provoked you beyond reason," he went on gallantly. "I think we'd better forget the whole thing."

"I'm a Loyalist," Mallow replied. "I'm a Loyalist, and if you're one, too, what reason should there be for our not being friends?"

A black cloud flooded Calhoun's face.

"If—if I'm a Loyalist, you say! Have you any doubt of it? If you have—"

"You wish your sword had gone into my heart instead of my arm, eh?" interrupted Mallow. "How easily I am misunderstood! I meant nothing by that 'if.'" He smiled, and the smile had a touch of wickedness. "I meant nothing by it—nothing at all. As we are both Loyalists, we must be friends. Good-bye, Calhoun!"

Dyck's face cleared very slowly. Mallow was maddening, but the look of the face was not that of a foe. "Well, let us be friends," Dyck answered with a cordial smile. "Good-bye," he added. "I'm damned sorry we had to fight at all. Good-bye!"

CHAPTER V

THE KILLING OF ERRIS BOYNE

"There's many a government has made a mess of things in Ireland," said Erris Boyne; "but since the day of Cromwell the Accursed this is the worst. Is there a man in Ireland that believes in it, or trusts it? There are men that support it, that are served by it, that fill their pockets out of it; but by Joseph and by Mary, there's none thinks there couldn't be a better! Have a little more marsala, Calhoun?"

With these words, Boyne filled up the long glass out of which Dyck Calhoun had been drinking—drinking too much. Shortly before Dyck had lost all his cash at the card-table. He had turned from it penniless and discomfited to see Boyne, smiling, and gay with wine, in front of him.

Boyne took him by the arm.

"Come with me," said he. "There's no luck for you at the tables to-day. Let's go where we can forget the world, where we can lift the banner of freedom and beat the drums of purpose. Come along, lad!"

Boyne had ceased to have his earlier allurements for Dyck Calhoun, but his smile was friendly, his manner was hospitable, and he was on the spot. The time was critical for Dyck—critical and dangerous. He had lost money heavily; he had even exhausted his mother's legacy.

Of late he had seen little of his father, and the little he had seen was not fortunate. They had quarrelled over Dyck's wayward doings. Miles Calhoun had said some hard things to him, and Dyck had replied that he would cut out his own course, trim his own path, walk his own way. He had angered his father terribly, and Miles, in a burst of temper, had disclosed the fact that his own property was in peril. They had been, estranged ever since; but the time had come when Dyck must at least secure the credit of his father's name at his bank to find the means of living.

It was with this staring him in the face that Erris Boyne's company seemed to offer at least a recovery of his good spirits. Dissipated as Boyne's look was, he had a natural handsomeness which, with good care of himself personally, well-appointed clothes, a cheerful manner, and witty talk, made him palatable to careless-living Dublin.

This Dublin knew little of Boyne's present domestic life. It did not know that he had injured his second wife as badly as he had wronged his first—with this difference, however, that his first wife was a lady, while his second wife, Noreen, was a beautiful, quick-tempered, lovable eighteen-year-old girl, a graduate of the kitchen and dairy, when he took her to himself. He had married her in a mad moment

after his first wife —Mrs. Llyn, as she was now called—had divorced him; and after the first thrill of married life was over, nothing remained with Boyne except regret that he had sold his freedom for what he might, perhaps, have had without marriage.

Then began a process of domestic torture which alienated Noreen from him, and roused in her the worst passions of human nature. She came to know of his infidelities, and they maddened her. They had no children, and in the end he had threatened her with desertion. When she had retorted in strong words, he slapped her face, and left her with an ugly smile.

The house where they lived was outside Dublin, in a secluded spot, yet not far from stores and shops. There was this to be said for Noreen— that she kept her home spotlessly clean, even with two indifferent servants. She had a gift for housewifery, which, at its best, was as good as anything in the world, and far better than could be found in most parts of Ireland.

Of visitors they had few, if any, and the young wife was left alone to brood upon her wrongs. Erris Boyne had slapped her face on the morning of the day when he met Dyck Calhoun in the hour of his bad luck. He did not see the look in her face as he left the house.

Ruthless as he was, he realized the time had come when by bold effort he might get young Calhoun wholly into his power. He began by getting Dyck into the street. Then he took him by an indirect route to what was, reputedly, a tavern of consequence. There choice spirits met on occasion, and dark souls, like Boyne, planned adventures. Outwardly it was a tavern of the old class, superficially sedate, and called the Harp and Crown. None save a very few conspirators knew how great a part it played in the plan to break the government of Ireland and to ruin England's position in the land.

The entrance was by two doors—one the ordinary public entrance, the other at the side of the house, which was on a corner. This could be opened by a skeleton key owned by Erris Boyne.

He and Dyck entered, however, by the general entrance, because Boyne had forgotten his key. They passed through the bar-parlour, nodding to one or two habitués, and presently were bestowed in a room, not large, but well furnished. It was quiet and alluring on this day when the world seemed disconcerting. So pleasantly did the place affect Dyck's spirits that, as he sat down in the room which had often housed worse men than himself, he gave a sigh of relief.

They played cards, and Dyck won. He won five times what he had lost at the club. This made him companionable.

"It's a poor business-cards," he said at last. "It puts one up in the clouds and down in the ditch all at the same time. I tell you this, Boyne—I'm going to stop. No man ought to play cards who hasn't a fortune; and my fortune, I'm sorry to say, is only my face!" He laughed bitterly.

"And your sword—you've forgotten that, Calhoun. You've a lot of luck in your sword."

"Well, I've made no money out of it so far," Dyck retorted cynically.

"Yet you've put men with reputations out of the running, men like Mallow."

"Oh, that was a bit of luck and a few tricks I've learned. I can't start a banking-account on that."

"But you can put yourself in the way of winning what can't be bought."

"No—no English army for me, thank you—if that's what you mean."

"It isn't what I mean. In the English army a man's a slave. He can neither eat, nor drink, nor sleep without being under command. He has to do a lot of dirty work without having voice in the policy. He's a child of discipline and order."

"And a damned good thing that would be for most of us!" retorted Dyck.

"But I'm not one of the most."

"I know that. Try a little more of this marsala, Calhoun. It's the best in the place, and it's got a lot of good stuff. I've been coming to the Harp and Crown for many years, and I've never had a bad drink all that time. The old landlord is a genius. He doesn't put on airs. He's a good man, is old Swinton, and there's nothing good in the drink of France that you can't get here."

"Well, if that's true, how does it happen?" asked Dyck, with a little flash of interest. "Why should this little twopenny, one-horse place— I mean in size and furnishings—have such luck as to get the best there is in France? It means a lot of trouble, eh?"

"It means some trouble. But let me tell you"—he leaned over the table and laid a hand on Dyck's, which was a little nervous—"let me speak as an old friend to you, if I may. Here are the facts. For many a year, you know as well as I do, ships have been coming from France to Ireland with the very best wines and liquors, and taking back the very best wool- -smuggled, of course. Well, our little landlord here is the damnedest rogue of all. The customs never touch him. From the coast the stuff comes up to Dublin without a check, and, as he's a special favourite, he gets the best to be had in la belle France."

"Why is he such a favourite?" asked Dyck.

Erris Boyne laughed, not loudly, but suggestively. "When a lady kisses a man on the lips, of her own free will, and puts her arm around his neck, is it done, do you think, because it's her duty to do it or die? No, it's because she likes the man; because the man is a good friend to her; because it's money in her pocket. That's the case with old Swinton. France kisses him, as it were, because"—he paused, as though debating what to say—"because France knows he'd rather be under her own revolutionary government than under the monarchy of England."

His voice had resonance, and, as he said these words, it had insistence.

"Do you know, Calhoun, I think old Swinton is right. We suffer here because monarchy, with its cruel hand of iron, mistrusts us, brutalizes us."

He did not see enlightenment come into the half-drunken eyes of Dyck. He only realized that Dyck was very still, and strangely, deeply interested.

"I tell you, Calhoun, we need in Ireland something of the spirit that's alive in France to-day. They've cleaned out the kings—Louis's and Marie's heads have dropped into the basket. They're sweeping the dirt out of France; they're cleaning the dark places; they're whitewashing Versailles and sawdusting the Tuileries; they're purging the aristocratic guts of France; they're starting for the world a reformation which will make it clean. Not America alone, but England, and all Europe, will become republics."

"England?" asked Dyck in a low, penetrating voice. "Aye, England, through Ireland. Ireland will come first, then Wales, Scotland, and England. Dear lad, the great day is come—the greatest the world has ever known. France, the spirit of it, is alive. It will purge and cleanse the universe!"

The suspicious, alert look passed from Dyck's eyes, but his face had become flushed. He reached out and poured himself another glass of wine.

"What you say may be true, Boyne. It may be true, but I wouldn't put faith in it—not for one icy minute. I don't want to see here in Ireland the horrors and savagery of France. I don't want to see the guillotine up on St. Stephen's Green."

Boyne felt that he must march carefully. He was sure of his game; but there were difficulties, and he must not throw his chances away. Dyck was in a position where, with his inflammable nature, he could be captured.

"Well, I'll tell you, Calhoun. I don't know which is worse—Ireland bloody with shootings and hangings, Ulster up in the north and Cork in the south, from the Giant's Causeway to Tralee; no two sets of feet dancing alike, with the bloody hand of England stretching out over the Irish Parliament like death itself; or France ruling us. How does the English government live here? Only by bribery and purchases. It buys its way. Isn't that true?"

Dyck nodded. "Yes, it's true in a way," he replied. "It's so, because we're what we are. We've never been properly put in our places. The heel on our necks—that's the way to do it."

Boyne looked at the flushed, angry face. In spite of Dyck's words, he felt that his medicine was working well.

"Listen to me, Calhoun," he said softly. "You've got to do something. You're living an idle life. You're in debt. You've ruined your independent fortune at the tables. There are but two courses open to you. One is to join the British forces—to be a lieutenant, a captain, a major, a colonel, or a general, in time; to shoot and cut and hang and quarter, and rule with a heavy rod. That's one way."

"So you think I'm fit for nothing but the sword, eh?" asked Dyck with irony. "You think I've got no brains for anything except the army."

Boyne laughed. "Have another drink, Calhoun." He poured out more wine. "Oh, no, not the army alone; there's the navy—and there's the French navy! It's the best navy in the world, the freest and the greatest, and with Bonaparte going at us, England will have enough to do—too much, I'm thinking. So

there's a career in the French navy open. And listen— before you and I are two months older, the French navy will be in the harbours of Ireland, and the French army will land here." He reached out and grasped Dyck's arm. "There's no liberty of freedom under the Union Jack. What do you think of the tricolour? It's a great flag, and under it the world is going to be ruled—England, Spain, Italy, Holland, Prussia, Austria, and Russia—all of them. The time is ripe. You've got your chance. Take it on, dear lad, take it on."

Dyck did not raise his head. He was leaning forward with both arms on the table, supporting himself firmly; his head was bowed as though with deep interest in what Boyne said. And, indeed, his interest was great— so great that all his manhood, vigour, all his citizenship, were vitally alive. Yet he did not lift his head.

"What's that you say about French ships in the harbours of Ireland?" he said in a tone that showed interest. "Of course, I know there's been a lot of talk of a French raid on Ireland, but I didn't know it was to be so soon."

"Oh, it's near enough! It's all been arranged," replied Boyne. "There'll be ships-war-ships, commanded by Hoche. They'll have orders to land on the coast, to join the Irish patriots, to take control of the operations, and then to march on—"

He was going to say "march on Dublin," but he stopped. He was playing a daring game. If he had not been sure of his man, he would not have been so frank and fearless.

He did not, however, mislead Dyck greatly. Dyck had been drinking a good deal, but this knowledge of a French invasion, and a sense of what Boyne was trying to do, steadied his shaken emotions; held him firmly in the grip of practical common sense. He laughed, hiccuped a little, as though he was very drunk, and said:

"Of course the French would like to come to Ireland; they'd like to seize it and hold it. Why, of course they would! Don't we know all that's been and gone? Aren't Irishmen in France grown rich in industry there after having lost every penny of their property here? Aren't there Irishmen there, always conniving to put England at defiance here by breaking her laws, cheating her officers, seducing her patriots? Of course; but what astounds me is that a man of your standing should believe the French are coming here now to Ireland. No, no, Boyne; I'm not taking your word for any of these things. You're a gossip; you're a damned, pertinacious, preposterous gossip, and I'll say it as often as you like."

"So it's proof you want, is it? Well, then, here it is."

Boyne drew from his pocket a small leather-bound case and took from it a letter, which he laid on the table in front of Dyck.

Dyck looked at the document, then said:

"Ah, that's what you are, eh?—a captain in the French artillery! Well, that'd be a surprise in Ireland if it were told."

"It isn't going to be told unless you tell it, Calhoun, and you're too much of a sportsman for that. Besides:

"Why shouldn't you have one of these if you want it—if you want it!"

"What'd be the good of my wanting it? I could get a commission here in the army of George III, if I wanted it, but I don't want it; and any man that offers it to me, I'll hand it back with thanks and be damned to you!"

"Listen to me, then, Calhoun," remarked Boyne, reaching out a hand to lay it on Dyck's arm.

Dyck saw the motion, however, and carefully drew back in his chair. "I'm not an adventurer," he said; "but if I were, what would there be in it for me?"

Boyne misunderstood the look on Dyck's face. He did not grasp the meaning behind the words, and he said to him:

"Oh, a good salary—as good as that of a general, with a commission and the spoils of war! That's the thing in the French army that counts for so much—spoils of war. When they're out on a country like this, they let their officers loose—their officers and men. Did you ever hear tell of a French army being pinched for fodder, or going thirsty for drink, or losing its head for poverty or indigence?"

"No, I never did."

"Well, then, take the advice of an officer of the French army resident now in Dublin," continued Boyne, laughing, "who has the honour of being received as the friend of Mr. Dyck Calhoun of Playmore! Take your hand in the game that's going on! For a man as young as you, with brains and ambition, there's no height he mightn't reach in this country. Think of it—Ireland free from English control; Ireland, with all her dreams, living her own life, fearless, independent, as it was in days of yore. Why, what's to prevent you, Dyck Calhoun, from being president of the Irish Republic? You have brains, looks, skill, and a wonderful tongue. None but a young man could take on the job, for it will require boldness, skill, and the recklessness of perfect courage. Isn't it good enough for you?"

"What's the way to do it?" asked Dyck, still holding on to his old self grimly. "How is it to be done?" He spoke a little thickly, for, in spite of himself, the wine was clogging his senses. It had been artistically drugged by Boyne.

"Listen to me, Calhoun," continued Boyne. "I've known you now some time. We've come in and gone out together. This day was inevitable. You were bound to come to it one way or another. Man, you have a heart of iron; you have the courage of Caesar or Alexander; you have the chance of doing what no Englishman could ever do—Cromwell, or any other. Well, then, don't you see the fateful moment has come in Irish life and history? Strife everywhere! Alone, what can we do? Alone, if we try to shake off the yoke that binds us we shall be shattered, and our last end be worse than our first. But with French ships, French officers and soldiers, French guns and ammunition, with the trained men of the French army to take control here, what amelioration of our weakness, what confidence and skill on our side! Can you doubt what the end will be? Answer me, man, don't you see it all? Isn't it clear to you? Doesn't such a cause enlist you?"

With a sudden burst of primitive anger, Dyck got to his feet, staggering a little, but grasping the fatal meaning of the whole thing. He looked Erris Boyne in the eyes. His own were bloodshot and dissipated, but there was a look in them of which Boyne might well take heed.

Boyne had not counted on Dyck's refusal; or, if it had occurred to him, the remedy, an ancient one, was ready to his fingers. The wine was drugged. He had watched the decline of Dyck's fortunes with an eye of appreciation; he had seen the clouds of poverty and anxiety closing in. He had known of old Miles Calhoun's financial difficulties. He had observed Dyck's wayside loitering with revolutionists, and he had taken it with too much seriousness. He knew the condition of Dyck's purse.

He was not prepared for Dyck's indignant outburst.

"I tell you this, Erris Boyne, there's none has ever tried me as you have done! What do you think I am—a thing of the dirty street-corner, something to be swept up and cast into the furnace of treason? Look you, after to-day you and I will never break bread or drink wine together. No—by Heaven, no! I don't know whether you've told me the truth or not, but I think you have. There's this to say—I shall go from this place to Dublin Castle, and shall tell them there—without mentioning your name— what you've told about the French raid. Now, by God, you're a traitor! You oughtn't to live, and if you'll send your seconds to me I'll try and do with you as I did with Leonard Mallow. Only mark me, Erris Boyne, I'll put my sword into your heart. You understand—into your filthy heart!"

At that moment the door of the room opened, and a face looked in for an instant—the face of old Swinton, the landlord of the Harp and Crown. Suddenly Boyne's look changed. He burst into a laugh, and brought his fists down on the table between them with a bang.

"By Joseph and by Mary, but you're a patriot, Calhoun! I was trying to test you. I was searching to find the innermost soul of you. The French fleet, my commission in the French army, and my story about the landlord are all bosh. If I meant what I told you, do you think I'd have been so mad as to tell you so much, damn it? Have you no sense, man? I wanted to find out exactly how you stood—faithful or unfaithful to the crown—and I've found out. Sit down, sit down, Calhoun, dear lad. Take your hand off your sword. Remember, these are terrible days. Everything I said about Ireland is true. What I said about France is false. Sit down, man, and if you're going to join the king's army—as I hope and trust you will—then here's something to help you face the time between." He threw on the table a packet of notes. "They're good and healthy, and will buy you what you need. There's not much. There's only a hundred pounds, but I give it to you with all my heart, and you can pay it back when the king's money comes to you, or when you marry a rich woman."

He said it all with a smile on his face. It was done so cleverly, with so much simulated sincerity, that Dyck, in his state of semi-drunkenness, could not, at the instant, place him in his true light. Besides, there was something handsome and virile in Boyne's face—and untrue; but the untruth Dyck did not at the moment see.

Never in his life had Boyne performed such prodigies of dissimulation. He was suddenly like a

schoolboy disclosing the deeds of some adventurous knight. He realized to the full the dangers he had run in disclosing the truth; for it was the truth that he had told.

So serious was the situation, to his mind, that one thing seemed inevitable. Dyck must be kidnapped at once and carried out of Ireland. It would be simple. A little more drugged wine, and he would be asleep and powerless—it had already tugged at him. With the help of his confreres in the tavern, Dyck could be carried out, put on a lugger, and sent away to France.

There was nothing else to do. Boyne had said truly that the French fleet meant to come soon. Dyck must not be able to give the thing away before it happened. The chief thing now was to prime him with the drugged wine till he lost consciousness, and then carry him away to the land of the guillotine. Dyck's tempestuous nature, the poetry and imagination of him, would quickly respond to French culture, to the new orders of the new day in France. Meanwhile, he must be soaked in drugged drink.

Already the wine had played havoc with him; already stupefaction was coming over his senses. With a good-natured, ribald laugh, Boyne poured out another glass of marsala and pushed it gently over to Dyck's fingers.

"My gin to your marsala," he said, and he raised his own glass of gin, looking playfully over the top to Dyck.

With a sudden loosening of all the fibres of his nature, Dyck raised the glass of marsala to his lips and drained it off almost at a gulp.

"You're a prodigious liar, Boyne," he said. "I didn't think any one could lie so completely."

"I'll teach you how, Calhoun. It's not hard. I'll teach you how."

He passed a long cigar over the table to Dyck, who, however, did not light it, but held it in his fingers. Boyne struck a light and held it out across the small table. Dyck leaned forward, but, as he did so, the wine took possession of his senses. His head fell forward in sleep, and the cigar dropped from his fingers.

"Ah, well—ah, well, we must do some business now!" remarked Boyne. He leaned over Dyck for a moment. "Yes, sound asleep," he said, and laughed scornfully to himself. "Well, when it's dark we must get him away. He'll sleep for four or five hours, and by that time he'll be out on the way to France, and the rest is easy."

He was about to go to the door that led into the business part of the house, when the door leading into the street opened softly, and a woman stepped inside. She had used the key which Boyne had forgotten at his house.

At first he did not hear her. Then, when he did turn round, it was too late. The knife she carried under her skirt flashed out and into Boyne's heart. He collapsed on the floor without a sound, save only a deep sigh.

Stooping over, Noreen drew the knife out with a little gurgling cry—a smothered exclamation. Then she opened the door again—the side-door leading into the street—closed it softly, and was gone.

Two hours afterwards the landlord opened the door. Erris Boyne lay in his silence, stark and still. At the table, with his head sunk in his arms, sat Dyck Calhoun, snoring stertorously, his drawn sword by his side.

With a cry the old man knelt on the floor beside the body of Erris Boyne.

CHAPTER VI

DYCK IN PRISON

When Dyck Calhoun waked, he was in the hands of the king's constables, arrested for the murder of Erris Boyne. It was hard to protest his innocence, for the landlord was ready to swear concerning a quarrel he had seen when he opened the door for a moment. Dyck, with sudden caution, only said he would make all clear at the trial.

Dublin and Ireland were shocked and thrilled; England imagined she had come upon one of the most violent episodes of Irish history. One journal protested that it was not possible to believe in Dyck Calhoun's guilt; that his outward habits were known to all, and were above suspicion, although he had colloqued—though never secretly, so far as the world knew—with some of the advanced revolutionary spirits. None of the loyal papers seemed aware of Erris Boyne's treachery; and while none spoke of him with approval, all condemned his ugly death.

Driven through the streets of Dublin in a jaunting-car between two of the king's police, Dyck was a mark for abuse by tongue, but was here and there cheered by partizans of the ultra-loyal group to which his father adhered. The effect of his potations was still upon him, and his mind was bemused. He remembered the quarrel, Boyne's explanation, and the subsequent drinking, but he could recall nothing further. He was sure the wine had been drugged, but he realized that Swinton, the landlord, would have made away with any signs of foul play, as he was himself an agent of active disloyalty and a friend of Erris Boyne. Dyck could not believe he had killed Boyne; yet Boyne had been found with a wound in his heart, and his own naked sword lying beside him on the table. The trouble was he could not absolutely swear innocence of the crime.

The situation was not eased by his stay in jail. It began with a revelation terribly repugnant to him. He had not long been lodged in the cell when there came a visit from Michael Clones, who stretched out his hands in an agony of humiliation.

"Ah, you didn't do it—you didn't do it, sir!" he cried. "I'm sure you never killed him. It wasn't your way. He was for doing you harm if he could. An evil man he was, as all the world knows. But there's one thing that'll be worse than anything else to you. You never knew it, and I never knew it till an hour ago. Did you know who Erris Boyne was? Well, I'll tell you. He was the father of Miss Sheila Llyn. He was divorced by Mrs. Llyn many years ago, for having to do with other women. She took to her maiden name, and he married again.

"Good God! Good God!" Dyck Calhoun made a gesture of horror. "He Sheila Llyn's father! Good God!"

Suddenly a passion of remorse roused him out of his semi-stupefaction.

"Michael, Michael!" he said, his voice hoarse, broken. "Don't say such a thing! Are you sure?" Michael nodded.

"I'm sure. I got it from one that's known Erris Boyne and his first wife and girl—one that was a servant to them both in past days. He's been down to Limerick to see Mrs. Llyn and the beautiful daughter. I met him an hour ago, and he told me. He told me more. He told me Mrs. Llyn spoke to him of your friendship with Erris Boyne, and how she meant to tell you who and what he was. She said her daughter didn't even know her father's name. She had been kept in ignorance."

Dyck seated himself on the rough bed of the cell, and stared at Michael, his hands between his knees, his eyes perturbed.

"Michael," he said at last, "if it's true—what you've told me—I don't see my way. Every step in front of me is black. To tell the whole truth is to bring fresh shame upon Mrs. Llyn and her daughter, and not to tell the whole truth is to take away my one chance of getting out of this trouble. I see that!"

"I don't know what you mean, sir, but I'll tell you this—none that knows you would believe you'd murder Erris Boyne or anny other man."

Dyck wiped the sweat from his forehead.

"I suppose you speak the truth, Michael, but it isn't people who've known me that'll try me; and I can't tell all."

"Why not, if it'll help you?"

"I can't—of course I can't. It would be disgrace eternal."

"Why? Tell me why, sir!"

Dyck looked closely, firmly, at the old servant and friend. Should he tell the truth—that Boyne had tried to induce him to sell himself to the French, to invoke his aid against the English government, to share in treason? If he could have told it to anybody, he would have done so to Michael; but if it was true that in his drunken blindness he had killed Boyne, he would not seek to escape by proving Boyne a traitor.

He believed Boyne was a servant of the French; but unless the facts came out in the trial, they should not have sure origin in himself. He would not add to his crime in killing the father of the only girl who had ever touched his heart, the shame of proving that father to be one who should have been shot as a traitor.

He had courage and daring, but not sufficient to carry him through that dark chapter. He would not try to save himself by turning public opinion against Erris Boyne. The man had been killed by some one, perhaps—and the thing ached in his heart—by himself; but that was no reason why the man's death should not be full punishment for all the wrong he had done.

Dyck had a foolish strain in him, after all. Romance was his deadly foe; it made him do a stupid, if chivalrous, thing. Meanwhile he would warn the government at once about the projected French naval raid.

"Michael," said Dyck, rising again, "see my father, but you're not to say I didn't kill Boyne, for, to tell the truth, I don't know. My head"— he put his hand to it with a gesture of despair—"my head's a mass of contradictions. It seems a thousand years since I entered that tavern! I can't get myself level with all that's happened. That Erris Boyne should be the father of the sweet girl at Limerick shakes me. Don't you see what it means? If I killed him, it spoils everything—everything. If I didn't kill him, I can only help myself by blackening still more the life of one who gave being to—"

"Aye, to a young queen!" interrupted Michael.

"God knows, there's none like her in Ireland, or in any other country at all!"

Suddenly Dyck regained his composure; and it was the composure of one who had opened the door of hell and had realized that in time—perhaps not far off—he also would dwell in the infernal place.

"Michael, I have no money, but I'm my father's heir. My father will not see me starve in prison, nor want for defence, though my attitude shall be 'no defence.' So bring me decent food and some clothes, and send to me here Will McCormick, the lawyer. He's as able a man as there is in Dublin. Listen, Michael, you're not to speak of Mrs. Llyn and Miss Llyn as related to Erris Boyne. What will come of what you and I know and don't know, Heaven only has knowledge; but I'll see it through. I've spoiled as good chances as ever a young man had that wants to make his way; but drink and cards, Michael, and the flare of this damned life at the centre—it got hold of me. It muddled, drowned the best that was in me. It's the witch's kitchen, is Dublin. Ireland's the only place in the world where they make saints of criminals and pray to them; where they lose track of time and think they're in eternity; where emotion is saturnine logic and death is the touchstone of life. Michael, I don't see any way to safety. Those fellows down at the tavern were friends of Erris Boyne. They're against me. They'll hang me if they can!"

"I don't believe they can do it, master. Dublin and Ireland think more of you than they did of Erris Boyne. There's nothing behind you except the wildness of youth—nothing at all. If any one had said to me at Playmore that you'd do the things you've done with drink and cards since you come to Dublin,

"I'd have sworn they were liars. Yet when all's said and done, I'd give my last drop of blood as guarantee you didn't kill Erris Boyne!"

Dyck smiled. "You've a lot of faith in me, Michael—but I'll tell you this—I never was so thirsty in my life. My mouth's like a red-hot iron. Send me some water. Give the warder sixpence, if you've got it, and send me some water. Then go to Will McCormick, and after that to my father."

Michael shook his head dolefully.

"Mr. McCormick's aisy—oh, aisy enough," he said. "He'll lep up at the idea of defendin' you, but I'm not takin' pleasure in goin' to Miles Calhoun, for he's a hard man these days. Aw, Mr. Dyck, he's had a lot of trouble. Things has been goin' wrong with Playmore. 'Pon honour, I don't know whether anny of it'll last as long as Miles Calhoun lasts. There'll be little left for you, Mr. Dyck. That's what troubles me. I tell you it'd break my heart if that place should be lost to your father and you. I was born on it. I'd give the best years of the life that's left me to make sure the old house could stay in the hands of the Calhouns. I say to you that while I live all I am is yours, fair and foul, good and bad." He touched his breast with his right hand. "In here is the soul of Ireland that leps up for the things that matter. There's a song—but never mind about a song; this is no place for songs. It's a prison-house, and you're a prisoner charged—"

"Not charged yet, not charged," interrupted Dyck; "but suspected of and arrested for a crime. I'll fight—before God, I'll fight to the last! Good-bye, Michael; bring me food and clothes, and send me cold water at once."

When the door closed softly behind Michael Clones, Dyck sat down on the bed where many a criminal patriot had lain. He looked round the small room, bare, unfurnished, severe-terribly severe; he looked at the blank walls and the barred window, high up; he looked at the floor—it was discoloured and damp. He reached out and touched it with his hand. He looked at the solitary chair, the basin and pail, and he shuddered.

"How awful—how awful!" he murmured. "But if it was her father, and if I killed him"—his head sank low—"if I killed her father!"

"Water, sir."

He looked up. It was the guard with a tin of water and a dipper.

CHAPTER VII

MOTHER AND DAUGHTER

"I don't believe he's guilty, mother."

The girl's fine eyes shone with feeling—with protest, indignation, anguish. As she spoke, she thrust her head forward with the vigour of a passionate counsel. Sheila Llyn was a champion who would fight to the last gasp for any cause she loved.

A few moments before, she had found her mother, horror-stricken, gazing at a newspaper paragraph sent from Dublin.

Sheila at once thought this to be the cause of her mother's agitation, and she reached out a hand for it. Her mother hesitated, then handed the clipping to her. Fortunately it contained no statement save the bare facts connected with the killing of Erris Boyne, and no reference to the earlier life of the dead man. It said no more than that Dyck Calhoun must take his trial at the sessions.

It also stated that Dyck, though he pleaded "not guilty," declared frankly, through Will McCormick, the lawyer, that he had no memory of aught that happened after he had drunk wine given him by Erris Boyne. He said that he and Boyne had quarrelled, but had become reconciled again, and that the drink was a pledge of their understanding. From the time he had taken the drink until he waked in the hands of the king's constables, he had no memory; but he was sure he had not killed Boyne. The fact that there was no blood on his sword was evidence. Nevertheless, he had been committed for trial.

Mrs. Llyn was sorely troubled. She knew of her daughter's interest in Dyck Calhoun, and of Dyck's regard for Sheila. She had even looked forward to marriage, and she wished for Sheila no better fate, because nearly all she knew of Dyck was to his credit. She was unaware that his life in Dublin had been dissipated.

If Dyck was guilty—though she could not believe it—there would be an end of romance between him and Sheila, and their friendship must be severed for ever. Her daughter did not know that Erris Boyne was her father, and she must not know—in any case not yet; but if Dyck was condemned, it was almost sure he would be hanged.

She wondered about Boyne's widow, whose name did not appear in the paragraph she had seen. She knew that Noreen was beautiful, but that he had married far beneath him socially. She had imagined Erris Boyne living in suburban quiet, not drawing his wife into his social scheme.

That is what had happened. The woman had lived apart from the daily experiences of her husband's life in Dublin; and it had deepened her bitterness against him. When she had learned that Erris Boyne was no more faithful to her than he had been to his previous wife, she had gone mad; and Dyck Calhoun was paying the price of her madness.

Mrs. Llyn did not know this. She was a woman of distinguished bearing, though small, with a wan, sad look in her eyes always, but with a cheerful smile. She was not poor, but well-to-do, and it was not necessary to deny herself or her daughter ordinary comforts, and even many of the luxuries of life.

Her hair was darker than her daughter's, black and wavy, with here and there streaks of grey. These, however, only added dignity to a head beautifully balanced, finely moulded, and, in the language of the

day, most genteelly hung. She was slender, buoyant in movement yet composed, and her voice was like her daughter's, clear, gentle, thrilling.

Her mind and heart were given up to Sheila and Sheila's future. That was why a knowledge of the tragedy that had come to Dyck Calhoun troubled her as she had not been troubled since the day she first learned of Erris Boyne's infidelity to herself.

"Let us go to Dublin, mother," said Sheila with a determined air, after reading the clipping.

"Why, my dear?"

The woman's eyes, with their long lashes, looked searchingly into her daughter's face. She felt, as the years went on, that Sheila had gifts granted to few. She realized that the girl had resources which would make her a governing influence in whatever sphere of life she should be set. Quietly, Sheila was taking control of their movements, and indeed of her own daily life. The girl had a dominating skill which came in part from herself, and also to a degree from her father; but her disposition was not her father's—it was her mother's.

Mrs. Llyn had never known Sheila to lie or twist the truth in all her days. No one was more obedient to wise argument; and her mother had a feeling that now, perhaps, the time had come when they two must have a struggle for mastery. There was every reason why they should not go to Dublin. There Sheila might discover that Erris Boyne was her father, and might learn the story of her mother's life.

Sheila had been told by her mother that her father had passed away abroad when she was a little child. She had never seen her father's picture, and her mother had given her the impression that their last days together had not been happy. She had always felt that it was better not to inquire too closely into her father's life.

The years had gone on and then had come the happy visit to Loyland Towers, where she had met Dyck Calhoun. Her life at that moment had been free from troublesome emotions; but since the time she had met Dyck at the top of the hill, a new set of feelings worked in her.

She was as bonny a lass as ever the old world produced—lithe, with a body like that of a boy, strong and pleasant of face, with a haunting beauty in the eyes, a majesty of the neck and chin, and a carriage which had made Michael Clones call her a queen.

She saw Dyck only as, a happy, wild son of the hilltop. To her he was a man of mettle and worth, and irresponsible because he had been given no responsibility. He was a country gentleman of Ireland, with all the interest and peril of the life of a country gentleman.

"Yes, we ought to go to Dublin, mother. We could help him, perhaps," Sheila insisted.

The mother shook her head mournfully.

"My child, we could do him no good at all—none whatever. Besides, I can't afford to visit Dublin now. It's an expensive journey, and the repairs we've been doing here have run me close."

A look of indignation, almost of scorn, came into the girl's face.

"Well, if I were being tried for my life, as Dyck Calhoun is going to be, and if I knew that friends of mine were standing off because of a few pounds, shillings, and pence, I think I'd be a real murderer!"

The mother took her daughter's hand. She found it cold.

"My dear," she said, clasping it gently, "you never saw him but three times, and I've never seen him but twice except in the distance; but I would do anything in my power to help him, if I could, for I like him. The thing for us to do—"

"Yes, I know—sit here, twist our thumbs, and do nothing!"

"What more could we do if we went to Dublin, except listen to gossip, read the papers and be jarred every moment? My dear, our best place is here. If the spending of money could be of any use to him, I'd spend it—indeed I would; but since it can't be of any use, we must stay in our own home. Of one thing I'm sure—if Dyck Calhoun killed Erris Boyne, Boyne deserved it. Of one thing I'm certain beyond all else—it was no murder. Mr. Calhoun wasn't a man to murder any one. I don't believe"—her voice became passionate—"he murdered, and I don't believe he will be hanged."

The girl looked at her mother with surprise. "Oh, dearest, dearest!" she said. "I believe you do care for him. Is it because he has no mother, and you have no son."

"It may be so, beloved."

Sheila swept her arms around her mother's neck and drew the fine head to her breast.

At that moment they heard the clatter of hoofs, and presently they saw a horse and rider pass the window.

"It's a government messenger, mother," Sheila said.

As Sheila said, it was a government messenger, bearing a packet to Mrs. Llyn—a letter from her brother in America, whom she had not seen for many years.

The brother, Bryan Llyn, had gone out there as a young man before the Revolutionary War. He had prospered, taking sides against England in the war, and become a man of importance in the schemes of the new republican government. Only occasionally had letters come from him to his sister, and for nearly eleven years she had not had a single word from him.

When she opened the packet now, she felt it would help to solve—she knew not how—the trouble between herself and her daughter. The letter had been sent to a firm in Dublin with which Bryan Llyn had done business, with instructions that it should be forwarded to his sister. It had reached the hands of a government official, who was a brother of a member of the firm, and he had used the government messenger, who was going upon other business to Limerick, to forward it with a friendly covering note, which ended with the words:

The recent tragedy you have no doubt seen in the papers must have shocked you; but to those who know the inside the end was inevitable, though there are many who do not think Calhoun is guilty. I am one of them. Nevertheless, it will go hard with him, as the evidence is strong against him. He comes from your part of the country, and you will be concerned, of course.

Sheila watched her mother reading, and saw that great emotion possessed her, though the girl could not know the cause. Presently, however, Mrs. Llyn, who had read the letter from her brother, made a joyful exclamation.

"What is it, mother dear?" Sheila asked eagerly. "Tell me!"

The mother made a passionate gesture of astonishment and joy; then she leaned back in her chair and closed her eyes, with the letter—which was closely written, in old-fashioned punctiliousness—in her hands.

"Oh, my dear, my dear!" she said. "How strange it all is! Your Uncle Bryan is immensely rich. He has no children and no family; his health is failing."

She seemed able to get no further.

"Well, what is it, mother?" asked Sheila again.

For an instant Mrs. Llyn hesitated; then she put the letter into Sheila's hands.

"Read it, my child," she said. "It's for you as much as for me—indeed, more for you than for me." Sheila took the letter. It ran as follows:

DEAREST SISTER:

It is eleven years since I wrote to you, and yet, though it may seem strange, there have not been eleven days in all that time in which I have not wished you and Sheila were here. Sheila—why, she is a young woman! She's about the age you were when I left Ireland, and you were one of the most beautiful and charming creatures God ever gave life to. The last picture I have of you was a drawing made soon after your marriage—sad, bad, unhappy incident. I have kept it by me always. It warms my heart in winter; it cools my eyes in summer.

My estate is neither North nor South, but farther South than North. In a sense it is always summer, but winter on my place would be like summer in Norway—just bitingly fresh, happily alert. I'm writing in the summer now. I look out of the window and see hundreds of acres of cotton-fields, with hundreds upon hundreds of negroes at work. I hear the songs they sing, faint echoes of them, even as I write. Yes, my black folk do sing, because they are well treated.

Not that we haven't our troubles here. You can't administer thousands of acres, control hundreds of slaves, and run an estate like a piece of clockwork without creaks in the machinery. I've built it all up out of next to nothing. I landed in this country with my little fortune of two thousand pounds. This estate is worth at least a quarter of a million now. I've an estate in Jamaica, too. I took it for a debt. What it'll be worth in another twenty years I don't know. I shan't be here to see. I'm not the man I was physically, and that's one of the reasons why I'm writing to you to-day. I've often wished to write and say what I'm going to say now; but I've held back, because I wanted you to finish your girl's education before I said it

What I say is this: I want you and Sheila to come here to me, to make my home your home, to take control of my household, and to let me see faces I love about me as the shadows enfold me.

Like your married life, mine was unsuccessful, but not for the same reason. The woman I married did not understand—probably could not understand. She gave me no children. We are born this way, or that. To understand is pain and joy in one; to misconceive is to scatter broken glass for bare feet. Yet when I laid her away, a few years ago, I had terrible pangs of regret, which must come to the heart that has striven in vain. I did my best; I tried to make her understand, but she never did. I used at first to feel angry; then I became patient. But I waked up again, and went smiling along, active, vigorous, getting pleasure out of the infinitely small things, and happy in perfecting my organization.

This place, which I have called Moira, is to be yours—or, rather, Sheila's. So, in any case, you will want to come and see the home I have made this old colonial mansion, with its Corinthian pillars and verandah, high steps, hard-wood floors polished like a pan, every room hung in dimity and chintz, and the smell of fruit and flowers everywhere. You will want to see it all, and you'll want to live here.

There's little rain here, so it's not like Ireland, and the green is not so green; but the flowers are marvellously bright, and the birds sing almost as well as they sing in Ireland, though there's no lark. Strange it is, but true, the only things that draw me back to Ireland in my soul are you, and Sheila, whom I've never seen, and the lark singing as he rises until he becomes a grey-blue speck, and then vanishing in the sky.

Well, you and the lark have sung in my heart these many days, and now you must come to me, because I need you. I have placed to your credit in the Bank of Ireland a thousand pounds. That will be the means of bringing you here—you and Sheila—to my door, to Moira. Let nothing save death prevent your coming. As far as Sheila's eye can see—north, south, east, and west—the land will be hers when I'm gone. Dearest sister, sell all things that are yours, and come to me. You'll not forget Ireland here. Whoever has breathed her air can never forget the hills and dells, the valleys and bogs, the mountains, with their mists of rain, the wild girls, with their bare ankles, their red petticoats, and their beautiful, reckless air. None who has ever breathed the air of Ireland can breathe in another land without memory of the ancient harp of Ireland. But it is as a memory—deep, wonderful, and abiding, yet a memory. I sometimes think I have forgotten, and then I hear coming through this Virginia the notes of some old Irish melody, the song of some wayfarer of Mayo or Connemara, and I know then that Ireland is persuasive and perpetual; but only as a memory, because it speaks in every pulse and beats in every nerve.

Oh, believe me, I speak of what I know! I have been away from Ireland for a long time, and I'm never going back, but I'll bring Ireland to me. Come here, colleen, come to Virginia. Write to me, on the day you get this letter, that you're coming soon. Let it be soon, because I feel the cords binding me to my beloved fields growing thinner. They'll soon crack, but, please God, they won't crack before you come here.

Now with my love to you and Sheila I stretch out my hand to you. Take it. All that it is has worked for is yours; all that it wants is you.

Your loving brother,

BRYAN.

As Sheila read, the tears started from her eyes; and at last she could read no longer, so her mother took the letter and read the rest of it aloud. When she had finished, there was silence—a long warm silence; then, at last, Mrs. Llyn rose to her feet.

"Sheila, when shall we go?"

With frightened eyes Sheila sprang up.

"I said we must go to Dublin!" she murmured.

"Yes, we will go to Dublin, Sheila, but it will be on our way to Uncle Bryan's home."

Sheila caught her mother's hands.

"Mother," she said, after a moment of hesitation, "I must obey you."

"It is the one way, my child—the one thing to do. Some one in prison calls—perhaps; some one far away who loves you, and needs us, calls— that we know. Tell me, am I not right? I ask you, where shall we go?"

"To Virginia, mother."

The girl's head dropped, and her eyes filled with tears.

CHAPTER VIII

DYCK'S FATHER VISITS HIM

In vain Dyck's lawyer, Will McCormick, urged him to deny absolutely the killing of Erris Boyne. Dyck would not do so. He had, however, immediately on being jailed, written to the government, telling of the projected invasion of Ireland by the French fleet, and saying that it had come to him from a sure source. The government had at once taken action.

Regarding the death of Boyne, the only thing in his favour was that his own sword-point was free from stain. His lawyer made the utmost of this, but to no avail. The impression in the court was that both men had been drinking; that they had quarrelled, and that without a duel being fought Dyck had killed his enemy.

That there had been no duel was clear from the fact that Erris Boyne's sword was undrawn. The charge, however, on the instigation of the Attorney-General, who was grateful for the information about France, had been changed from murder to manslaughter; though it seemed clear that Boyne had been ruthlessly killed by a man whom he had befriended.

On one of the days of the trial, Dyck's father, bowed, morose, and obstinate, came to see him. That Dyck and Boyne had quarrelled had been stated in evidence by the landlord, Swinton, and Dyck had admitted it. Miles Calhoun was bent upon finding what the story of the quarrel was; for his own lawyer had told him that Dyck's refusal to give the cause of the dispute would affect the jury adversely, and might bring him imprisonment for life. After the formalities of their meeting, Miles Calhoun said:

"My son, things are black, but they're not so black they can't be brightened. If you killed Erris Boyne, he deserved it. He was a bad man, as the world knows. That isn't the point. Now, there's only one kind of quarrel that warrants non-disclosure."

"You mean about a woman?" remarked Dyck coldly.

The old man took a pinch of snuff nervously. "That's what I mean. Boyne was older than you, and perhaps you cut him out with a woman."

A wry smile wrinkled the corners of Dyck's mouth. "You mean his wife?" he asked with irony. "Wife—no!" retorted the old man. "Damn it, no! He wasn't the man to remain true to his wife."

"So I understand," remarked Dyck; "but I don't know his wife. I never saw her, except at the trial, and I was so sorry for her I ceased to be sorry for my self. She had a beautiful, strange, isolated face."

"But that wouldn't influence Boyne," was the reply. "His first wife had a beautiful and interesting face, but it didn't hold him. He went marauding elsewhere, and she divorced him by act of parliament. I don't think you knew it, but his first wife was one of your acquaintances— Mrs. Llyn, whose daughter

you saw just before we left Playmore. He wasn't particular where he made love—a barmaid or a housekeeper, it was all the same to him."

"I hope the daughter doesn't know that Erris Boyne was her father," said Dyck.

"There's plenty can tell her, and she'll hear it sooner or later."

Miles Calhoun looked at his son with dejection.

His eyes wandered over the grimly furnished cell. His nose smelled the damp of it, and suddenly the whole soul of him burst forth.

"You don't give yourself a chance of escape, Dyck. You know what Irish juries are. Why don't you tell the truth about the quarrel? What's the good of keeping your mouth shut, when there's many that would profit by your telling it?"

"Who would profit?" asked Dyck.

"Who would profit!" snarled the old man. "Well, you would profit first, for it might break the dark chain of circumstantial evidence. Also, your father would profit. I'd be saved shame, perhaps; I'd get relief from this disgrace. Oh, man, think of others beside yourself!"

"Think of others!" said Dyck, and a queer smile lighted his haggard face. "I'd save myself if I honourably could."

"The law must prove you guilty," the old man went on. "It's not for you to prove yourself innocent. They haven't proved you guilty yet."

The old man fumbled with a waistcoat button. His eyes blinked hard.

"You don't see," he continued, "the one thing that's plain to my eyes, and it's this—that your only chance of escape is to tell the truth about the quarrel. If the truth were told, whatever it is, I believe it would be to your credit—I'll say that for you. If it was to your credit, even if they believe you guilty of killing Erris Boyne, they'd touch you lightly. Ah, in the name of the mother you loved, I ask you to tell the truth about that quarrel! Give it into the hands of the jury, and let them decide. Haven't you got a heart in you? In the name of God—"

"Don't speak to me like that," interrupted Dyck, with emotion. "I've thought of all those things. I hold my peace because—because I hold my peace. To speak would be to hurt some one I love with all my soul."

"And you won't speak to save me—your father—because you don't love me with all your soul! Is that it?" asked Miles Calhoun.

"It's different—it's different."

"Ah, it's a woman!"

"Never mind what it is. I will not tell. There are things more shameful than death."

"Yes," snarled the other. "Rather than save yourself, you bring dishonour upon him who gave you birth."

Dyck's face was submerged in colour.

"Father," said he, "on my honour I wouldn't hurt you if I could help it, but I'll not tell the world of the quarrel between that man and myself. My silence may hurt you, but some one else would be hurt far more if I told."

"By God, I think you're some mad dreamer slipped out of the ancient fold! Do you know where you are? You're in jail. If you're found guilty, you'll be sent to prison at least for the years that'll spoil the making of your life; and you do it because you think you'll spare somebody. Well, I ask you to spare me. I don't want the man that's going to inherit my name, when my time comes, to bring foulness on it. We've been a rough race, we Calhouns; we've done mad, bad things, perhaps, but none has shamed us before the world—none but you."

"I have never shamed you, Miles Calhoun," replied his son sharply. "As the ancients said, 'alis volat propriis'—I will fly with my own wings. Come weal, come woe, come dark, come light, I have fixed my mind, and nothing shall change it. You loved my mother better than the rest of the world. You would

have thought it no shame to have said so to your own father. Well, I say it to you—I'll stand by what my conscience and my soul have dictated to me. You call me a dreamer. Let it be so. I'm Irish; I'm a Celt. I've drunk deep of all that Ireland means. All that's behind me is my own, back to the shadowy kings of Ireland, who lost life and gave it because they believed in what they did. So will I. If I'm to walk the hills no more on the estate where you are master, let it be so. I have no fear; I want no favour. If it is to be prison, then it shall be prison. If it is to be shame, then let it be shame. These are days when men must suffer if they make mistakes. Well, I will suffer, fearlessly if helplessly, but I will not break the oath which I have taken. And so I will not do it—never—never—never!"

He picked up the cloak which the old man had dropped on the floor, and handed it to him.

"There is no good in staying longer. I must go into court again to-morrow. I have to think how my lawyer shall answer the evidence given."

"But of one thing have you thought?" asked his father. "You will not tell the cause of the quarrel, for the reason that you might hurt somebody. If you don't tell the cause, and you are condemned, won't that hurt somebody even more?"

For a moment Dyck stood silent, absorbed. His face looked pinched, his whole appearance shrivelled. Then, with deliberation, he said:

"This is not a matter of expediency, but of principle. My heart tells me what to do, and my heart has always been right."

There was silence for a long time. At last the old man drew the cloak about his shoulders and turned towards the door.

"Wait a minute, father," said Dyck. "Don't go like that. You'd better not come and see me again. If I'm condemned, go back to Playmore; if I'm set free, go back to Playmore. That's the place for you to be. You've got your own troubles there."

"And you—if you're acquitted?"

"If I'm acquitted, I'll take to the high seas—till I'm cured."

A moment later, without further words, Dyck was alone. He heard the door clang.

He sat for some time on the edge of his bed, buried in dejection. Presently, however, the door opened. "A letter for you, sir," said the jailer.

CHAPTER IX

A LETTER FROM SHEILA

The light of the cell was dim, but Dyck managed to read the letter without great difficulty, for the writing was almost as precise as print. The sight of it caught his heart like a warm hand and pressed it. This was the substance of the letter:

MY DEAR FRIEND:

I have wanted to visit you in prison, but my mother has forbidden it, and so, even if I could be let to enter, I must not disobey her. I have not read the papers giving an account of your trial. I only know you are charged with killing a bad man, notorious in Dublin life, and that many think he got his just deserts in being killed.

I saw Christopher Dogan only a week ago, before we came to Dublin. His eyes, as he talked of you, shone like the secret hill-fires where the peasants make illegal drink.

"Look you," he said to me, "I care not what a jury decides. I know my man; and I also know that if the fellow Boyne died by his hand, it was in fair fight. I have read Dyck Calhoun's story in the stars; and I know what his end will be. It will be fair, not foul; good, not bad; great, not low. Tell him that from me, miss," was what he said.

I also will not believe that your fate is an evil one, that the law will grind you between the

millstones of guilt and dishonour; but if the law should call you guilty, I still will not believe. Far away I will think of you, and believe in you, dear, masterful, madman friend. Yes, you are a madman, for Michael Clones told me—faith, he loves you well!—that you've been living a gay life in Dublin since you came here, and that the man you are accused of killing was in great part the cause of it.

I think I never saw my mother so troubled in spirit as she is at this time. Of course, she could not feel as I do about you. It isn't that which makes her sad and haggard; it is that we are leaving Ireland behind.

Yes, she and I are saying good-bye to Ireland. That's why I think she might have let me see you before we went; but since it must not be, well, then, it must not. But we shall meet again. In my soul I know that on the hills somewhere far off, as on the first day we met, we shall meet each other once more. Where are we going? Oh, very far! We are going to my Uncle Bryan—Bryan Llyn, in Virginia. A letter has come from him urging us to make our home with him. You see, my friend—

Then followed the story which Bryan Llyn had told her mother and herself, and she wrote of her mother's decision to go out to the new, great home which her uncle had made among the cotton-fields of the South. When she had finished that part of the tale, she went on as follows:

We shall know your fate only through the letters that will follow us, but I will not believe in your bad luck. Listen to me—why don't you come to America also? Oh, think it over! Don't believe the worst will come. When they release you from prison, innocent and acquitted, cross the ocean and set up your tent under the Stars and Stripes. Think of it! Nearly all those men in America who fought under Washington and won were born in these islands. They took with them to that far land the memory and love of these old homes. You and I would have fought for England and with the British troops, because we detest revolution. Here, in Ireland, we have seen its evils; and yet if we had fought for the Union Jack beyond the mountains of Maine and in the lonely woods, we should, I believe, in the end have said that the freedom fought for by the American States was well won.

So keep this matter in your mind, for my mother and I will soon be gone. She would not let me come to you,—I think I have never seen her so disturbed as when I asked her, and she forbade me to write to you; but I disobey her. Well, this is a sad business. I know my mother has suffered. I know her married life was unhappy, and that her husband—my father—died many a year ago, leaving a dark trail of regret behind him; but, you see, I never knew my father. That was all long ago, and it is a hundred times best forgotten.

Our ship sails for Virginia in three days, and I must go. I will keep looking back to the prison where lies, charged with an evil crime, of which he is not guilty, a young man for whom I shall always carry the spirit of good friendship.

Do not believe all will not go well. Let us keep the courage of our hearts and the faith of our souls—and I hope I always shall! I believe in you, and, believing, I say good-bye. I say farewell in the great hope that somehow, somewhere, we shall help each other on the way of life. God be with you!

I am your friend,
SHEILA LLYN.

P. S.—I beg you to remember that America is a good place for a young man to live in and succeed.

Dyck read the letter with a wonderful slowness. He realized that by happy accident—it could be nothing else—Mrs. Llyn had been able to keep from her daughter the fact that the man who had been killed in the tavern by the river was her father. It was clear that the girl was kept much to herself, read no newspapers, and saw few people, and that those whom she saw had been careful to hold their peace about her close relationship to Erris Boyne. None but the evil-minded would recall the fact to her.

Sheila's ignorance must not be broken by himself. He had done the right thing—he had held his peace for the girl's sake, and he would hold it to the end. Slowly he folded up the letter, pressed it to his lips, and put it in the pocket over his heart.

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

Beginning of a lifetime of experience, comedy, and tragedy
Wit is always at the elbow of want

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