

EO 7426

The Wood of the Brambles

THE WOOD OF THE BRAMBLES

BY FRANK MATHEW



LONDON: JOHN LANE · ·
THE BODLEY HEAD ·
CHICAGO: WAY, AND ·
WILLIAMS ·

MCCXCVII

R

Contents

Prologue—To Lady Davern

Book I—Davernmore

<i>Chap.</i>	<i>PAGE</i>
<i>I. Coming Home</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>II. The Burning of Davernmore . .</i>	<i>24</i>

Book II—The Rising

<i>I. The Muster at Night</i>	<i>49</i>
<i>II. The Camp on the Hill</i>	<i>65</i>
<i>III. The Rector of Enniscrone . . .</i>	<i>84</i>
<i>IV. The Tribunal of the People . . .</i>	<i>95</i>
<i>V. The Green Boy</i>	<i>108</i>
<i>VI. An Offer of Help</i>	<i>122</i>
<i>VII. A Hunt in the Dark</i>	<i>136</i>
<i>VIII. In the Heat of the Day</i>	<i>151</i>
<i>IX. Shamus Dhu, the Captain</i>	<i>167</i>
<i>X. With the Babes of the Wood . .</i>	<i>187</i>

Contents

<i>Chap</i>	<i>PAGE</i>
<i>XI. The Fighting at Ross</i>	198
<i>XII. With a broken Army</i>	225
<i>XIII. A Prisoner at Ballymoreen</i>	240
<i>XIV. Vinegar Hill</i>	261

Book III—Justice

<i>I. The Cave in the Cliff</i>	275
<i>II. A Ride to the Gallows</i>	288
<i>III. The Court-Martial</i>	306
<i>IV. Sir Tim</i>	322
<i>V. At the Well in the Wood</i>	348
<i>VI. In the Thick of the Brambles</i>	372
<i>VII. Confessions</i>	398
<i>VIII. The Reprieve</i>	433
<i>IX. Justice</i>	450

Epilogue—To Lady Davern

Prologue

To Lady Davern

WHEN you told me Sir Dominick's history, as I stared at his likeness, I thought of this book, and wanted to dedicate it to you. The light of the turf was lingering on you and the picture: and the snow was drifting unsteadily down beside the darkening windows. Here is the book, finished at last; but will you look at it now? I have made Sir Dominick tell the story, because it is his, and so much of it was found in his journals. I owe my thanks to your husband for lending me his family papers, and I dedicate it to you after all.

Book I

Davernmore

Chapter I

Coming Home

THE sea shone in the early morning as I came to the village. The quiet wind from the water freshened Enniscrone, and that street of cabins appeared changed, for I remembered it smoky, and smelling like a farmyard, and full of the shouting of children and the barking of dogs and the clattering of hens and the grunting of pigs and the loud gossip of neighbours; but now it was hushed, as I passed through, and got out of the coach, by the well, where the chestnuts begin to darken the white road on the moor.

Standing on the top of the road, I saw the wood and the House. The sun was on the familiar face of my home. The hills were red, and the river was like steel in a woody dip of the ground.

I was full of hope, in that eager spring of the morning. I was resolved to win the love of the

The Wood of the Brambles

peasants on my land, and the trust and liking of neighbours. Agatha came into my mind, with the thought of a dream of peasants rejoicing at my return as the bearer of an impossible benefit.

The coach was creaking behind me, and I turned to get in. As I had my foot on the step, a priest came down the road, on a hack. Our eyes met ; and I saw it was Pierce Kilclare, who had been with me at school.

Driving along the side of the wood, in that lumbering coach with the smears on the glass and the dust on the cushions and the rents in the fringes, I found it hard to believe it was more than a few days since I had been with Sir Malachi. I was so accustomed to all I passed, that I scarcely troubled to look : and I felt I had been always at home in that pleasant county, among the moors and the high roads in the shadow of trees.

I remembered nothing before the day I sat on the sideboard at the end of the hall. Then I was in scarlet and gold, with a waistcoat down to my knees, and a little sword, and with buckles on my shoes that had made me proud because I

Coming Home

thought they were diamonds. I was very small, and my hair was ribboned and powdered. Sir Tim had lifted me up on the sideboard to fondle me ; and because I was frightened by his pity, I blubbered, and grieved for myself as the victim of some mysterious disaster. Till then I was happy, although my mother was dead. It was a disaster indeed, although it pained me so little. I could hear Sir Malachi singing at the top of his voice. He sang the louder, when he had a reason for sorrow ; except when he heard my father had been killed in America—that day he was silent.

Sir Malachi was fond of me then. He would have me into the dining-room. “ Walk across, and bow to the company, you proud little ruffian,” he would say. “ Will you look at his feet, Slaughter ? Will you watch him, Maguire ? Sir, he is a Davern I tell you. We have little feet, though my shoes are lubberly because of the gout.” Then he would give me oranges, and put me beside him, and forget me ; and I would stare at his friends, or at his honest and bright face with the boyish colour and the masterful eyes. Every night and morning, I prayed to grow up to be like him and able to sing his beautiful songs.

The Wood of the Brambles

I was proud to be Sir Malachi's grandson, because he was so big, and so many lived to obey him. Yet, although he told me to call him "Father," I was never at ease with him. But Sir Tim was always my friend. I was sure Sir Tim Desmond was very old; for his voice was husky, his hands shook, and he often fell asleep at the table. When he spoke to me, something softened his ruddy and hard features and his quarrelsome eyes, and I was never afraid of him; although I had seen the servants alarmed by the sight of that little square man with his twisting swagger and his dangerous look. He had a grey wig that was worn at the rim from being handled so often, and a dingy red coat, and a long sword, and a three-cornered hat upon the side of his head. When I was growing sleepy myself, at my grandfather's side, and the flushed faces and loud voices appeared distant, Sir Tim would carry me off, whispering, "Ah, my poor little man! an' has the dustman put a cloud in his eyes?" Often he was weak and unsteady, and he knocked me against the door and the banisters on the way to the kitchen, and shook me; but he never could shake my trust in his kindness.

The kitchen was full of servants, who loved

Coming Home

me as long as I was Sir Malachi's pet. Of course, the work of the house was done by bare-footed girls, who scurried about in the passages and pantries with loads; but it was always considered rudeness to notice them. The men waited at meals, or saw to the many horses, and followed when Sir Malachi rode. I kept at his side on a pony, or in the coach, when he went to visit the neighbours, or on the car that he used in winter when the ruts in the roads were watery and we had to turn into meadows and drive along on the grass. Then he was never tired of my merits; for I found it a pleasure to give things I did not want any longer, and fed the dogs with the scraps when I had finished my dinner, and liked others to be happy as soon as I had all that I needed, and he often boasted I proved I was a Davern all over by my generous ways. And he was so proud when I struck a servant across the face with a whip for rudeness, that he gave us a guinea apiece, to reward my spirit and to comfort my victim's.

"Whenever I sit down on a cushion, I find it is a dog," said Sir Tim: and the animals added to the disorder and noise in the House.

It was a long building, with two storeys, and

The Wood of the Brambles

many windows that made it pleasant in summer, but gloomy when the weather was dark. The drawing-room and the dining-room opened on the terrace and garden. The book-room and the parlours looked out on a sedgy and rough field with the avenue winding around it. A corridor was above them, and thirty narrow and long bedrooms were off it, and faced towards the garden behind. Often all the bedrooms were occupied by visitors, and each had his servants.

Sir Malachi would sooner have thought of walking to Dublin, than of riding without men to obey him; and it was the custom for people who had servants to prove it by taking them everywhere. Travellers took horsemen to carry the valise and the hamper of wine and the netted bag full of lemons: and I have seen my grandfather go away with so many behind, that it was all they could do to discover enough burdens, for each of them was supposed to be laden, although their number was a proof of his rank, and they were useful to frighten robbers or bailiffs. They lived in neighbouring cabins: but the servants of visitors slept in the drawing-room, because they preferred its sofas to the seats in the book-room.

Coming Home

Sir Malachi and his visitors spent the mornings on horseback, and most of their other hours in the dining-room; for nobody used the bedrooms much, as it was always considered more sociable to sleep at the table or under it: and the dinner began at four; and was followed by sipping claret, till supper at nine would give the signal for drinking. The servants were sent away about midnight, after they had loaded the side-board: and my grandfather finished his four bottles a sitting, even in his age, but the memory of the feats of his youth is lost to his country, for the tales are incredible. Certain it is that the footmen going into the room, in the fresh hours, would find Sir Malachi sober and singing at the head of the table. Often then I was roused by his singing and his calls for the chorus. If there was no answer, because his friends were limp in their chairs, or stretched at ease on the carpet, he gave the chorus himself; and then, while the servants awoke the others, or carried away obstinate sleepers by the head and the heels, he would stride out to the hall, and clap his three-cornered hat on the back of his wig, and saunter off to the farm, with the dogs; and I would turn on the pillow, in my narrow bedroom, and doze, as his song died in

The Wood of the Brambles

the distance and blended with the barks and the drowsy lowing of cattle.

My grandfather might have made me his toy longer, if Sir Tim had not angered him by a hint of my being old enough to be harmed by the stories and the songs in the dining-room. Because he was indignant at such an interference, he sent me my meals in a little parlour, and banished me. Grieved at this unexpected disgrace, I lived in hope of a summons to his favour: but soon he had forgotten me; and so I was altered by my hours with the books. Since I was not a favourite now, the servants let me alone. Though I was the heir, it was little in their eyes; for my grandfather was always so lusty that the end of his time was a thing hard to imagine. My pony died, and I had never another. In a little time, I became so dull that Sir Malachi was disgusted when he met me by chance. Even Sir Tim, when he came again, was aghast, and said I was learning manners from the family portraits. On the morning of a hunt, I would sit at a window of the book-room, and read, while the horsemen were pacing up and

Coming Home

down on the gravel, and glance every now and then at my cousin Tony, and despise him sincerely as he managed his black cob with the riders: but when the last of the red coats was behind the trees, I would shut my book with an aching heart, and think I would give even my little sword with the silver hilt, if I could canter behind the horses and dogs.

Tony was the favourite now; for, although he was my age, he could drink and curse like a man. I kept out of the way; and when the weather was sunny I stole off to the wood, with a book under my coat, and crept along the rim of the grass by the roses and wall-flowers in the front of the House, for fear my steps would be heard on the gravel, and make my grandfather shout angrily from a window, "Put down that dirty book, and be a Davern for once." For he had soon come to believe my ways were a deliberate crossing of his wishes; and once I heard him describing how fond he had been of me until I became sulky and stupid. "I can't make it out at all," he went on; "there was never a Davern like him before. Sir, it is a degenerate time." Often I got safe to the well, in that great Wood of the Brambles, behind the garden, and there read by the hour, without

The Wood of the Brambles

lifting my eyes, even as I turned over the pages, or brushed away caterpillars or adventurous ants.

The wood had its name from many thickets of brambles. It was old and forsaken: and I wandered across it looking out for adventures, with my little sword in my hand; but I never came on a lion or a dragon, although once, as I broke out of a thicket, I found myself in front of the master of the school in the village. Shamus Dhu Harragan was his name, and he often strolled about in the tangle. So did a little man named Dromeen, who had always one of the long and hereditary coats of the peasants. When it was dark, I was afraid of the wood; but I tried to conquer my fear by going into the shadows with my sword in my hand. For I was so much alone, that my amusements were odd. When the weather was frosty, I would dig in the garden for stones covered with frozen dew, and would call it hunting for silver. And when I came on a frosted pebble, I would run to the gardener, who encouraged my whim, because it did away with the stones: "'Deed it is a fine bit of silver, Masther Dom," he would say. "We'll be rich men for ever." When it was rainy, I would skip in the long corridor at the top of the House. Mrs Regan, the Dame of the Buttery, came out

Coming Home

of a bedroom once, and stared with such surprise on her withered face, that I slunk away like a criminal. I daresay the sight of me skipping all alone with my hands in my breeches pockets, as powder fell from my hair and sprinkled my scarlet coat, and my sword clattered at my side, was ridiculous. For all that, she was kind to me afterwards; when she had a moment to think of me. I remember skipping until I throbbed with delight; and then pausing, and looking out of the window with a feeling as if I was a thousand years old. So I remember dancing a breakdown by the well, to keep warm; and then stopping, with a dread that the trees had watched me; and going heavily back, over the wet leaves and the slimy roots on the path. When it was time to go to bed, I would wander out on the terrace; and standing on the brink of the yellow slabs of light that were by the dining-room windows, would stare at the revellers, as if I was shut out of my home.

Once I had a chance of recovering my place, for Sir Malachi met me, as he went out in a rollicking temper, and he paused in his song, saying, "Come, you poor little white creature, and see if you have the blood of a gentleman." Giving me a pole with a spike in it, he went off

The Wood of the Brambles

to a musty barn by the stables; and I followed him with my heart in my mouth: he was bent on ratting, and ordered me to stand in a door; and I was eager to kill a dangerous brute, for I was certain my destiny hung upon my manliness then. I saw a puny rat bolting, and I pitied its terror. My grandfather shouted, "Sir, you can go back to your books!"

His contempt of me rankled in my heart, and I took to scrambling on the rocks on the shore, and climbing trees in the wood, and crossing by the Ford of the Alders when the river was flooded; to prove to myself that, in spite of my unfortunate mercy for the rat, I had a gentleman's courage. Once I climbed the cliffs by a way that appeared so risky when I got to the top that I was afraid to tell anyone, because I was sure it would be hard to believe me. At first, I was very fond of my own garden, at the side of the sycamore: but Sir Malachi strolled over it once, when he went out with his dogs. After that, as I grew up, I had no pleasures but my reading and rambles.

At this time, there were only three that I cared about—Sir Tim, and the Rector of Ennis-crone, and Theophilus Considine of Ballymoreen, an ivied house in the wood. I fancy I was

Coming Home

proudest of Considine's friendship; because he was so stately in purple and an elaborate wig. But the Rector had been good to me also, and had nursed me when I was sick of a fever. I was friends with the people, except a gloomy and dark fellow that was known as the Squire.

Sometimes, I went to call on the Abbé Maguire, a complacent, rosy little man, and a dear friend of Sir Malachi's. Up at the House he would never notice me, but welcomed me kindly at his home in the village. There I would sit on the stone seat in the ingle, and look at his guests; for he used always to leave his door on the latch, and any passers were welcome; and the bench and his room would be crowded by the ragged "boc-caghs," who were wanderers by trade, and the dark men—the blind—and the Poor Scholars who were tramping to seek learning and depended on charity. Biddy would carry stir-about round, and the dark men would sit sniffing the hot milk, and the others looked at it wistfully; but all of them waited for their turns with politeness. The old Abbé would chat with them, or else he would nod by the hearth, as the fire deepened his rosiness, and reddened the silk of his stockings, amazing his rough bare-footed visitors. He used to wear a nightcap indoors,

The Wood of the Brambles

and hang his wig on the dreary bust of a martyr in the window behind him, and had a gown with a red sash at his waist, for he wished to be taken for a Frenchman because he had been over to Paris. When the bench was crowded, the comers would linger out in the garden, never touching the fruit, even if it lay on the path, because they were trusted. Naked feet would be heard upon the path, and outlandish faces would peer beside the screen at the door.

The Abbé was supposed to be teaching me, although he had stopped his efforts when I could spell; and so my life was changed by his death.

For once, I had been admitted to dine with the others, as Sir Tim was the only visitor in the house, and had made my grandfather let me in, on Maguire's birthday, and we four were at table. Maguire was on my grandfather's left, with Sir Tim beside him, and I was facing them, very grateful for tolerance. The clock began to strike in the hall. "Eleven," said Sir Tim; but the Abbé counted the strokes. "It is twelve," said he; "my drinking is over, for I say Mass in the morning." He upset his glass on the cloth. "I can't move," he said, whispering, and Sir Malachi slapped him on the back,

Coming Home

with a laugh, crying, "You are feeble and old. Drunk after a couple of bottles?" The Abbé fell forward, with his head on his plate. Sir Malachi laughed louder, and cried, "It is John the Baptist, with his head on a dish!"

When they had laid the Abbé upstairs, the others came again to the dining-room. Sir Malachi righted the spilt glass, with an indifferent swagger. Sir Tim sat with his elbows on the table, and was looking in front of him, as if there was somebody beside me: his wig was tilted to the left; and his eyes were so sunk, that I almost thought he had spectacles. My grandfather stood lifting a glass. "Tim," he said, "we drink to the health of the kind fellow who was sitting between us." Sir Tim put his face in his hands, sobbing and crying.

Maguire's death reminded my grandfather that it was well I should learn something besides the motley and indefinite knowledge to be found in his books, and he was glad to be rid of me. So, when I was nine, I was taken to Dunleary, and sent to school at St. Omer's. Luckily old Ryland, the steward, had the sense to provide me with

The Wood of the Brambles

less remarkable clothes. My coats were scarlet till then, for Sir Malachi never ordered a change.

I was happy at the school, but the holidays were dreary, because I was alone in the house. When the Revolution began, I went to live with a master until my grandfather wrote for me in the summer of Ninety-two, and I took ship at Boulogne.

I was surprised to see how little had altered. The House was just the same; but the furniture was dingy and worn. Mrs Regan had gone off to her home in Ross; and the men were more untidy than ever. My bedroom, in the corner above the sycamore at the end of the terrace, had been fine to me once; but now it was naked. Mirrors were so rare in the House, that tubs of water in the pantries were used instead by the servants, if ever they had a wish to be neat. Yet the dining-room was full of extravagance.

My grandfather was testy and ill. Formerly, he treated his servants with a rollicking contemptuous friendliness, that they seemed to enjoy the more from the risk of his irrational anger; but now he was so fierce that they shunned him. In the old time, if there were no guests in the House, he would breakfast late, to have only a couple of hours, before dinner, for lounging in the

Coming Home

farmyard, or poking the pigs with his cane, or cantering over to the field where his workmen were at ease till his coming would make them begin desperate toil: they used to put urchins to look for him, because they were loath to vex him by the sight of their laziness; just as he was reluctant to find them out, for he shrank from annoyance and preferred to be angry without the compulsion of a reason for rage, although, if he was forced to discover offences, he would shout such profanity that the culprit would tremble with a look of despair, and murmur, "It is a fine old man he is, an' his bark is worse than his bite." But now he rose betimes, for he slept badly; and if ever he sang, it was only to pretend to be happy. Although he was good to me now, the remembrance of his coldness divided us. It was too late for thinking of the earlier kindness. Once his companions were chosen from the proudest, but now he had a train of squireens and "half-sirs"; for his friends had been unable to bear his fretfulness, and even Sir Tim was seldom a visitor.

My cousin Tony, a freckled and bright fellow with red hair and an astonishing brogue, was still much at the House. Although he was so young, he was honoured. Once he rode whooping

The Wood of the Brambles

across Wexford in the paint of an Indian, to lead the people to think the Mohawks were invading the country : this was spoilt by the mayor, who imprisoned him until he was sober. Another time, he upset a watchman into the sea. This, with similar doings, got my cousin the name of a fine spirited lad ; and won him the affection of all who were not hurt by his playfulness.

The House was managed by Ryland, who seemed to worship its stones, and would wander in the airy and quiet rooms, and pull off his yellow wig to dust the tables as tenderly as a maid powders the soft cheek of her mistress. Because he had such a reverent look, the rooms would appear smaller without him. Yet, in spite of his watchfulness, a number of panes of glass were broken, and half the doors were in want of hinges or handles ; because these were disasters it was awkward to remedy : he would have set them right if he could ; but found it more difficult to summon a tradesman, and put it off until he happened to be in Wexford, and then it would slip out of his mind.

I had so little liking for the noisy squireens, that I used to slip away from the table, when the drinking began, and stroll across to the Considines', or down to the Rectory. I made

Coming Home

friends with Shamus, the master, a long fellow in black, with a bony face and cynical mouth : he was still as fond of the Wood, and he proved to be learned in pedigrees and dusty traditions.

My friend Theophilus Considine was less in my eyes. Because he had found it easy to fool his neighbours, he had come to partake their trust in his learning, or was doubtful of mine, for he made a show of his ignorance. For the sake of old times, I was subdued, when he told me his greatest joy was to read Theocritus in the original Latin. His phrases were as rich as his coat : and he could terrify the people around him with the name of Epictetus, although he was pronouncing it wrong. For all that, his appearance was noble.

Agatha was hardly fourteen, and I looked down on her youthfulness ; but in spite of the difference of our ages I found her delightful, and we wandered together in the thick of the wood, or lingered by the well, or went further to a cave in the cliffs. The secret of the cave had been long kept by the Kilclares, who had once lived in Ballymoreen ; and she had learnt it from Pierce, when he was back from St Omer's. I was five years older than Agatha Considine, and so I had never noticed her in

The Wood of the Brambles

my dignified childhood ; but now I made amends for that loftiness. Agatha was overlooked by Theophilus, and spoilt by her mother ; and so she had her way, and was happy.

One day when I was alone with Sir Malachi, he said he was sorry he had not travelled abroad, and I answered I was longing to do so. Upon that, he proposed to let me travel, and I jumped at the offer. So I went around, the next day, to bid "Good-bye" to the Considines ; and was disappointed to see only Theophilus. I searched in the wood for Agatha ; but after a time, I gave it up, and determined to go again to the cliffs. The day was hot, and I lagged drowsily on the edge of the trees ; and would have shrunk from the eyes of Jim the Fool, or Dark Jacob, as if everyone knew I was sentimental and sheepish. As I sat on the narrow screen in the cave, resting my head upon my hands to shut out the sunset gilding the sky, the door was darkened ; and Agatha stood on the threshold, and was framed in the rugged hoop of the rock, and the clouds were in a halo behind her. And the green-sickness of my sentiment passed, and left a loyal companionship.

I thought of her in the years of my travels. Often, when I was moonish, my dreams moulded

Coming Home

an impossible Agatha. I spent months at a time in little towns and the quieter cities from Laval to Verona. My allowance was too scanty for long adventurous journeys. With a burden of books, and the acquaintance of the people I met, I enjoyed my travels; until I was recalled by the tidings of Sir Malachi's death. Hunting, he had been killed by a fall. I came back at once; and the coach met me at Arklow.

And so I had arrived at the village, on that morning in May. All the night I had watched the beacons cresting remote hills with unaccountable fires.

Chapter II

The Burning of Davernmore

THE dogs scurried to meet us, barking and jumping; and I was glad of their welcome. But they whined, and ran off, when they looked in vain for Sir Malachi. Even the servants, on the steps to receive me, had fallen looks, as if my coming reminded them of my grandfather's death. I saw his three-cornered hat on a peg as I went in, and his gold-handled whip upon the sideboard, where one of his gloves was sprawling as if there was the hand of a ghost in it.

The House was as still, as if it was decayed and abandoned. As I went over it, when the breakfast was done, I found myself listening for Sir Malachi's voice. My mind was full of the past. The sideboard, at the end of the hall, was oaken, and its screen was a tangle of preposterous roses. I used to think they were copied from roses Gulliver gathered in the

The Burning of Davernmore

country of giants. The gold-handled whip had been Sir Malachi's pride: he would rub it with care before he went to a meet; and would put it with the show of the silver at the back of the dining-room. A servant used to sit on that hooded chair in the hall, with a gun on his knees, with orders to sit up all the night, because it had been the custom in wilder times; but as soon as he learnt from the hush that my grandfather was asleep, he would slink away from his post, and hurry back when the noisiness began in the morning.

In my absence of mind, I pointed out the things that were broken and damaged, until Ryland rebelled. "The old masther—God be with him to-day!" said he, "would never have troubled about a thrifle like that." Then he hobbled away, as if I had broken his heart by speaking about mending the windows. I felt I must be careful to soothe his vanity later; and meanwhile I determined to go and call on the Considines.

Putting on my blue coat with the high collar, and brown corduroy breeches, I clubbed my hair with a fresh ribbon, and saw that my sword had not been stained on the journey. The wood was at its greenest; and all the brambles and briar-

The Wood of the Brambles

roses were blossoming. The hawthorn was fading; and the lilac and laburnum were over. Going up to the gabled and ivied house, I could hear Mrs Considine singing "Where the bee sucks," and saw her at her harp by the window. As I stood on the steps, I heard Theophilus upstairs in the study;

"We are not the first,
Who, with best meaning, have incurred the worst,"

he was saying, reading very loud to himself. A stately butler, with black eyebrows of a singular heaviness, showed me into the parlour.

Mrs Considine was just as untidy, and as comely and soft, as I had always remembered her. She was a gossiping kind woman, who was often unhappy with her husband, because she attempted to share his wisdom in his presence, although it saddened her as much as the silk dress that was the pride of her heart. She was fond of confiding in everyone; and often would tell me her troubles when I was little; and I would come on her talking to her image in the looking-glass on the mantelpiece, as if she was whispering secrets to that homely reflection. She used to drive Theophilus desperate, by leaving her knitting on the seat of his chair.

The Burning of Davernmore

"Madam," he would say, as he rose, "must I remind you that I object to disorder?" Now she was as flurried as if I was a stranger; but yet she offered me bread and jam, and assured me she remembered I was fond of it always. "And whenever you want it, you will know where to find it, my dear," she went on, just as she used. I refused the offer, in spite of the risk of hurting her, because I was dreading Agatha might come in and surprise me at that undignified meal. I had no need to be afraid, for I lingered a great while for her coming.

I used to undervalue the graces of silks and ribbons, because I remembered Agatha delightful in rougher clothes, and had never found her as pretty as the time we were caught in the rain, and ran through the wood to the parlour, and bent beside the fire, whose uncertain glow was on her glistening cheeks, as she stooped with her hands out, while the draggled hem of her frock was steaming, and her mother was crying unnoticed in the neighbouring room—"Change your dress, dearest." I forgot that heresy now, as Agatha came in to the parlour. She was in grey, with narrow glimpses of red silk as a lining; and a ribbon to suit it fastened the wide straw

The Wood of the Brambles

of her hat: and although she was slender, her petticoat was blocking the door. Her brown hair had been woven and piled by her mother, whose dream of Heaven was to finger that softness, and listen to Agatha through a quiet eternity. Her eyes were honest and young, and I felt I had been never away from her.

Agatha said she had been just on the point of going out for a walk: but she was too simple to act her surprise well; and, as it happened, I caught a glimpse of her bright face at her window as I stood on the steps. I was delighted to have the chance of escorting her. Her mother would not leave her alone in the house, but would follow her with worshipping eyes; and that was one of the reasons Agatha was glad to be out. So we strolled away in the wood, and Mrs Considine watched us from the top of the broken steps, calling out plaintively—"Mind, and keep off the grass, Agatha dearest." She had an innocent habit of advising her daughter; and would have been astonished and hurt, if Agatha had taken the least notice of her affectionate orders.

Agatha's wide dress was a trouble on the narrow and thorny paths of the wood; and it forced me to keep a little behind, but that

The Burning of Davernmore

allowed me to stare at her. At first she put on airs of romance, talking of the pleasures of solitude, and sighing now and then with a dreamy sadness in her beautiful eyes. I thought she had been reading some trashy novel, and was trying to imitate the heroine's ridiculous ways. Of course I made believe to be pining to cure the imagined sorrow that was eating her heart. "She will grow out of it soon enough," I reflected, and her folly delighted me. As she spoke she was glancing back at me, and turning her neck with the pleased grace of a pigeon: and I was sure she was thinking complacently of her charming appearance, and I was with her in that.

So we came to the mossy seat at the well. It was a stone bench with a screen of laurels behind it, and was always in shadow. Then Agatha found it wearisome to pretend to be grave, or caught an unwary twinkle in my eyes, for she suddenly grew joyful, and treated books with disdain, and was devoted to horses, and said her dream was to live in Dublin because she was so tired of the loneliness. From this I understood that she needed an admiring companion. Then she spoke of my travels, and said she only wanted to see Paris, and went on to enquire

The Wood of the Brambles

gravely whether women of fashion in that city were wearing clothes like her own. I said I was too dull to remember. It would have been cruel to tell her I had seen the Parisian ladies in low-necked dresses with hardly any sleeves, and in hats with immense feathers and bows.

Then we spoke of our friends; and as we talked of Sir Tim laughingly, she turned to discover the cause of a rustling in the bushes behind us.

I spoke at random, because I was more eager to listen. My wits were lost in the sunny depths of her eyes. That was why I talked of the duel when my great-grandfather, old Sir Terence, and Black Phelim, his lifelong devoted comrade, were killed there at the well. It was on a blustering morning in December, when the branches were naked. "Phelim," said old Terence-na-fion, "we have been always together: and now we are divided at last. Come, my dear, let us make the division just as small as we can. This bench will be enough, I am sure." Black Phelim Kilclare was touched to the very heart by that tenderness. "God bless you, Terence, my dear boy," said he, blinking and hoarse; "we have never differed till now, and if you are killed,

The Burning of Davernmore

dear, remember I forgave you beforehand." "I will, dear, I will," said Terence, with a sob in his throat. So the old fellows stood at either end of the seat and fired at the word: and Phelim floundered into the laurels; but Terence toppled into the water. It was all about a litter of pigs. And as I finished that history, I saw in her eyes that she had heard it before.

So I changed the subject, and talked of Ireland, and the efforts to quell the spirit of resistance and rage. And she spoke of the regiments quartered in the neighbouring parishes. She was sorry for the people, and said the innocent suffered for the others, and harmless folk were in suffering. She blamed the officers too, for giving power to the men: and I was glad she was ignorant of the charms of a soldier.

"Troubled times," I said.

"Yes," she said, "the times for a man. Now you will step out and be great. You will come here, and I will crown you with laurel."

And as she was speaking, the splendid figure of her father, Theophilus, shone on the path. He had come to seek us, and met me with an affable kindness. After we had talked

The Wood of the Brambles

for a time, I made my excuses and went back to the house.

Going into the hall, I found I had a number of visitors. Their hats were on the pegs, and their swords and whips had been laid down in the rack; and this meant they had come over to dinner. Sir Malachi would have thought it an insult, if any of his friends were afraid to invite themselves to dinner or supper. "Sir!" he would shout, "have I such a name that my friends eat before they come to my house? Stuff and nonsense! I insist on your dining!"

I found the men were in the dining-room, where they were accustomed to gather. The room was airy and long: and the silver at the back, and the portraits of my rude and depraved ancestors brightened it. Sir Tim was striding about eagerly, in his usual way. My cousin Tony was there in green velvet; and a knot of blue ribbon fastened his red curls: but the brightness of his dress was a shadow compared with the gladness of his freckled and round face as he saw me. "If you happened to come on the peacock sthridin' around the garden as if

The Burning of Davernmore

the eyes in his tail were adorin' him, when you had left Tony, you would fancy the poor bird was ashamed of himself," Sir Tim used to say. Then there was Colonel Carnaby Blake; and Rory Macnamara was by him. A big boisterous priest, with soft humorous eyes, was standing beyond the table, and talking to Boyle of the Fencibles: and the others were strangers who had come with my friends.

Sitting at the head of my table, it amused me to find I was feeling taller, as if I was important at last. I could not forbear smiling as I saw the unhappiness of the grooms and the gardeners who were helping to wait. Farahy, the gardener, hobbled in the clothes that had made him splendid in his youth; they were shiny, and the stockings were wrinkled on his vanishing calves. He filled the glasses as if he considered them thirsty blossoms to be watered with claret. Neligan, a groom, was exhibiting an embarrassing zeal; and if a guest caught his eye, would seize the pepper, or anything handy, and rush around to present it so eagerly, that only a stern heart could have refused his assistance. Sometimes he held a plate to a visitor, as if he had been feeding a horse; but that was only from absence of mind,

The Wood of the Brambles

when he was amused at a joke. I was so struck by his quickness, that I thought I would single him out as my servant.

The men were far gone in years, for the most part; and I found myself critical—as I watched them—and noticed the smoothness of the cloth, and the brightness of the silver, and dirtiness of the bottles that lay flat on the sideboard in the glory of cobwebs. Ryland was uncorking the bottles, with a screw on the silver chain of his office. He was working with a tragical look: and now and then he would pause, to have an eye on the waiters. There were many dishes, with roast mutton, and beef, and chicken, and bacon: and nearly every diner was carving. All were talking at once, with the loud accents of men accustomed to be much in the open air, and to be heard above others. “Dom,” said Tony, “I am sending you a hint of this mutton.” “An’ I’ll throuble you for a half of that chicken, Father Roche,” cried Sir Tim. Father Roche was refusing the meat, because the day was a vigil, and the eve of Whit Sunday. But he was making up for his abstinence, by smearing a pile of potatoes with abundance of butter. One of the servants was set apart to attend to the potatoes; and, every

The Burning of Davernmore

few minutes, he hurried by, with a new dish of them asteam in their skins. Another ran around with the ale in a silver flagon: and the servants and guests were as hot and excited as if they were at work for a wager.

There was a heartiness and kindness about my friends that delighted me; and told me I was now with my own people, and no longer a stranger. "Every Irishman," said Sir Tim to me once, "is a good fellow at heart; though, if you were to go by our conduct, you would frequently doubt it." "That is why so few of us prosper," said Theophilus, sadly. "Ah, we are too simple and kind." "The simplicity of a snake, it is often," said Sir Tim, with a grunt.

As the pastry was brought, someone began to speak of the trouble and the dread in the county. Roche said he was certain a Rising was at hand; and he talked of the change that had come over the people, so that the faction fighting and the drinking had stopped, and all the chapels were crowded. Then somebody referred to a horse; and, in a moment, my visitors all shouted together on that favourite subject. There was such a din, that I longed to get away from the room. It was getting late; and the wood was dull, and the cedars

The Wood of the Brambles

by the garden were sombre. When the cloth had been removed, and the sherry and the port and the ripest claret had been brought, and my friends had settled themselves back in their chairs to go on talking about horses till supper; I left my place, on the plea that I had much to arrange.

"I daresay," said Sir Tim, "there is a deal that you must do in the stables."

"Upon my word, sir, I forgot them," I said.

"Good heavens!" said he, as if he had been struck in the face, "an' yet you call yourself Irish! Annyway," he went on, recovering, "it is my duty to fill your place in your absence: for a table, with only an absent entertainer at the top, is as bad as the headless ghost of Liscannor, that looked in at the dinin'-room window at Castle Desmond, without sayin' a word, an' frightened my aunt Mehetabel, by way of a joke."

The hall was airy and chill: and Neligan was keeping the door. Borrowing a sword from the rack, he had taken his seat in the hooded chair, with the look of a guardian on whose courage and watchfulness the house was depending. He had no business in the hall; but I soon found he was zealous in volunteer-

The Burning of Davernmore

ing his services. Obeying orders was dull, but the thought that he was working to please himself was delightful. Starting in dismay as he heard me, he recovered his spirits, when I said I was going to try him as my servant; and then he grinned, as if he thought me grotesque. That was only a sign of his happiness, and so I delighted him, and suited myself; for I had taken a fancy to that dark little fellow, whose laughing eyes were absurdly feeling and innocent.

Strolling into the Bookroom, I handled the stiff books that I once cherished, and I sat in the hard chair by the window. Often I used to pull it behind the dusty curtain, to shun my grandfather's eyes, if he should happen to look in at the door, to drive me out to the sloppy fields or the wet paths in the winter. "Go and play!" he would shout, disgusted at my effeminate quietness. The books were all in the old places; with Boswell, and Peter Wilkins, and Nelson's Fasts and Feasts, and the Spectator, and the Gentleman's Magazine, and the Muses' Monthly Companion, and the Arabian Nights, in a row. Boswell, and many of the books, had been printed by Crampton in Dublin; because the authors had no copyright there: and I came

The Wood of the Brambles

on a bundle of old chap-books that were read by the people, and among them was a version of Greene's *Dorastus and Faunia*. I used to read the volumes at random, determined to be wise, and to know as much of books as the people I would meet in the world. Nothing was changed in the long room: I remembered the imitations of books on the inside of the doors, and the smell of the wallflowers when the window was open.

Then, as the light weakened, I went into the hall, where the shouting of the drinkers was plain, and up the staircase, whose steps were so high that only Theophilus and my grandfather came down them with dignity. It used to be pathetic to see Sir Tim descending those stairs.

I had my old room, for the present. There was a red glint of the sunset in the pond in the garden, as I fetched my cloak, and went out to meet Theophilus Considine.

Whenever we had guests at the House, Theophilus came over to join the party at supper. He took little, and was fond of explaining that he thought it his duty to practise self-denial in all things. At this, the strangers would start; but fellows who were aware that

The Burning of Davernmore

he liked reading, were quieter, as if they considered nothing was too odd for a man with such a singular taste. Though they thought him eccentric, everyone was proud of his company. The truth was that he was never robust, and so he denied himself everything that made him unwell.

It was not to listen to wordy and poetical talk, that I went out ; but to meet Agatha, who used to accompany Theophilus a part of the way. Stepping out on the terrace, I saw the glow of the dining-room windows ; and waited on the brink of a bed of light, as I used. Sir Tim had thrown his wig on the ground. His skull had a big lump at the base. As he laughed and leant back, his neck was of a generous red : and he was clutching his glass, as if he wanted to be sure it was there. Tony sat exulting beside him. I could not see the others at all, from my place, and only one of the silver candlesticks Sir Malachi prized. It was by a dish of broiled bones, and a pewter jug of the steaming and mulled claret or port. Punch was always served in a bowl, and was the favourite drink of the younger men ; but the elders were true to rum-shrub : and my grandfather loved Madeira with brandy to give

The Wood of the Brambles

it strength; and Sir Tim was faithful to warm claret with butter floating on top. The light of the candles gleamed on the mahogany table, and lent a glisten to the silver and wine. There was smoke in the room, and it hung about the flames of the candles. Just as I was turning, Sir Tim began his song of "An old woman tossed in a blanket, seventeen times as high as the Moon." It followed me, as I was crossing the garden to the dusk of the trees.

I was startled when Theophilus spoke, for I was passing the well. Then I saw him with Agatha on the seat; he would never walk without delaying to rest. I had gone slowly up the wood in the twilight. I was tired, and besides, I was careful, for the roots of the trees sprawled on the path.

"We were watching the fires, and I remembered those strenuous verses of the beacons that shouted to the man on Makistos," he said. "And as my memory fumbled those echoing lines, I had a vision of beacons on every mountain in Ireland."

"Are the beacons burning to-night?" said I.

The Burning of Davernmore

"Are you as absent-minded as ever?" said Agatha, laughingly.

"Well, they are only lit after dark," I said.

"We saw them from the gable," she said; but Theophilus broke in, "They are shining on invisible peaks. Northward they are handfuls, and tufts, and tongues; but away on the White Mountains they are glimmering stars."

He was speaking as if he had a throng of admirers. That was often his way; and his eyes would be as pleased and unnoticing, as if he was in front of a looking-glass.

"And there is a beacon behind you," said Agatha.

"So you thought I would see it?" said I.

"We saw it just as you came," she said. "Do you know, I think it is bigger."

Turning to look, I saw a flame in the leaves. It was high up; and for a moment I stared, and then I turned to the others.

"I think the House is on fire," I said, calmly.

"The House!" cried Agatha.

"I approve your philosophy, my dear lad," said her father. "If it is on fire, let it burn. You are not dependent for happiness on houses or goods."

My quietness was only a cover to a foolish

The Wood of the Brambles

astonishment. At first I was astounded, and then I was indignant; but more than all, I was eager to look steady under Agatha's eyes. I think it was her father's serenity that led me to rival him.

"Oh, what can we do?" cried Agatha.

"Nothing," he said, "unless it would amuse you to stroll down to admire it."

"Really, there is nothing to do," I said, airily. "The servants will save trifles, and steal all they want: and our friends will be disturbed at the table."

"They will be excited, I know. You will have occasion, my Cluster of Nuts, to see the uses of wisdom. Remember what I said when I found you weeping for the puppy that died: and notice my indifference now," said Theophilus.

"Well," I said, "I will come with you."

Theophilus strode on with a solemn dignity, addressing us both with the wisdom of the classics; and neither answered at all. I think Agatha was dazed by our quietness. After I had followed them down the narrow path for a little, my attempt to be patient vexed me, and I said I would cut across the wood, and rejoin them in the garden; and as I left them I heard

The Burning of Davernmore

Theophilus go on with a ring of triumph, because he had surpassed me in calmness.

Soon I could hear crashes and shouting: then there was a roar in the branches like a wind, and a smell of burning; and irresolute sparks drifted in the thick of the leaves. Then I had a widening glimpse of the flame, with a netting of the branches before it. As I felt a heat, and the darkness of the thickets was giving way to a flushed and tremulous twilight, a ballad in the garden was mingled with the noise of the burning.

The roof was blazing; and fire spouted from the gaps of the windows, upward to the pillar of smoke. The fire had reddened the clouds over it, and a circle of woods. It flung an unquiet glow upon the happy and flushed faces of my friends, who were lounging on the seats in the garden. They had glasses in their hands, and the younger servants were behind them with bottles. Facing me, on the opposite side of the garden, was a crowd of the villagers. Dark Jacob was over them, turning his blind face to the heat; and Shamus was near him. There was a glitter, like the stain of the sunset, in the pond by the roses. The people, and my friends, were surveying the sight like the children at a

The Wood of the Brambles

bonfire of furze. Tony had been singing; and just as I came out of the wood, the others joined in a chorus.

I looked in vain for Sir Tim; and then I saw him beside me, on the root of a cedar. I was sorry to see the old fellow downcast at the end of a house where he had often been happy.

"Well, sir," I said, putting my right hand on his shoulder. "Grieving about old recollections?"

He started up with a fright that would have been hard to imagine on his resolute face. For a moment he stared, and then he turned away, sighing.

"An' about a new one," he said.

"Ah! my dearest Dom," said my cousin Tony, coming up to me beaming, "can we ever thank you enough, for providing such a beautiful spectacle?"

"I am glad you like it," said I.

"And we saved a number of things," he said; "all the silver with wine in it, and several bottles. It shall never be said an Irishman deserted a bottle in a moment of danger. Ryland was looking after the plate. 'Ah, sir!' he says, 'come, and lend a hand, to pull out some of the furniture.' 'Are you sober?' said I, 'do gentle-

The Burning of Davernmore

men carry furniture, fool? and after supper, of all times, when they need to be resting? And what is the good of furniture, with nowhere to put it? You can live without a chair if you like. Rory Macnamara used his to make the fires in the winter; and now he sits on the tables. But can you live on a chair without a house?' I demanded."

"Right! You taught him a lesson," I said; "and now I shall speak to him. I see him over there by the sycamore."

"And I'll go with you, my dear," said Tony, clutching my arm.

"You must stop and comfort Sir Tim," I said.

Ryland was as full of affliction as if the House was his own. The older servants had helped him to save things from the fire, and pile them under the sycamore. Most of the things were out of the light; but I saw silver, and books chosen as if their value depended on their weight, and a heap of pictures and furniture selected at random. Now it was too late to preserve anything besides; and he stood as if he was broken.

"Ah, sir!" he said, "what would old Sir Malachi say? This would be a blow to the Master."

No one ever thought of the House with such

The Wood of the Brambles

a pride and affection. The other ricketty elders were as sad; for their home, and their habits, and their shelter in age, were at an end in that burning. This was besides the bitter loss of their master. Sir Malachi had moulded their lives; and they were orphaned without him.

Then as the clock struck in the hall, and its deliberate sound mingled with the noise of the flames, the roof crashed, and my friends and all the villagers cheered.

I saw Theophilus standing by the cedars, with Agatha on his arm, and addressing Tony with eloquence.

"The House," he said, "is a brazier that lifts up a fantastic burden of flame: the roaring of the fire is the worshipping music of the world, and the voice of the storms and the thunder and the breakers at night."

"Gentlemen," cried Sir Tim, as he lifted a bumper, "I will give you a toast, an' you must honour it standin'."

My friends stood up with their glasses.

"We dhrink the health an' prosperity of Dominick Davern, an' welcome him to the home of his fathers."

END OF BOOK I

Book II

The Rising

Chapter I

A Muster at Night

“WE are leaves on a drift, and the wind will trundle us apart in a moment,” said Theophilus, sighing. “I was a leaf sodden in a pool on the road. It was well to be out of the forced fun of the leaves that are sent rolling and scurrying at the will of the wind.”

We were dining alone, in the little room in the front of Ballymoreen. Our black clothes and silk stockings and ruffles were suited to the wainscoted parlour. Neligan had plaited my hair in a powdered queue, and I felt as if I acted a part in an old play, as we lingered over the wine. Sir Tim used to say Theophilus lifted his fork as if he was feeding a king, and put his glass to his lips as if he was pouring a libation to Jupiter. It was amusing to see him, and listen to his theatrical tones. I left the talking to him, as he only looked for a listener. It was getting dark; and the window was like a picture of trees.

The Wood of the Brambles

He had made me come to his house on the night of the burning of Davernmore; and I spent the days after it riding with Agatha, or planning my new home, for my mother's fortune was enough to supply me with the funds for the building. Though the beacons had proved to be the call for a Rising, and many thousands of peasants were in arms, we had noticed little difference yet. We had heard the firing on Oulart Hill on Whit Sunday; but it lasted a short time, for the rebels on the top had few guns, and bore down the militia by a desperate rush on them with pitchforks and pikes. On Whit Monday, the rebels had driven the black cattle before them into Enniscorthy, to trample the soldiers, and had taken the town; and they had been triumphant in Wexford on the Wednesday, but now were fighting in the distance, or mustering by Ross or upon Vinegar Hill. Agatha and her mother had gone to Wexford; for Theophilus said they would be safe with his friend Keogh, while the lonely houses were dangerous. He had promised to join them the next day; and I was going to Dublin.

"Yet I shall be glad to take part in a fuller life," he went on, "though I am fond of my surroundings, for even the trifles in this room

A Muster at Night

have a history. This table is old, and it has come from a dusty room with dark panels, and a slippery floor, and big windows that open on mossy steps into a garden in France. White women, with lace about their delicate hands, touched it serenely: it used to mirror their diamonds, and powdered masses of hair: they are dust now, those beautiful ladies."

"Others have been using it here," said I.

"Yes, and I am leaving them also. My poor wife is an excellent woman, after all: and I think I may be proud of my daughter."

"You may indeed, sir," said I, earnestly.

"I fear she is too dainty," he said, sighing, "she should walk in a sunny garden with white blossoms around her, and be handled as a delicate plaything, and loved with a light heart, and made happy with presents and a mirror to worship. In what place could she find a lovelier picture?"

"Nowhere," I replied, with assurance.

"And now I shall be living for others," he said. "I like the people of Wexford, they are so innocent, and kindly, and dangerous. I think they are not easy to know. A man used to the tired village of Enniscrone would be startled to see it when the factions are fighting."

The Wood of the Brambles

"There is Welsh blood in the county," I began.

"Ah, but the hearts are Irish!" he said.

"They have English tunes and May games, and the mummers go about," I went on, trying to have a share in the talk.

"Yes," he broke in, "and, as a rule, the dramatic gifts of our people find employment in tragedy. But Wexford is just as Irish as the noisier counties. If the people were exiled, they would be breaking their hearts for the wet wind on the hills, and the olive tints of the moors. They will prove redoubtable rebels."

"The Rising will be crushed in a week," I said.

"Or never," he said; "a troubled time is beginning."

"Then I am glad I am going; I should be reluctant to help in crushing a Rising."

"Why?"

"Because it is no business of mine. The soldiers are paid for it, and the work is unpleasant."

"You would never side with the people?"

"Why, that would be madness," I said.

"Well, I am not sure you are safe from troubles in town," he said. "Sir Tim insisted on making a will, before he started for Dublin."

"What has he to leave?"

A Muster at Night

"Debts, and a large income of bills: and he has left them to you."

"To me!" I cried in astonishment.

"To make up for your loss."

"I noticed he was sad at the fire; and next day, when I asked him how it had come about, he was angry, and would not answer the question. He was trying to shield somebody, and so were the servants."

"I daresay nobody knew. It makes no difference, anyway."

"No more does the will."

"But he was proud to be making it. The Castle is entailed; but he signed 'Timotheus Desmond,' with a flourish, as if he was giving the lands of the Geraldines, and the kingdom of Connaught."

"Then I disagree with Sir Tim if he thinks the Rising will last. How can it go on without leaders?"

"The leader is at hand," he said, solemnly. "Ireland has a Washington coming in the hour of her need."

"You mean Bagenal Harvey?" I said.

"You might as well have thought I meant Murphy or Roche," he said, pettishly. "Roche is a rough fellow, and familiar, and boisterous:

The Wood of the Brambles

he is only fit to obey. I knew Murphy in the village; and then he would have swooned if a mouse had raised its voice above a squeak in the wainscot."

"He is a wistful meek little man, with the look of a starved angel," I said.

"He would never brush off a fly, for fear of hurting its feelings. He had the ways of a robin that cannot make up its mind whether you want to give it a crumb or a blow. And he used to slink through the village, keeping his eyes down, and not looking at anyone but the children and ragged folk who would be hurt if he passed them. I think he knew his friends by their feet. But he liked to be with others, as long as nobody looked at him: and then he would sit like a ghost, and would have been happy if he had been safely invisible. And he walked as if his heart was so tender that he wished to avoid treading on the stones in the path."

"Perhaps it was his feet that were tender," said I.

"Fancy a man of that size presuming to set up as a leader! He could not even dress himself well," said Theophilus.

"Sir Tim used to say he thought Murphy put on his clothes anyhow in the dark in the morning,

A Muster at Night

and never took them off in the night," I said. "But what could make him a rebel?"

"The yeomen had got into his chapel at Aghavrin, and defiled the altar as a joke; and when Murphy saw the people crowding to Mass, with their weapons, on the way to the Camp, without thinking of his assistance because he was so tiny and frail, he took the crucifix down after the Communion, and told them his place was at their head in a war for their religion and lives. Now he leads the way in his vestments."

"It is a good thing he was taken from Ennis-crone," I said; "Pierce Kilclare will be quieter."

"Ah, the poor dear lad! He was always as unlucky as even his bitterest friends could desire," said Theophilus, lounging. "He used to be as bashful as Murphy, though he has got over it now. Pierce was so aggressively shy that it was hard to avoid taking it as a personal insult. I have always thought of him with esteem and dislike. When he was a baby in arms, I esteemed him for the strength of his lungs; and I disliked him for proving it. When he was bigger, I let him come to the house; because I was sorry for his father, who had lived in it once. It used to be their family place. Grim old Michael Kilclare would never come, but the lad

The Wood of the Brambles

was often about, when he was at home for the holidays. If I came on Pierce in a passage, I would give him a kind word and a nod; and so he trusted my friendship. For all that, I was often annoyed by his awkwardness and slovenly clothes. I remember his coming in here once, as I was snug at the fire. It was raining, and his dampness and shyness put an end to my comfort. He had brought in mud on his boots; and, as I was trying to put him at his ease, I was wishing he would go, for I wanted to have the dirt cleared away. The shifting light of the fire had given his dark ugliness a sort of distinction. 'My dear lad,' I said, 'do you know you have a classical face?' He glanced up as if he thought I was joking, and then flushed with a ridiculous pleasure. I added, 'I mean of classical ugliness.'"

"Come now, that was cruel," I said.

"Well, he had no right to be vain. You were chockful of vanity, and it gave me amusement; just as I was fond of the peacock in your garden at home. But I was remorseful, and showed him an unusual kindness, and asked him to come and see me again; and so I was punished."

"How did he get on with my grandfather?"

A Muster at Night

“After he came back as the curate? With his usual fortune. He was in the village, and met Sir Tim and Sir Malachi striding arm-in-arm with their way as if they were leading a triumphant procession. As he was uncertain about saluting them, he avoided their eyes; and gazed upon a pig in a door. They swung their three-cornered hats in a salute, and he missed it: and when it was unanswered, the old fellows scowled with such a purple and tragic anger, that nobody had the courage to bow to them for fear of attracting their attention and rage. ‘Stuff and nonsense!’ shouted Sir Malachi, when I tried to explain. ‘Sir, it was a deliberate insult: he was corrupted by the Revolution in Paris. Sir, the scoundrels in the village took after his example at once, the tenants that have lived on my land hundreds of years!’”

“But the people like him?” I asked.

“No, he is too grave; and he likes to dig in his garden. The peasants, who will dig if they must, think poorly of a man who is fond of it. It is said he sits waiting in the evenings, and nobody steps in for the stirabout. He would give his coat to the poor; but his awkwardness chills them, and it keeps them away: even the dark men are frightened by the tales of his

The Wood of the Brambles

gravity, and choose the assistance of his pleasanter neighbours."

"And the little house is the same?"

"As when Maguire used to live in it: but it is full of forlorn tidiness, and is hung with the doleful likenesses of unlucky Kilclares.

"I used to be afraid of the Squire," I said.

"Old Michael Kilclare? He was a sad rigorous fellow. His family used to be as great as the highest; and he worked in the fields: and the well-to-do farmers, as they handed him his fourpence a day for wages, would touch their hats, and the folk at a fair, or by a chapel on Sundays, would salute as he passed. He dressed as a gentleman on Sundays, in rusty black with a periwig and sword; and he had the clothes of a peasant in the fields, but he was always proud, and accepted the deference as a matter of course."

"Were you ever in his house?"

"In the Glen? I saw it the day after his death. It was a cosy and thatched farm; and was hung with family pictures. They used to be here; but he had taken them off with him. There are traces still of his family, in the house," he went on; "that white chimney elaborate with ponderous arms, and the crests on these Tudor

A Muster at Night

chairs, and the weapons on the sides of the hall."

"How did he lose his money?" I said; "the old story of spendthrifts?"

"It is a long story," he said, with embarrassment, rising and staring out of the window, and putting his wig straight as if he looked at a mirror. "I will tell you about it another time, my dear lad. The lilacs are carpeting the lawn with their irregular shadows. The wood darkens, and the roses are dim," he went on; lingering, and tasting his words. "Our ways are parting here in the twilight: I have a favour to ask you: you must promise me to see to my epitaph."

"With pleasure," I said.

"I would leave it to my wife, but the good woman would forget it, and take a verse from the scriptures, "The wages of sin is death," or something quite as annoying. These are the words, "He only lived to be great. He cared little for any, and a little for all."

"Right. I will be sure to remember them," I said.

"Perhaps you will write them down," he went on. "I have a shrewd suspicion, my dear lad, that you make notes of my sayings," he said, turning, and smiling. "I have found you very

The Wood of the Brambles

attentive. Mind you, I am not angry at all : and I beg you not to say I am right ; for that would hamper the freedom of talking, and I love to be natural."

"I wasn't going to say it," I said.

"I might have trusted to your tact," he went on, "for it is better unsaid. But above all things, I must beg you to note my calmness at this perilous time : and if I stand triumphant before Europe, you can count on my friendship."

"I will," I said, and then he strode out with a solemn far-away look.

Without troubling my head about his meaning, because he liked to make believe he stood on the brink of a surprising adventure, I went into the semi-circular hall paved with dingy Italian tiles and made menacing by a lining of weapons. The hall was light ; for the door was open, as usual. Taking my felt hat from a peg, I went down the lofty and broken steps to the lawn, and strolled across to the wood. There, in the dark paths, I forgot Theophilus, and even his daughter was not much in my mind : for the sleepiness of the branches was over me, and made me indifferent.

A Muster at Night

I remember I was struck by the whimsical air that my elaborate dress and powdered queue would have given me in the eyes of a stranger meeting me alone in that solitude of the whispering trees. There was a wind in the branches of the wood: and it altered with the trees, and was like a heavy rain in the beeches, and had a shivering mutter in the elms, and it sighed lazily in the tops of the oaks. In my narrow bedroom at home, I used to listen at night, as the wind in the sycamore grew till it had the sound of a river. Thinking of that time, I remembered my bold wanderings in the wood, in the dusk, with my little sword in my hand; and my appearance then, with my powdered hair and mature clothes, in this wilderness, was whimsical also. Every tree had its own character, and looked at me then; the sycamores and limes had a motherly air, and the gnarled branches were spiteful. "If I could encounter that pompous mite on this weedy path," I thought, "I would say to him, 'Get rid of your powdered hair and those ridiculous clothes, you unfortunate little wretch; and run about like a child.'" And then I was amused to discover myself taking Sir Malachi's point of view, after all. I remembered going at random in the thickets of briars, until I astounded Shamus as he

The Wood of the Brambles

sat on the fallen tree in the glade. As I thought of that adventure, I followed the bushy paths in the tangle that I used to explore.

All of a sudden, I started at an eloquent voice. It was in the leaves and the dark. Stopping short, I listened ; for I found it familiar. "It is Theophilus Considine," I said to myself, "but is there anyone with him, or is he practising eloquence alone in the trees? Perhaps he is taking the whispers above him for a buzz of applause. Anyway, it is my duty to go near him, and attend to his wisdom, for the good of posterity." So I began forcing a way through the thicket, with heed on account of my silken clothes ; and was glad the dew was not thick, and the grass had been dried by the long drought of the summer. "How full of briars is this working-day world !" Theophilus would sigh if a visitor spoke of the wood : and yet he had come into the thorny mazes in the night, with a reckless disregard of his clothes. No wonder I was almost incredulous.

As soon as I could hear what he said, I paused again, and discovered he was talking of freedom, and the right of the poor to live as if they were men, and the claims of Ireland to manage its affairs for itself. "Upon my word," I said, "it is well he came here, if he was going

A Muster at Night

to talk sedition and treason." Going on again, I could see sparks in the bushes. Then I saw a glow; and a little further on, as I peered through a netting of the brambles, I looked on a glade that was full of people and light.

The people were in a column between girls who were holding torches of the bog-fir aloft. The dusky glow of the torches was lifting the boughs to an incredible height. The fellows in the front of the crowd had pikes, but all the others, beyond them, had pitchforks or scythes. One of them had a banner, and all had bunches of green ribbon on their hats and their clothes. A great number of women and children were behind, and I saw babies in arms. The girls were all in the white dresses they had worn on Whit Sunday. The people came from the village of Enniscrone and the Glen; and yet they seemed to be strangers. They were looking up at Theophilus. He was on horseback before them; and was dressed in a green coat with a shining profusion of gold lace, and white breeches, and garters of green silk, and he carried big epaulettes. His hat was plumed, and his wig and his gold lace and his sabre shone in the twilight.

I felt as if I dreamed, when Theophilus turned with a shout of "Forward!" and rode into a

The Wood of the Brambles

gap in the thicket. The way was in the heart of the wood, and in a tangle of briars. It had been cleared, and was wide enough for the rebels to pass. As the girls were moving, the wayward light of the torches jerked the boles and the bushes out of the shadow till they seemed to be tramping in a silent procession. Then the rebels began "The Wearing of the Green," and that woeful ballad was like a song of deliverance.

Someone shouted "a spy," and caught me by the back of the neck, and flung me into the glade, and struck me on the head with a stick. I staggered, drawing my sword, and lungeing out at him blindly. A smashing blow on my forehead stretched me out on the turf.

Chapter II

The Camp on the Hill

WHEN I came to myself, I was lying bound on a cart; fetters of rope were fastening my hands and my feet. A dizzy pain was my first feeling, as I opened my eyes. A man followed me, leading a white horse with another cart, and a rumbling and a cracking of whips and a distant singing before us told me I was carried along with the baggage in the train of the rebels. When a village turned out to join the rebels, I knew its property was hidden or taken to the camp on the hill. My clothes and ruffles were tattered: my sword was gone; but the empty scabbard was left. I shut my eyes, for my sickness and my soreness prevented me from minding at all what became of me until I was better. The flash of the torch carried by the fellow behind me was a sting in my eyes: and I dozed painfully, as if I was fevered.

I fancied we were hours on the road. "Wake

The Wood of the Brambles

up now, prisoner. Shamus Dhu, the Captain, is here," shouted a rough voice, and I clambered off the little cart, and fell down heavily, because I was tied. The shout of laughter above me seemed to be away in the distance. Someone cut the rope at my feet, and assisted me up: and I stood clutching a man's arm, as I turned round to the Captain.

I saw Shamus Dhu Harragan, the master of the school in the village. The dark quietness of his face was the same, and his manner was as curt; though a helmet and a sash had been added to his ordinary clothes.

"Is that you?" he said coldly, "come along with me, please."

We went silently up a lane under branches. I was trying to master my dizziness, and speak, but I thought of nothing to say. After a little time I began—

"Well, this is a foolish mistake."

"It is," said Shamus.

"And I was partly to blame."

"You were," said he.

"You have heard the story?"

"I have," he said.

"Your people are violent."

"A strange thing in a war," he said.

The Camp on the Hill

"But I won't ask you to punish the fellows who assaulted me."

"Don't," said Shamus. "It would be wastin' your breath. We'll look in at the house," he went on, as we were passing a white gate in the hedge.

The gate was on the right, and it led to the little court of a farm. There was music: and the windows were shining. The court was full of people on tubs or barrows or planks, or sitting at their ease on the ground. They were drinking, and taking part in the chorus of a song in the house. The women had been tucking their gowns to avoid the dirt of the yard, as if it was easy to hide or remedy stains on the petticoats.

"Tell me now, my good man," cried Shamus to a lad in the darkness, "is Dermody beyond in the house?"

"Is it you, Captain Harragan? An' is it Jacob you're wantin'? He is there, an' what's more, he is singin'," said the other.

"We'll step in for a moment," said Shamus: and we went through the people.

"Whist, decent men," said one, "an' don't you see the house is full up? Have reason, an' sit down where you are." But we passed

The Wood of the Brambles

through the crowd, though it was very thick at the door. The light of the windows made the looks of the people haggard and yellow, and it altered them by the shadows it put beside their noses and round their eyes, and it lent the women in their shawls the appearance of a cluster of monks.

There was a tall screen at the door. The room was lit by a fire and candles on the chimney and rafters. The scene was as pleasant as if it was in quieter times. The people were drinking soberly, and chatting in comfort.

"Tell me who's there?" said Dark Jacob.

"Can I have a word with you, Captain?" said Shamus.

The blind man came and stood at the door. Dark Jacob was mighty in Enniscrone, for his burliness and vigour amazed his leaner and contemplative neighbours. Besides, he was known to be prosperous, because he had begged for many years at the milestone beneath the chestnuts at the foot of the road. So he had his way, and he bore himself as if he could see.

"Whisper now, an' what are you afther?" he said.

"I have a prisoner here for you," said Shamus.

The Camp on the Hill

"There's a time for all things, my dear," said Dark Jacob. "We are easy to-night. Let the poor divil go, or pike him : but anyway, get rid of him somehow."

"It is Sir Dominick Davern," said Shamus.

"Is it young Masther Dom?" said Jacob. "Sure, there's little harm in the lad. Let him run away in the dark."

"I hand him over to you," said Shamus.

"Come in then, prisoner," said Jacob, with a cross and aggrieved tone ; and I followed him.

I hardly knew a soul in the room. Many in the country about Enniscrone would have taken off their hats if they met me in the road, and I was used to their faces. These went on with their gossip, as if I had no right to intrude.

"You are merry to-night," I said, trying to pull myself together and speak as if I was careless.

"It is a wake," said the beggarman.

"And who are you waking?"

"You can see for yourself," he said.

Striding to the bed in the corner, he put out his hand to avoid jostling his neighbours ; but this was only because they were his guests, for he used to tramp through the village, leaving the others to get out of his way. A body

The Wood of the Brambles

under a board with a sheet on it was there on the bed. Jacob lifted the sheet, like a sculptor showing his work. The face on the pillow had the beauty of an exquisite carving. The subtle changes of death had altered it to a noble serenity.

"It is Macnamara," I cried.

"Roarin' Mac it is," said the beggarman, complacently.

I was staring, aghast. I was so used to see Macnamara excited and flushed, that I wondered at his loftiness now.

"Was he killed in the fighting?" I said, whispering as if he could hear.

The blind man had his eyes on my face.

"He was shot as a thraitor," he said gruffly.

"He was treacherous?" I said, with astonishment.

"Annyone who is not in the service of England an' fights against us now is a thraitor."

"A new law?" I said.

"An' the Republic is new," said Jacob, putting the sheet tidily back. "I'll tell you all about it," he said. "But you must make yourself at home, Masther Dom. Do you think I would make a sthranger of Sir Malachi's grandson? You must take a seat an' a drop."

The Camp on the Hill

"No, thank you," I said.

"Whisper now, my good man, get me a wee sup in a glass," he said to a neighbour. "Thank you, my dear," he said, taking it. "Listen now, Masther Dom, when they lit the fires on the hills, an' the word had gone round that everyone was to gather an' fight with the Orangemen, Roarin' Mac sent out for his friends. Says he, 'I'll fill my house with an ocean of dhrink, an' a little food, an' my friends, an' feast until the fightin' is done.'"

"But he was fond of fighting," I said.

"An' he was fonder of dhrink, an' hated the law that was disthurbin' him often. 'Come out of that now,' says hunthreds of the poor boys in the night, 'or throw us out the barrels of whiskey; we are dead with the drought.' 'Go away,' says he, puttin' his head out of a window, 'or you'll be dead with a bullet. I'll sthand a siege, before I sthand your impertinence.' Then, if you please, as the boys were settin' fire to the house, afther he an' his friends had murdered a score of them by firin' safely out of the dark windows at poor lads that were lit up by the torches, would you believe it? Roaring Mac thrundles the barrels o' whiskey into the heart of the blaze. So he was shot on the hill, for de-

The Wood of the Brambles

sthroyin' the poor lads an' the liquor. 'If you must shoot me,' says he, 'I suppose there is no help for it, boys. So we'll make a night of it now.' And when we led him up at the dawn, we hoisted the black flag on the Mill, an' the pipers played the Dead March, an' everyone knelt down, an' scores of us were cryin' like children; an' the shooters hadn't the heart to fire straight at him, so some of the bullets killed people lookin' on, an' I tell you he was mightily amused at the accident."

"Then he put a bold face on it," I said.

"Ah, he was a kind spirited lad: it was a pleasure to shoot him. I hope we'll be as merry to-morrow."

"To-morrow?" I said. "What are you doing?"

"An' I'll see to the wake. Don't you be uneasy about it. I'll do it for the love of Sir Malachi. God rest his kind soul! Will I ever forget how he flung me out of the House!"

His talking made me uneasy.

"Your friends are very quiet," I said, to change the subject.

"Why not? They are decent, well-to-do-people. Only the officers an' their friends are

The Camp on the Hill

invited. Come over here, an' I'll introduce you to some intellectual men."

"Another time," I said.

"You mean to-morrow? Well, just as you please. Come an' have a look at the night."

He leant out of the door, and he drew back with a shudder.

"I felt the creep o' the dawn," he said.

"Are you there, Captain Harragan?"

"I am," said Shamus behind me.

"I am steppin' up to the Mill."

"I'll go with you a bit o' the way," said the other.

The yard was black, and the only light was from the windows, and few people were there. The voices seemed to be faint.

"There ought to be torches in the black o' the lane," said Jacob. "It is cold in the dark."

"And yet you tramp in the night," said Shamus, as we went to the hill.

"If I walk to a distance: for I want to avoid the gentry, who go ridin' and dhrovin' as if they were mad, instead o' thravellin' easily like respectable folk. An' 'tis annoyin' to hear a man comin', an' not know who he is. Some will go along without speakin', though they know I am wondherin' who they are; an' I think—'Who is

The Wood of the Brambles

that scounthrel, an' why wouldn't he talk? Maybe he heard somethin' against me.' But in the village, I know the steps of the neighbours. An' even if I walk, I can feel the shadows, an' hurry out of them quickly. An' I hate the dawn, for the whole world is a-tremble, as if it had no right to be lookin'. But why should I be afraid that am dark? An' the leaves shiver an' say, 'God pity us all! for the day of the Misfortune begins!' But, in no time, the sun is out, and they titter, 'Who cares for that old Misfortune? It isn't comin' yet afther all.'"

"Whisht, an' give an ear to the music," said Shamus curtly.

I peered through the hawthorn on the right of the lane. There was dancing, in the heart of the field. The men had torches whose smoky light wavered on the women and altered with the steps of the reel, so that a boy fronting a laughing girl would appear suddenly to be facing a shadow. They danced to the shaken music of a fiddle behind. That irresolute music in the darkness was making their enjoyment fantastic.

"A fine tune," said Jacob, "'Jimmy banged the Weaver' it is; an' now it is changing to a better, 'The Wind that bends the Barley.'"

The Camp on the Hill

"You mean 'I dreamt that I was sailin','" said the other.

"So I said," said Jacob.

"Come on," said Shamus quietly.

"Is that a part of the wake?" I said.

"It is," he said.

"I thought they would have danced in the house."

"So they would, if the elders would go to bed as they ought."

"Go to bed on the turf?" I said.

"And they prefer to sit up. Many are afraid in the dark, that are happy in the Camp in the daylight; an' they slink off to their houses, an' come again in the mornin'."

"It will have to be checked. Nobody must go from the Camp," said the beggarman sternly.

"I suppose you have a number of wakes?" I said.

"Why?" said Shamus.

"On account of the fighting. You have your losses," I said.

"Our lads lie where they fall, an' would it be reverent to be wakin' a martyr?" said the beggarman.

"Well, you have prisoners."

"Scoundrels," said Shamus.

The Wood of the Brambles

“A wake has to be friendly,” said the beggarman. “So it is luck when it is our duty to kill lads that we like. It would be a sad world without wakes. What else could be a comfort to mournin’? An’ when you are dead, it must be cheerin’ to know the boys are talkin’ about you an’ dhrinkin’ your health an’ makin’ believe you are a loss to the counthry, an’ you in Hell all the time.”

Here there was an end of the hawthorn. I saw Vinegar Hill before us, and it seemed to be distant in the dusk of the morning. We got over a stone stile in the wall on the right, and passed through a meadow where the rebels were sleeping. The grass was hidden by men in their greatcoats, and women and children in their blankets and shawls. The crowd was like the crop of a battle. One or two of the rebels woke terrified, and some of the others growled a little and turned over, as Jacob prodded them with the butt of his pike as he was stepping across them. Many were lying prone, with their coveted weapons beneath them. Others in the meadow sat up, and stared at us drowsily, sinking again as if they had been heavily tired.

Coming to a wall under brambles, I saw an

The Camp on the Hill

array of shelters, like the home of a Fair, or an encampment of gipsies. They were made of curtains, or blankets, or tablecloths, supported on poles. The slope began at the wall, and grew steeper above, till it was crowned by a bare hump of rock and the ruined butt of a mill.

"Wait here a minute, while I look for the gaoler," said the beggarman, vaulting the low wall, and proceeding through the shelters with the pike in his hands, as if he was charging.

"One would hardly think he was blind," I said.

"Pigs can see in the dark," said Shamus. "We had better sit down. He will be delayed by a quarrel with some innocent man whom he has killed with that pike. It ought to be stopped. What kind of security can anyone feel with that obstreperous animal plungin' in the dark at the end of a pike, without a look where he goes? Why, he is a king in the Camp. When the sthrangers see him about, they think he has the Devil inside him, and respect him accordingly. If you say a word to him, he is fit to be tied; an' he looks down on his betters."

"Does he fight?"

"He can charge like a bull, for he is blind to the danger. But listen, let us sit on the wall."

The Wood of the Brambles

"It is covered with brambles."

"An' what then?" he said, sitting down.
"Dark Jacob is a dangerous man," he went on;
"he'll have the life of the Rector."

"Doctor Carey?" I said.

"Yes, he is above in the Mill."

"A prisoner?"

"An' sure to be shot."

"But what has he done?" I cried.

"He has angered Jacob."

"And how?"

"By interruptin' a wake, an' callin' him a beggar, and preachin' a sermon against him. The dark men never forget: an' I admire them for that. Macnamara nearly ran over me once, and laughed as he drove on; and, said I, 'Maybe you will sup sorrow for this.' I daresay he thought of it, as I was condemnin' him yesterday."

"But you can save the Rector," I said.

"The Rector? Not I: it is no business of mine. Jacob has his will with the boys. He is afraid of nobody in the world, but his wife, a little scrap of a woman that makes him like a shadow at home. If he made a noise in the village, we had only to shout, 'Fine mornin', Mrs Dermody, ma'am,' as if she was at the end of the street.

The Camp on the Hill

‘Whisper, decent man,’ he would cry, ‘tell me now which way she is comin’, an’ I’ll go along by the other.’ ”

“But surely,” I said, “the Camp would be opposed to a murder?”

“Between you an’ me,” he said quietly, “the boys are a little apt to be harsh. The soldiers hang us up to the trees, without a trial at all; an’ that is spoilin’ our tempers. Not that I deny you had bitter luck to be taken so soon after comin’ home from abroad. But then, why did you meddle? And that reminds me,” he went on, “I have papers in my pocket that I meant to have given you as soon as we met. Yet, perhaps, it is hardly worth while to give them up to you now. Here is a pedigree from Gillananeave O’Davoren of Lissyllisheen and Ballydoora in Clare. He was known as ‘Gillananeave of the Girls.’ I meant to ask you as a favour to christen your eldest son Gillananeave. These were papers that I found at MacConsadine’s. I put them aside for you, but now,” he said, placing them in his pocket again, “perhaps we had better wait for the trial.”

“What trial?”

“Yours,” he said.

“Mine?” I said in astonishment.

The Wood of the Brambles

"Certainly," he said, in a pained tone. "Did you fancy we would shoot you without one?"

"I don't understand you," I said.

"You are a prisoner charged with spyin', an' attemptin' to make a hole in Shaun Plunder, when he took you, an' fightin' against the Irish Republic."

"You are not in earnest," I said.

"Well, that is all one," he said quietly.

"You mean I will be tried?" I said.

"Surely; an' I think you'll be killed."

"Nonsense," I said.

"We'll see," he said lazily.

A bell began tolling. At once, there was a bustle of waking people around us. They began to flock from the shelters, and shout greetings to neighbours. The sun had risen behind us; and the daylight was clear.

"Considine will free me at once," I said, as the bell stopped.

"He has gone to Wexford: and Father Murphy is here."

"Well," I said, with relief, "no one is as gentle as Murphy."

"Cats are gentle to mice," said Shamus.

"Well, we'll see," I said carelessly.

"So I told you," said Shamus.

The Camp on the Hill

"That is a fine bell," said I cheerfully, with an air of indifference.

"We took it in Enniscorthy below."

"And why was it ringing?"

"For Mass there, at the altar."

A wooden altar was standing on the boulder on the left of the top. The rebels clustered around it. Many, as they passed us, saluted Shamus with deference. I saw some I knew, but they turned hastily, avoiding my eyes.

The people were in holiday clothes. The richer women had black cloaks and silken hoods, and were wearing their ornaments, because they were homeless. The well-to-do farmers had snuff-coloured coats, and corduroy breeches, with greased riding boots; and the poorer had grey clothes, and stockings of homespun. Only the wretched were without the frieze "cothamore" fastened at the neck by a button and flung back like a mantle. The yellow, two-buckled wigs of the respectable men had vanished, and the rebels were cropped.

All the fellows had green cockades and white ribbons in their hats, and their weapons were pikes, and pitchforks, and scythes, and singular guns. The pikes were blades of about a foot long, on staffs of varying length, and many had

The Wood of the Brambles

hooks to cut the bridles of horses. Some of the pikes were fifteen feet, and the blades of many had been blackened by blood. The men with the guns were from Shilmalier, and had lived by fowling in marshes. They had their powder in horns, though many carried it loose in their pockets or tied in pieces of rag. In spite of the weapons, the banners of every colour but orange, and the clothes, gave the gathering a holiday look.

The beggarman came clearing a pathway at the point of his pike.

"Where are you now, Captain dear?" he was shouting.

"Here," said Shamus.

"Come along to the Mill. It is cruel to lock you in with the Recthor, Masther Dom, but his sermons will make you willin' to die. He preaches so much, he is silent when the sermons are over. He'll insist on preachin' in Heaven. There he'll be put in a corner where the people are deaf. I looked in on him now, an' said you had come; an' he is wantin' to see you.

A priest was going up to the altar, with a boy, who was lighting the candles, as we passed through the Camp. Vinegar Hill was the turfy and steep side of a down that was little above

The Camp on the Hill

the uplands behind. Brambles and furze and many pieces of grey rock were about it. On the right end of the long top was the ruined tower of a mill that was abandoned before it was finished, and had never the luck to have a roof or spread prosperous sails. Its stunted wall was about twenty-five feet high, and a green banner was over it.

“That is to be your prison,” said Shamus.

As he spoke I was chilled, as if there was a cloud on the sun. I looked backward, but the weather was stainless. Enniscorthy was below on the left, that little town among moors with its narrow river on weeds. There was a blue mist of smoke above the roofs; and the Castle, rising out of the haze, looked nearer than the rest of the buildings. The arches of the stumpy and grey bridge were black, and the smoke was white against the golden and red thatch of the cottages. Around us were the sunny and windy moors: and the morning was delightfully peaceful.

Chapter III

The Rector of Enniscrone

THE Rector's severe silence was as strange as his frugal living, or the length of his sermons. Sir Tim used to say of him, "He looks like his own monument, and ought to be lyin' on his back in a church." The village was never used to his immovable face. The women at the well in the wall beneath the chestnuts were silent as he passed, and the children would gape with a wonder that was never diminished. The children used to pause at the door of his chapel, and shudder as he chanted a hymn: and the passers were grave at his monotonous voice. Jim the Fool was often a hearer, for he was flattered that anyone should trouble to address him with earnestness; and so, as the Rector denounced his iniquities and promised him Hell, he would look on with enjoyment, and feel he was a man of importance. Then he would go and romp in the gutter with the children and mongrels, when the singing began.

The Rector of Enniscrone

I am aware many who honoured the Rector for his goodness denied he had a fault, or had ever attempted to teach himself to play on the fiddle. He would never have tried to learn the playing, they said, unless he knew it beforehand. When the discord began to excite the village, his servant, Judy Harragan, said she was learning the fiddle, and was making the noises : and she suffered for this sacrifice too, for the neighbours considered her selfish when she would not oblige them with a reel at the dances. That was unjust, for there was no one as kindly ; although her mouth was a caricature of her brother's. Shamus had a mouth that was turned down at the corners by a look of moroseness. The people alleged that Judy had the mouth of a shark. Luckily the Rector was seen playing at his window, and so she was cleared : and the village said she was decent, but was given to boasting. She carried her respect for her master so far, that although he christened his terrier "Bill," she used always to address it as "William."

At first the Rector was hated for denouncing Maguire, and drinking nothing but water, and abusing the beggarmen ; but later on it was found that although he was so fierce with the kindly strollers, he was good to the starving.

The Wood of the Brambles

There were people ready to starve at Enniscrone in the winter, if a summer was wet, or if a spring had been dry, or in any case ; and so it was seen that the Rector was of use, after all. So the villagers thought him well-meaning, but unluckily mad. While he fancied he was winning their love, they had begun to respect him because he was afflicted by God. He troubled little about their feelings, and was always a stranger. His quiet heart lingered in a village of Ulster.

All the peasants for miles knew him as he stalked in his speckless clothes and irreproachable wig. But he seldom interfered with the Catholics, unless he was moved, as he was on the night of Kitty Dermody's wake. The dark men of the county had gathered in eagerness to do honour to Jacob, who was shouting and laughing, although he had been glum since her death. It would have gladdened her kind heart to foresee it. Then, as all the fiddles were playing, and the youngsters were jigging in a wonder of dust, the Rector opened the door. As he came stalking in like a ghost, the breathless lines of the dancers stopped, and the fiddles were silent, for the dark men could feel the fright in the room, and were turning about, gaping as if they wanted to see.

The Rector of Enniscrone

“Is this the house of death?” cried the Rector, with a voice like a knell, touching Jacob’s shoulder. “Is this the sound of your mourning?”

Jacob dropped his glass, with a cry. Everyone made a rush from the room. Afterwards they said they had feared the Rector was beginning a sermon. Some of the dark men ran in the wrong direction; and one who was crippled was nearly dying, but, happily, he was saved by his friends. Then the people huddled outside; and those who could see, watched the Rector blow out the candles and make everything orderly, “with a face like a tombstone” (as Shamus said, when he told me the incident); and when he had gone, as if he walked in his sleep, no one had a heart to be joyful.

This was in my mind as I followed Jacob to the door of the Mill. The narrow door was of deal, and opened heavily outwards on a pivot of stone. The Rector was inside at a small table, and was reading intently. Just so, he would sit studying at the Rectory window, wearing a Sabbath countenance, for his life was a Sabbath.

That ruined stump of the Mill was seven feet, or so, wide. It was built of a grey stone with red shadows, diorite, I think it is called. A

The Wood of the Brambles

rough table and chair, and a little bundle of straw, had been put in as the furniture.

"I am afraid I interrupt you," I said, as the door creaked on the pivot.

"Sir, I ask your pardon," he said, getting up stiffly, and eyeing me with chilly resentment. "I thought it was one of the gaolers looking in to make sure I was not climbing the wall. I should be glad if they would leave me alone. Several times this morning, or six, to be accurate, they interrupted my reading. Twice has that blind beggarman thrust his head in at the door, and laughed at my reproof, but a word from you would make him considerate."

"I wish I thought so," I said.

"Understand, I am not asking a favour," he said. "I have something to say to you. But I am sorry to find you in this murderous camp."

"So am I to be here," I said.

"Have you begun to repent?" he said searchingly.

"I have begun to be frightened."

"Afraid of Judgment?"

"And of pikes," I replied.

"You are not a prisoner," he said.

"I hope you are right."

The Rector of Enniscrone

"Dermody the beggarman said you had driven up, on a cart."

"So I did, with a rope around my hands and my feet."

"That fellow is a scoundrel," he said, "and it was often my duty to tell him so in the plainest of language. He follows me with unaccountable hatred. Forgive me, my dear lad," he went on, taking my hand. "I am glad I was unjust to you, Dominick." His grasp was steady and cold. It was not often he shook hands: he would wince if anyone touched him.

"I am sorry to see you in this danger," I said.

"I was never happy before," he said. "It was my dream to win the crown of a martyr. My life has been so pleasant that often I was almost afraid."

"I wish I could look forward to death."

"You are safe," said he, "yet this is a singular meeting. Ah, Dominick, I remember you plainly, when you were only a yard high, and would call at the Rectory with the airs of a bishop, and sip sherry with a critical wisdom. My servant watered the sherry behind your back, but she dared not do it before you. You came often, and yet Maguire was teaching the children to

The Wood of the Brambles

track me with insults, on account of his unchristian dislike."

"I thought you preached against him," said I, "and called him a drunken worshipper of the Woman of Babylon."

"And could I flinch from the truth for any peace or prosperity?"

"He must have been a quarrelsome fellow," said I.

"And obstinate, too," said the Rector. "When I preached against all the blind men of the county, and said they were in outer darkness, and soon they would be gnashing their teeth, Maguire answered with a sermon on Bartimeus, and argued that his case was a proof it was the duty of dark men to sit and beg by the wayside."

"Did he really?" I said.

"I hate stubborn people," he said, "and bigots, and priests. There is no hope for Ireland, till all the priests have been hanged. One of them, that is here, has been hanged already to a lamp-post in Paris, but it bent with his weight till he was touching the ground. Then some interfering fool brought him to life."

"Who is that?" I said.

"Antony Kearns."

The Rector of Enniscrone

"I have seen him."

"The priests are changing the Rising to a War of Religion. There is Mass in the morning, and the rebels go to communion: and vespers at dusk, and then they crowd to confession."

"The rebels wish to be martyrs?" I said.

"Martyrs!" he said; "I have no patience with fanatical folly. Do you know you are little changed?" he went on. "You have kept a deal of your stiffness."

"I am sorry to hear it," I said. "The stiffness will wear off, I suppose: it comes of living so much alone and abroad."

"Well, I have been always alone," he said: "there are few gentry about. Of course, I had nothing to do with the Considines, because they are Catholics. Sir Malachi was almost as bad, because his life was so scandalous."

"You ought to live in an immaculate world. I know you saw my grandfather seldom."

"He asked me to dinner once, and I felt bound to denounce him for wasting God's sunlight and the peace of his heart in riot and gluttony. And after that, he was cold. Tell me, are these your usual clothes?"

"No, they are the remains of an evening dress that I wore at dinner with Considine."

The Wood of the Brambles

"I thought it might have been the fashion abroad," he said.

"May I come in?" said Shamus Dhu, at the door.

"You are master here," said the Rector grimly.

"I wish I was, sir," said Shamus, coming in. "Well; an' how do you like the prison, O'Davoren?"

"Not at all," I said, "I think it is mean. I feel that I am cooped in a tub. There ought to be a roof, at the least."

"A roof?" he said.

"Suppose it should rain," said I.

"Why, it hasn't rained for a month," he said.

"You ought to supply chains, and a big lock to the door," said the Rector. "You deprive the prison of half its pleasure by negligence. And the stone should be softer. I have broken my penknife, trying to imitate Prynne and carve 'Deus est turris etiam in turre' on the wall over there."

"You are askin' too much," he said. "I heard you had been wishin' to see O'Davoren; and so I looked in, as I was passin', because I guessed what you were goin' to say to him."

"Then, sir, you were taking a liberty," said the Rector.

The Rector of Enniscrone

"You know we talked of the matter, when Sir Malachi died; an', as I happened to have the paper in my pocket, I just stepped in to produce it."

"Then it is a shameful intrusion on the privacy of a gentleman's prison," said the Rector sternly. "Perhaps I had a mind to discuss the matter soon with my friend Sir Dominick; but since you presume to dictate to me, I shall certainly do nothing of the sort, Mr Harragan."

"You won't?" said Shamus.

"Not on any account," said the Rector.

"The fact is, you were bitter against O'Davoren; but now you are friendly, and so you are reluctant to vex him," said Shamus calmly. "Well, then, all I can do is to say you are about to be tried."

"Tried?" I said.

"Both of you," said Shamus. "So, perhaps, it would be wastin' my time to talk about the business at present."

"And who are the judges?" said I.

"Father Murphy is one," he said.

"He should be shot like a mad dog," said the Rector.

"And he says you should be killed like a rat," said Shamus.

The Wood of the Brambles

"Heavens! what a murderous expression!" said the Rector aghast.

As Shamus went away, we were silent.

"Dominick, my dear," said the Rector, "you must read in this book sometimes, and remember a friend."

He handed me the dingy and small book that he had read at the table.

The door opened and Brosna, the Considines' butler, appeared. He had the uniform of a captain of yeomen. "Prisoners, you are summoned before the Tribunal of the People," he said.

Chapter IV

The Tribunal of the People

A MAN was begging for mercy. He was one of my tenants, Joicey of the Farm on the Hill, a sturdy man with red hair. I scarcely knew him, because he was so altered and hoarse.

"For the merciful God's sake," he was crying, "gentlemen, be changin' your verdict. Though I am an Orangeman, that is all I have done. I appeal to the gentlemen sthandin' by to declare I was friendly and honest, an' hurt nobody durin' the nine years I was yonder. I appeal to you, General Harragan, wasn't I your friend an' good neighbour?"

"You were, Tom, you were," said Shamus, who was one of the judges.

"Didn't I save your brother when he was in prison for killin' Prancin' Dromeen at the fight-in', although he never hit him at all?"

"You did, dear, you did," said Shamus soothingly.

The Wood of the Brambles

"Didn't I sit up wid you, when you were down wid a heavy load of the fever?"

"You did, dear," said Shamus, "an' you are the fitter to die."

Joicey was dragged away by the rebels.

"What'll we do with him, Captain?" said a fellow to Shamus.

"Pike him, Agra."

Three judges sat at a table on the side of the hill, in front of a booth built by resting a carpet on a high barricade of nettles and turf. Roche was there, and appeared gloomy and dull. He was seated between Shamus and Mark Antony Murphy. That white little man was even more frail than he had been in the village. His light hair was as long, and his clothes were as untidy as ever: his face was still; but his puny fingers were restless.

"Bring the next prisoner," he cried, as if he woke from a dream. There was soreness in his eyes and his voice.

We were in a group of the pikemen, on the edge of the throng.

"Patrick Carey!" cried Brosna.

The Tribunal of the People

The Rector stepped quietly to the front of the table. Roche sat up cheerily, taking off his hat with a flourish.

"We must give you the benefit of clergy," he said, "and a tribunal of priests. Captain," he went on, "do you mind letting Father Kilclare have your place?"

"Not at all, sir," said Shamus.

Kilclare came out of the crowd, and sat on Roche's right, without looking towards the Rector or me. There was little altering shown in his lean face, and big eyes, or the rueful set of his mouth, since we were together at school.

"You are an Orangeman, Carey?" said Murphy.

"I am not, Murphy," said the Rector, with calmness.

"But you are a friend of the Orangemen?"

"I am, indeed."

"Ah, now!" said Roche, "do you want us to be here all the day? Is there any charge against the Rector at all? And where are the witnesses?"

"I am one," cried a rebel.

"And who are you, my good man?"

"One of my people, Butler of the Farm in the Glen," said Kilclare.

The Wood of the Brambles

"Well, what do you say?" said Roche gruffly.

"He has bought children," said Butler, a worn elderly man.

"Then you wish to charge him with madness?" said Roche.

"An' he sent them to Dublin," said Butler, as if he was repeating a lesson, "an' he made them Protestants there."

Cries began in the crowd watching the tribunal. Some of the men said it was useless to hear more after that.

"It was in the winter of Ninety, in the days of the Hunger, an' I was dyin' of fever," Butler said, in the same dogged, unemotional voice. "The Rector comes to the Farm, and, says he, 'I have little gold, an' half the country is stharvin'. Here is all that I have. To be accurate,' says he, 'there is more of it in my hands for a purpose: I could help you wid that if you gave me Larry beyond.' 'Will I sell you Larry?' says my good woman, 'an' fatten on the price of his soul?' The boy, that was only three at the time, howls at the thought."

"It was well said of the decent woman," cried a voice in the crowd, "an' your son was a pious little man for his age."

The Tribunal of the People

"Cut the story short, if you can," said Roche.

"The money went, an' I was sick of the fever," said Butler. "Says the Recthor, an' he sthridin' up an' down his room, 'Do you want to drive me crazy? An' haven't I been stharvin' myself?' My good woman stops at the door. 'An' the other money, your Reverence?' says she. Says he, 'I can only use it, for converthin' the children.' 'Larry is near kilt by the hunger: my man is dyin',' she says."

"Then you were a long time about it," said Roche.

"How much gold will you give me," she says."

There were cries of "Ah! the poor soul!" and "God forgive her!" from the people around.

"Five pounds," says the Recthor, and she turns. "Ten," he says, "an' God pity you in the hour of your need." He sent Larry to Dublin: we never saw him again: an' there he is, a Protestant now."

There was angry shouting behind us. The Rector listened, as if he was ready with a sermon and waiting for the close of a hymn.

"Any other witnesses?" cried Murphy.

A man pushed forward.

"Your name?"

The Wood of the Brambles

"John Adeane."

"It is 'Shaun Plunder,' of the White Mountains," said a man in the mob.

"An' I was in prison in Wexford," said Adeane.

"An' often," said the other.

"An' the Recthor came, an' was good to us; when that fellow intherruptin' me now, dhrank in the next house, an' was never within a mile of the prison."

"This is only wasting our time," said Murphy.

"Here is a man wishful to speak," cried others.

Dromeen, the tiny deaf man who used to lurk in the wood, was pushed to the front, in a frieze coat that was a great deal too big for him.

"Humbly askin' your pardon, may I be so bold as to speak?" he quavered.

"What do you want," shouted Roche.

"I am a loyal rebel," said Dromeen, "an' a good Catholic; but for all that the Recthor nursed me when I was crazed wid a fever."

"You are crazed still," said Murphy.

"Ah, now, let the man be," said Roche.

"May it please your Reverence, I am a little hard o' the hearin'," whined Dromeen.

"Silence, fool!" said Murphy.

The Tribunal of the People

"Tell me, what did his Reverence say?" said Dromeen to the bystanders.

"He said, 'Silence, fool,'" they replied, lugging him backward.

"Whisper, I am a witness," shouted Dark Jacob, swaggering to the front. "An' the prisoner was always interferin' wid Catholics. He spoilt a beautiful wake, an' hunted thousands of neighbours out of my house; he that was not invited at all. It was the only wake I had for years, and perhaps I'll never have the chance of another."

"Ah! let us hope for the best," said Roche.

"Prisoner," said Murphy, "have you anything to say before sentence?"

"Sir, I welcome your sentence," said the Rector, "but the blood of the innocent people you slaughter——"

"Come, now," said Roche, interrupting him, "we are preachers ourselves. And you spoke too soon, Father Mark."

"What do you mean?" said Murphy. "Why, the man is proud of his guilt."

"Come, Father Pierce," said Roche hastily, for the Rector was going to speak, "do you find the prisoner guilty?"

Kilclare leant, with his hands clasped on the table.

The Wood of the Brambles

"The prisoner sent children to Dublin to be reared as Protestants," he said, without lifting his eyes, "and yet——"

"What more do you want?" said Murphy.

Kilclare went on quietly. "I have known him, all my life, as a helper of the poor and afflicted. I vote for freeing him now."

"And you?" said Roche.

"He is guilty," said Murphy.

"It lies with me to give judgment," said Roche, speaking loudly. "The prisoner has committed a fault that should be seldom forgiven."

"Never forgiven," shouted the people behind us, and Murphy nodded assent.

"If I have never bribed Protestants to let me bring up their children as Catholics, it was because I had no money to pay them," said Roche. "So I think the fault may be balanced by unusual virtues. After the evidence of Mr Boneen, and of Captain Dermody, who was able to prove that the prisoner was staunch to uphold order and temperance——"

"Whisper! I never said such a thing," shouted Dark Jacob.

"And of our friend from the White Mountains, who was often a victim to tyranny, I decide that

The Tribunal of the People

the prisoner's virtues have been enough to outweigh his only offence."

There was a hush among the listening people. Roche went on quickly, as if he was alarmed by the silence. "The fault must be punished, and the Court condemns Patrick Carey to be expelled from the Camp." There were some shouts of applause. "And he must also be clad in the uniform of the Army of Freedom. Perhaps Captain Dermody will consent to exchange clothes with the prisoner." There was loud laughing, and the Rector was carried away with whooping and cheers.

"The next prisoner now," said Murphy.

"Dominick Davern!" cried Brosna.

I took a step to the front, and heard a buzz in the crowd: the whispers near me were all about my singular clothes. Roche whispered to Kilclare, with a long face and anxiety. Kilclare got up with the quick clumsiness he had as a school-boy. Murphy looked before him with strained eyes that were dull with heavy lids, but I fancied he did not see me at all.

"Captain, will you join us again?" said Roche.

The Wood of the Brambles

Shamus took the seat on his right.

I faced the judges with a cheerful indifference. The Rector might suffer the horseplay of a practical joke; but I was sure I was safe. If the rebels knew me, I thought, they would be more eager to stand bareheaded and court me than to offer any kind of annoyance.

"You are a soldier?" said Murphy.

"No," I said.

"Not serving the King?"

"No."

"And you were taken in arms against the Irish Republic?"

"I can explain," I began.

"It is simple enough," he said. "Who are the witnesses?"

"I am one," said Adeane.

"Well?" said Murphy.

"The prisoner was spyin' at the Muster last night. I fetched him out of a thicket; and he nearly destroyed me. He ran his sword through my coat: an', you see, there is the mark of it still. Johnnie the Dim-eyed stopped him, wid a wipe on the head."

"The other witness?" said Murphy.

A shambling fellow, with bleared eyes, was shoved forward: he looked warm, and

The Tribunal of the People

was wiping his forehead with the skirt of his coat.

"Your name?" said Murphy.

"John O'Dwyer, your reverence."

"You saw the prisoner spying?"

"An' nearly murderin' Shaun."

"Is that enough, Father Philip?"

"Wait a bit, Father Mark," said Roche.

"Somebody may speak for the prisoner."

"I will," said Neligan, coming out in the clothes of a workman, with plenty of ribbons and a murderous pike.

"Your name?" said Murphy.

"It is Daniel O'Neill Neligan."

"And what do you say?" said Roche.

"Anny mortal thing that you like," said Neligan, with tears in his voice.

"Take care, now," said Murphy.

"He is the best man, an' greatest scholar, and kindest masther in Ireland," said Neligan earnestly.

"You can hardly better that, my good man," said Roche.

"And what good has he done?" said Murphy.

"Nothin', for he hadn't the time, as he was only back for a week," said Neligan.

"The witness is the prisoner's servant," said Shamus.

The Wood of the Brambles

"The hired evidence of menials," said Murphy, but Roche interrupted him with:

"Come, Father Mark, we are equals in the Irish Republic. That is enough, Mr Neligan. What is your explanation, Sir Dominick?"

"Of course I was not spying," I said, as if I was weary of this fuss about nothing. "I heard voices as I strolled in the wood, and so I came on the Muster; and only drew to defend myself when I was attacked from behind."

"It was strange to be strolling," said Murphy, "on the tangled and bushy paths where nobody went, and in the heart of the wood. And I think you are opposed to the Rising?"

"I am."

"I have heard him speakin' against it at dinner," said Brosna, as if he dined with me often.

"Come, this is taking too much time, I think. Captain," said Murphy, "what is your vote?"

"Guilty," said Shamus.

"And your sentence?"

"The prisoner was rather a friend of mine once. He is harmless enough, considerin' he is a gentleman," Shamus said quietly, "but he has broken our laws."

"Laws that were not made for our enemies only," said Murphy.

The Tribunal of the People

"An' I think he ought to be killed," said Shamus.

"If my mother had broken our laws, and was clinging to my coat with her tremulous hands, I would not spare her," said Murphy, looking at me with lustreless eyes. His voice was breaking and low. "What right have we to think about sparing? We were quiet once, and then it was natural to meddle with mercy. But our hearts have been changed. Was it an errand of kindness that took me from the work of my heart to draw the sword with a hand that was anointed for blessing?"

"Easy now, Mark," said Roche soothingly.

"My vote is for death," said Murphy, sinking back in his chair and shutting his eyes.

The judges and the rebels around, and the fantastical shelters, grew vivid, as if the light had increased. Then they seemed to fade in the distance; and I was suddenly cold. I was unmanned, but I kept a look of indifference. Roche said the majority had decided, and so he need not give his opinion, but I hardly understood him until he went on: "You are condemned to be shot at daybreak to-morrow."

Chapter V

The Green Boy

BROSNA shut the door of the Mill, and I sat down at the table. I was aghast at the blow, and everything had faded around me. The noise of the Camp and the shouting and the din of the rebels appeared to wane in the distance. The cares and hopes of my life had fallen in a minute to nothingness. Still, I could not think about death, but swerved from its menace, as a man aching from books, or a child weary with crying, flinches from a glare of the sun.

Once, when I was out in a squall, and my mast had gone, and my boat was crippled in the clutch of the sea, I had the same throbbing of a bitter resentment. Now, as I propped my face on my hands, I had the rage and the blind fear of an animal shrinking from hunters; but I felt above all the need to have a look of indifference. The sun stared, and the light under the door and in the chink of the latch was a witness. The

The Green Boy

rugged top of the table pressed on my eyes, as if it had been lifted against them.

I began pacing the Mill. The red in the rock glistened like a smatter of blood: I made sure it was clammy, and rubbed a wide smear, but it was dusty and hot. Then I lifted the latch, and flung the door open: it was easy to look defiant in the face of a crowd. I saw the serried backs of the mob. Angry at this callous neglect, I went again to the table. I found the Rector's book in my pocket, a Greek testament printed in huddled and indefinite type. Because I had forgotten my Greek, I groped for a meaning in those cramped words, till I lit upon a name and that helped me to remember the passage. Then I got on nimbly, in spite of the wreck of my scholarship. That open door and the heedless crowd were enough to give me strength to be calm.

Soon the rebels began to scatter, for the trial was finished. The people grouped at the door, and eyed me as children watch a beast in a cage. Seeing them without looking up, I read about the Prodigal Son: the book opened at that chapter, as if the Rector was fond of it. The rebels stared at me quietly. Mostly they were silent, but some whispered as people talk in a

The Wood of the Brambles

church. "He's a fine lad, so he is," said a woman. "The boy has a stiff lip," said another. "It is a pity that he has to be killed: he is cool an' easy, for he knows he deserves it." "Listen now," said a man, "I'd wager he is pleased to be shot: sure he might have been piked." But I heard nothing unkind, as the peasants, gaping with pleased gravity, went about their business in turn.

There was cheering at the foot of the Hill, as if a fortunate leader or happy news had arrived. Brosna strode through the gazers. "Who did this?" he cried sternly. "Tell me now, who opened this door?"

"I did," I said.

"Then, how dare you," he cried, slamming it as he spoke.

I sprang up, forgetting I had wished to be calm. I could hear him roping the latch, and even if I could face him, my anger would be only ridiculous; so I kept quiet, but his insolence stung me like a lash of a whip. This must be a nightmare, I thought. What risky food had made me dream I was guarded by the master of the school and the blind beggar, and condemned by a rabble, and bullied by the Considines' butler? I was dazed by these topsy-turvy proceedings.

The Green Boy

That I should be a judge of the peasants, or bully Brosna, would be only in reason ; but I was wild at this preposterous change.

“Go away now, good people. Don’t you hear what I tell you? The criminal is not on view at the moment ; walk away now at once,” my gaoler said to the crowd. His voice was aggrieved, as if he was hurt by my insubordinate ways.

The cheering grew in the lanes and on the slope of the Hill, and I heard people run by.

“Tell me, Captain Brosna, who is it?” said one.

“It is Considine’s daughter.”

Making sure Agatha had come to deliver me, I wished I had a looking-glass handy. Of course I had not shaved, and I reddened to think of my unlucky appearance : it was dreadful to think of her standing in the doorway and smiling at my woe-begone state.

“Brosna,” I cried.

There was no answer, but I heard his methodical step on the grass.

“General Brosna,” I said.

The Wood of the Brambles

"What do you want, prisoner? Why this disturbance?" he said.

"Tell me, is Miss Considine coming?"

"Comin'? Is it to be looking for me?"

"For me."

"She doesn't know you are here."

"What else could bring her up to the Camp?"

"The nature o' women," he said.

I did not like his accusing Agatha of the nature of women.

"And," he went on, "I think she might have remembered her visit would embarrass me greatly. Adversity drove me to accept a position in her father's establishment: and now, it would be awkward to meet."

"Her conduct is disgracefully selfish; but I think we could chat easily, if you opened the door. It is tiring to lift our voices over the wall."

"I thought you were after somethin' when you grew so polite."

"It would be worth your while, and I only want to look out."

"You could put your head through the slit, and shout to Miss Considine."

"I can shout where I am, and I have a good mind to begin."

The Green Boy

"Whisht! that would bring her up to us, an' what would I do? If I unfasten the door, will you give your word to be easy?"

"I will, and more than my word," I said, as I clinked some of my coins.

He pulled the door a little way open.

"Do you think I am in the form of a rat?" said I; "surely you can open it further."

"That is enough," he said strictly.

The rebels were flocking down to the place where the Tribunal had been. The leaders were there; and Roche was bowing in front of them, and welcoming Agatha. She was in grey; and the wide straw of her hat was fastened by ribbons under her chin, and put her face in a shadow. I could only stare at her silently. Then they led her into the booth. I looked out on the sunny and vain stir of the Camp, as if I was dying and had been fooled for a minute by an irrational hope.

Going back to the table, I sat for a little time with my eyes shut, and remembered it was foolish to feel as cast down as if Agatha was not minding my danger. She had not heard of it, and yet I was sorry to see her gracious and bright as if she was used to the welcome of multitudes, while I was in prison. I had been ashamed to

The Wood of the Brambles

anticipate her coming, but death would be a keener indignity.

“Are you there, General?”

“An’ waitin’,” said Brosna, putting in his hand at the door.

Giving him a couple of guineas, I looked out at the rebels. As he stowed the money away, he eyed me with a deal of austerity. It was on my lips to persuade him to give a message to Agatha: but I had known him as a butler, and could not make myself small in his eyes by a confession of fear. So I studied the Camp, with the quiet look of an inquisitive stranger.

“Who is that scare-crow in green?” I said.

“A boy that has no right to intrude in a respectable camp,” he said, as if he complained of another injustice.

I wanted to hit upon a pleasanter subject.

“Who is the big girl on the cannon?”

“Judy Harragan, the sister of Shamus.”

“And she used to be a maid at the Rectory?”

“Till the Risin’ began. You see her furze-cutter’s sickle? She runs out with that, under fire, an’ cuts the cartridges off the soldiers that are dead on the turf, an’ she goes thrapezin’ about the counthry to sell cherries an’ ginger-

The Green Boy

bread, and lookin' as big a fool as you please, an' everythin' she sees she remembers."

"But she is too dull for a spy."

"She's as sharp as her sickle; and so ugly that no one wants to look at her twice. An' her heart is just as big as her mouth."

"Has she as much weight with your friends as Miss Considine?"

"She has, an' no more," he said.

"Do you mean they have little?"

"The boys will follow Judy, because they're ashamed to be outdone by a woman. An' they'd run for a look at Miss Agatha, because she is pretty and has a smile for them all. But they'd be astounded at the thought of a woman darin' to give them anny advice."

"Come now, they are weak with the women."

"When they are in a crowd, they are brave. Anny fool can manage an Irishman; but it takes a strong wrist to keep a dozen in ordher."

"Miss Considine could manage the leaders."

"She could make a hare of them each, except Father Murphy an' Father Antony Kearns. It is said Father Murphy has never glanced at a woman, except once when he was a baby an' looked at his mother by accident. An' Father Kearns would sooner speak to a pig."

The Wood of the Brambles

"She could rule Roche."

"His heart is just as soft as her eyes. An' she could play the divil with me: often, when I handed her dishes at Ballymoreen, I nearly spilt them over her when she gave me a glance. That was in the days before I rose in the army."

"Well, you can do me a turn; perhaps I shall have a chance to repay it. I wish you would take a note to Miss Considine."

He scowled, and drew himself up.

"I am not a menial," he said.

"I ask you to do this as a friend."

"I have no friendship with criminals."

"You might send one of your followers. I know you have plenty that would run at your bidding."

"I have so."

"And I have a number of guineas about me that you might give to your messenger."

"Have you now?" he said, speaking with a sudden respect. I saw his old affection for fees struggling with his pride in his rank.

"Come, my friend," I said, putting my hand on his shoulder, "you won't refuse me this kindness?"

"Davern, my dear boy," he said, beaming, "to oblige you I'll take charge of the guineas."

The Green Boy

"Is Sir Dominick Davern at home?" said a voice on the right, and I made sure it was Tony's.

"Step in quick, till I send the fellow away," said Brosna, shutting the door.

"That's not the way to speak to a captain," he replied to the questioner.

"I thought you were the butler, my man, when I saw you here at the door. And you must let me in: have you no respect for my cloth?"

"What cloth, fellow?"

"This billiard cloth, ass."

"Listen to me now, Master Tony; this is a fool's thrick you are playin'; you have no right to be here."

"But I am wearing the green."

"You'll be a-wearin' a rope around your neck in a minute."

"I'll fetch Miss Considine up, and see if you'll give way to your mistress."

Tony swaggered into the Mill. His coat and breeches were green, and he had a pike in his hand, and only his long hair was unsuitable to the ranks of the people. His freckled and bold face had an immoderate smile. Though there was little fun in my heart, I could not keep from a laugh.

The Wood of the Brambles

"What wind or freak has brought you into this danger?" said I.

"It is good to visit ruffians in prison," he said airily.

"Well, I wish you were further," said I.

"Is that your welcome?" said he.

"I know too much of the rebels."

"Ah, you are too grand to enjoy their independence and cheeriness," he said, as he sat down on the table. "You should be a pike in a pond, and swim around at your ease without ever annoying the little fish unless you were hungry. But I am the most popular man on the Hill, except Judy Harragan and Agatha Considine."

"Do the people know you?"

"If they did, they would like me. The few that know me are affable; and Colonel Brosna outside is a gentleman, and so I am safe."

This he said with a loud voice, and a wonderful grin. Then he whispered, "Dom, this is a terrible business. What on earth can we do?"

"Nothing; unless Agatha Considine could get a delay, while we appealed to Theophilus and Bagenal Harvey. Can you take her a message?"

"Of course."

"You need only tell her my danger. Does she know you are here?"

The Green Boy

"No, I came immediately after her."

"How did you find out my ill-luck?"

"From Neligan, who saw you go by on a cart as he was watching the rebels."

"And your remarkable clothes?"

"Were made at Gurtygeeheen. We broke up the table, because the firewood was short; and Rory set his servant to work to make a suit, for he said it would be mighty convenient, if the rebels attacked us. When he was taken, I put it on in a hurry."

"They're becoming," I said.

"I hope Agatha Considine will think so," said he. "By the bye, you have a friend in the Camp."

"Who is that?" I said.

"Judy Harragan. She met me below, and is determined to save you. She wanted to come here in your place, while you should slip away in her clothes."

"That is nothing original."

"But when I suggested that changing clothes in the Mill would embarrass you both, she gave it up in despair."

"Well," I said, "you had better be off."

"And I'll come back with the news. Colonel Brosna!"

The Wood of the Brambles

"What do you want?" said Brosna!"

"I want to get out," said Tony.

"So do most prisoners."

"But you let me in," said Tony.

"I let Sir Dominick in."

"What's to be done now?" whispered Tony.

"Bribe him," I said.

"I have a guinea."

"Never mind," I said. "General, you were going to do me a good turn."

"On conditions," said Brosna.

"Yes, and here is the cash."

"It is mine, in anny case, now?" he said.

"This minute."

"Then you may come out, Masther Tony."

"Dom," whispered Tony, "let us play the scoundrel a trick. Ask him to step in for the money."

"And then?"

"I'll fasten the door."

"And then he will shout, and have you killed by the others. The point of that joke would be the tip of a pike."

"Ah, well!" he said, "it is a poor joke that makes nobody suffer."

"Where is the gold?" said Brosna, looking in.

The Green Boy

"Here," I said.

"Masther Tony, if you take my advice, you will trot home like a lamb," he said.

"I will go straight to Miss Considine," said Tony.

"Maybe the sentries will interfere with you there," said Brosna. "She went away from the Camp, as I let you into the Mill."

Chapter VI

An Offer of Help

WHEN Tony had gone off with a long face, I remembered a number of things I would have wanted to say to him if I had foreseen his arrival. I had not even told him the names of the judges; and now he might escape without learning that Kilclare had been one of them. I had a bitter resentment against Kilclare, for he could have saved me by a word, and was silent. I could see no reason for this, unless he was fostering a grudge, and recalling unfriendliness at school at St Omers. My dislike for him woke, and I remembered Sir Tim had warned me against him, saying, 'Because he is ostentatiously retirin', he fills me with profoundest disthrust.' Agatha had been friends with Kilclare. But she was not a rigorous judge: a sincere worshipper was all that she wanted. He was siding with both parties, and pretending to live quietly in the village, and yet he was a chief in the Camp. He was even

An Offer of Help

fooling Theophilus, who thought he was loyal. Now I remembered meeting him on the morning I came back from my travels. Then I had supposed he was riding from a sick-bed, but now I guessed he had come from a drill of the rebels in the heart of the wood, or on the cliffs by the sea.

So I resolved to write a letter, explaining his doubleness, and foiling his tricks. I asked Brosna to get me paper and pen and ink, and a tinder-box and a candle ; for I thought I could trust him as long as he was sure I was wealthy. He was rather shame-faced, as if he was thinking of his treatment of Tony : he got me all the things, and I hid them in the bundle of straw. There was no use in writing until I was safe from interruption and scrutiny. And he brought me a rough dinner of beef and potatoes ; and it was exceedingly welcome.

Afterwards I sat in the doorway, and looked out at the Camp. I no longer discovered any holiday look about the place or the people. There were many classes in the gathering ; old people and quiet women who took refuge, afraid to be left in their scattered cabins in war-time when the yeomen were out, and the desperate men who thought it better to die in arms, and

The Wood of the Brambles

the fellows who came in the belief that the country was rebelling, and ruffians hoping to profit by disorder and change. The wild lads from the quays of Wexford and the marshes of Shilmalier and the White Mountains, were prominent in threats and in plundering the houses of gentry. Brosna told me these, and the loud braggarts whose courage had been proved in the old fighting of the factions, were sluggish in the face of the enemy. For all that, they had weight in the Camp; and the others let them alone.

Many cattle were herded in the field at the back: and the rebels were roasting oxen whole for their dinner, and wasting the food, because they got it for nothing. A great number of dogs were in the Camp; and the little children were playing. A few cannon were lying among the shelters; and ditches had been dug on the Hill.

The rebels had an appearance of waiting that reminded me of the look of the men who would lounge before Mass by the Chapel in the village on Sundays: they used to sit on the slanting grey tombstones that were edged with the yellow lichen, though nobody would have sat there alone. In spite of the dogs and the children and the cattle, the Camp was quiet enough; for many of the people were grave. There was

An Offer of Help

something unnatural in the noise of the others that reminded me of a saying Theophilus was fond of repeating. "I have read in old writers," he would say, "that the country was fortunate in the time of their fathers. But was there ever a man who saw it glad in his own? We hear the echo of laughing, and wild jokes are remembered. Our fathers were like us, made a racket in public to deaden all the care at their hearts." Then he would sigh, as if his spirit was broken. "But, sir," I said to him once, "it was only yesterday you said 'we are living in the old age of a degenerate country; with bogs in place of the woods, and instead of the poets we have loud politicians.'" "You hardly understand me, my dear," he said plaintively, "and yet I am pleased that you have noted my words."

Brosna went away, and his post was filled by Dromeen. That little man was as deaf and as frightened as he always appeared when I met him in the wood, where he made hay for himself in the grassy slices between thickets, and stole rabbits and firewood. Now he propped his pike on the wall, and knelt saying his beads. His hair was shaggy and white; and he had an innocent look, as if his infirmity shut him out from the world.

The Wood of the Brambles

The bell tolled, and the people crowded up to the altar. Father Murphy was there, and he recited the Rosary. His voice was shrill between the sullen responses. Then he preached; and the quiet sufferings of the poor, and their loving-kindness and charity, were the themes of his sermon. I looked out, and I saw him in rich vestments above that dangerous crowd; and he was dreamy and tender. Because the light was waning, the country was beginning to alter: the hedges were like wool, and the sides of the moors were like tapestry, the wood in the distance was like smoke that is driven along the ground by the wind. A hawk hung aloft, as if it was dangling from invisible twine. Rooks were flying low in a meadow, and appeared to be running. The blue river in trees was like marble in a cluster of moss.

Then there was benediction: the people knelt; and the incense drifted by the doors of the Mill. After that, the quietness suddenly gave way to a noise like the clamour of children coming out of a school. A great many fires were lit: and the rebels had their supper, and drank. As the night was falling, the flames strengthened, and the rebels around them sang, with a playing of fiddles and pipes about the Camp, and the tink-

An Offer of Help

ling of a harp in the meadow. All the time, my gaoler Dromeen sat, with his legs crossed, on the turf, and looked down at the rejoicing below.

When the ballads ceased, and the rebels went away from the fires, the only lights were the sinking flames, and the torches of the sentries at the foot of the hill and on the banks of the river. I sat there at the door, and was feeling very drowsy and tired. As a bankrupt repents his economies, I thought of my life. Prayers that were often on my lips in my boyhood returned to me like snatches remembered when the music is over. The day's history mingled with an older remembrance. The incense from the altar when Murphy gave the Benediction was one with the mist that used to soar from the censers in the chapel in France. The Fathers made me carry a banner in the processions: I found it troublesome if the weather was windy. As I tried to steady the banner and keep the fringe of it away from my eyes, the incense used to drift to me almost as faint as the singing of the boys in the choir. I used to serve at the High Mass, in a red gown and surplice, and swing the censer, and incense would blot the people and dim the lights along the top of the altar. At this I must have fallen asleep; for I

The Wood of the Brambles

found myself swinging a censer, and was thrilled by the smell and the clouded tapers and music, and was full of misgivings because I wore my everyday clothes.

Then I was out on a misty river, with passengers who sat with their eyes shut as a peasant pulled us with his labouring oars. The grunt and splash of the oars was mingled with an echo of wailing from the shadow behind us. So we came in the twilight to a country where an angel was standing, and people were groping to a star in the gloom. The path was on cliffs, and many travellers fell.

"Tell me, are you dead?" said the angel.

He was shining in the dark; and I thought he had a look of the Rector.

"No, sir," said I.

"Then you have no right to be here."

"But I came over with others."

"Who are dead."

"I thought they were remarkably quiet."

"Death has put a seal on their hearts," he said.

"And where are they going?"

"To the City of Light."

"Groping with dead eyes?"

"If you look closer, you will see they are guided."

An Offer of Help

"I see insects and birds," said I.

"Everyone is led by his soul. They can see nothing else in the dark. Yonder is a man who was great, and has only a singed moth to befriend him. But they will all come to the City."

"And they are different there?"

"Death has driven the thought of the world and its foolishness away from their minds. Because they love one another, they are equal at last: and in their time in the world, the gap between the sinner and saint was not as much as you think."

"And so the path is the punishment of sin?"

"And a bitter one. I was so afraid when I tumbled, that the rocks were delightful."

"And why are you here?" I said.

"Because I was astounded to meet a man in Heaven who begged at the wayside in my village on earth. He used to be supremely offensive: 'Dark Jacob' was his name in the world. So I was put here as a penance, to watch those benighted people stumble, without a word of reproof. But you are alive, and I must ask you to give me your most earnest attention: I am about to speak to you in the plainest of language, though the task is unpleasant."

Then there was a creaking of oars.

The Wood of the Brambles

“Wait till I come back, Doctor Carey,” I said, “I must be leaving you now.”

So I awoke from my dream, stretching my arms drowsily, and rubbing my eyes. My head was heavy and ached: and the lights on the river and at the foot of the Hill blinked as if they were sleepy. There was snoring from the neighbouring shelters. I had a mind to take a sleep on the rushes. Then I thought of the letter, and desired to have done with it. Stooping, I got the things from the rushes. I tried to smother a yawn, but there was a burden of sleep on my eyelids, and a mist in my heart. I remembered that, when I was a youngster at school, I used to go to sleep on my knees in the chapel, and wake up, with a start, to find that a bigger boy had given me a poke with his prayerbook to recall me to duty. Kilclare was always devout; though he was so plain that it was hard to imagine he could ever be holy.

I went to shut the door of the Mill, to have a screen for the candle. I looked about for Droomeen, and saw him standing below. The door was stuck; and it made such a noise, with its rusty hinges and pivot of stone, that I left it, and

An Offer of Help

returned to the table. What with my drowsiness, and the despairing indifference that had come over me now, I was reluctant to write. I would have liked to have hidden the candle, and gone to sleep on the rushes: but because I was apt to alter my mind on a whim, I had a custom of holding to a purpose in spite of these irrational changes.

So I took my flint and I lit the candle: its flame was huge to my dull eyes, and it showed a smear of red on the rock. The Mill was lit; but the doorway was black, as if it was darkened by the brightness within. Then I began writing the letter. Sometimes I would stop for a word, and find myself glowering at that stain on the wall. I was brief, as one is when it goes against the grain to be writing. I wrote about the Camp, and the mockery of defences, the numbers, and the arms of the rebels; and gave a list of the leaders. When I got to Kilclare, I said it had been my misfortune to know him so long that I could speak of him surely: while he was pretending to keep aloof from the Rising, he was one of the judges. At this a hand was laid on my shoulder.

I had been taken up by the effort to write and

The Wood of the Brambles

keep the drowsiness off. Now I started, and knocked the candle down, and it lay extinguished in falling. I saw Kilclare, as I turned with the paper crumpled up in my hand.

"You are working late," he said quietly.

"I want to make the most of my time."

He had a cloak, and a lantern that threw a ray on the ground, but left the Mill in the dark. I could hardly see him at first, but soon he was clear in the twilight of the stars; and a few of them glittered in the pieces of sky above his shoulders in the frame of the door.

"Pleasant work, as it prevented your hearing my steps," he said, in a voice that was hardly more than a whisper.

"Steps are soft on the turf, and besides I was sleepy; but it ought to be pleasant to give Justice a hand," I said, keeping his tone, as if I was afraid of a spy.

"You were writing?"

"A letter," I said, holding it out.

"I have nothing to do with it," he said.

"I am not ashamed of it, sir."

"Who is it for?" he said, taking it. "If there is nothing in it to damage the rebels, I can have it delivered."

"It was intended to harm you."

An Offer of Help

"Me?"

"And the others : it is written to Johnson."

"Then I must tear it up," he said.

"Pity that my work should be wasted," I said angrily, because I was vexed that he came when I was writing by stealth. "I'd just as soon that you read it."

He turned the ray on the letter.

"I ought to have foreseen it," he said, crumpling the letter again, and his eyes were under blotches of shadow. "I want you to understand me at last. I come to-night as your friend."

"A new part," I said. "I wish you had begun it this morning."

"New?" he said; "I had little reason to like you, when we were together at school."

"And you bear me a grudge?" I broke in. "I am glad you have taken heart to acknowledge it. You hated me then, and pestered me with cowardly friendliness."

"I had reason to hate you," he said.

"You imagined it."

"When I was a boy, and had never given you an excuse for a spite, you changed my life to a suffering. I was smaller than you: I only asked that you should let me alone. No kindness—not a word, or the thoughtless friendli-

The Wood of the Brambles

ness of a look—was too little for me to remember with gratitude. A look could hurt me more than a blow. This is childish to you, hard to understand or believe. You disliked me, and looked down on me openly: if I went into a room, or tried to join in a game, or passed in a corridor, you were eager to set the others against me. It sounds little, and it poisoned my life. What is the grief of a man compared with that unreasoning misery?"

"You were always the same, brooding over a word till you found a tragedy in it. Thinking of yourself as you were, are you surprised that I was slow to be friendly? Is your memory so dull that you think your boyhood was pleasing?"

"I had no claim to your friendship: I was backward and clumsy, you were at the head of the class: but of all the boys in the school, you were the one that I was the most ready to worship."

"You make me proud."

"And, as I was saying, though I had little reason to like you in boyhood, I am here as your friend."

"Then you have altered your mind?——"

"Since?"

"This morning."

An Offer of Help

"We freed one at a time. We put you here in the Mill——"

"In the heart of the Camp."

"To make it easy to save you."

"Or difficult?"

"If you will put on this cloak, I can take you out as my servant."

"That is very simple," I said; "if I had a reason to trust you. Or have you come to propose a barter of lives? Do you expect me to save yours in return?"

"I am not in danger."

"You own you have fostered a foolish hate of me for years: and this morning you could have set me free if you wanted. Now you ask me to put my life in your hands. Do you want to let me out as a witness to your work in the Camp?"

Here there was the thud of a fall near us, and an outbreak of cursing in Irish, as though someone had tripped across the rope of a shelter.

Chapter VII

A Hunt in the Dark

“AN’ whose fault is it but yours?” cried Tony. “Have you any right to be leaving a rope to trip me up in the dark? What’s that you say? Why can’t you speak English, instead of wriggling about like a worm in that carpet?”

This Tony said in a loud rage, that was answered, in bitter Irish, by muffled voices below the fallen roof of the shelter. Kilclare went out, and I followed him as far as the door, and saw him speaking to Tony. After a word they went away to the right; and then there was nothing to spoil the peace of the Camp, except the gruff and aggrieved talk of two men who had been buried below the carpet, and now decided to use it as a blanket instead of propping it up again as a roof. They talked under breath, as if the hush of the gathering and the sleep of so many thousands had made the quietness holy.

As I had winced at the thought of owing my

A Hunt in the Dark

freedom to Agatha, and yet in a little time had found her assistance would be better than none; so I was sorry I had slighted Kilclare's offer, and the name of a hope had left me eager to live. Then I heard a step on the right. Tony was coming back with a cloak on his left arm, and he brandished his pike at the fallen shelter, as if he considered its owners should be waiting for vengeance.

"It is a disgrace to this Camp to allow ruffians to trip an innocent passer," he said. "I might have been killed. Did you see how I fell?"

"I heard you."

"And those scoundrels insulted me in Irish, and so I never knew what they said. And now they go to sleep, when I turn my back for a minute."

"It is a scandal," said I; "wake them up and insist on their giving you an exemplary thrashing. It will do you all the good in the world. Then if you survive it, you can tell me your business."

"And you should be the last to complain."

"I never dreamt of it, Tony."

"It was for you that I came into the Camp."

"But you went away, hours ago."

"I couldn't get out. It is easy to come in, but the sentries will let nobody out. I spent my

The Wood of the Brambles

guinea to provide them with liquor ; and they say they are too fond of me now to let me leave them at all."

"I am sorry to hear it. Come in, and we will chat at our leisure."

"Didn't I tell you we must hurry away?"

"No, indeed."

"If you won't come, I must be moving without you."

"Moving where?"

"Out of the Camp. And we will go with Dromeen, for Jacob is on guard in the lane."

"Dark Jacob?"

"Yes, and in a fury because Roche put you here for the night, instead of sending you to sleep in the farm. Jacob had invited his friends to keep you company, and grew so indignant with Roche that he had almost a mind to come and pike you himself. He is watching the lane, and the others are afraid to go near him."

"But what use is Dromeen?"

"He is crazy to get out of the Camp. He is frightened when the others are sleeping, and deserts in the dark ; but slinks back in the daytime, because there is nobody in the fields or the village."

A Hunt in the Dark

"And how can he help us?" I said.

"By speaking to Jacob, who was always his friend. And then we can rush."

"And Dromeen after us?"

"The beggarman will slaughter Dromeen. Now put on this cloak."

"I am ready," I replied, as I got into the cloak. I took his left arm, and we went away down the hill.

Tony had a swagger as if he had saved me by the toils of a hero: he dug his pike into the carpet that covered the men whose rest he had broken; and he knocked upon the shelters we passed. I felt as if the danger was over. So we went through the many shelters, and crossed the wall with the brambles and the field where the peasants were asleep on the ground. Nobody stirred; and the Camp had the stillness of the dead of the night. We could see the belt of the lights before us on the bank of the river and around Enniscorthy. Then we came on Dromeen, sitting on the stile in the wall. He nearly fainted when Tony prodded him with the butt of his pike.

"Listen now," said Tony, "the watchword is 'Scourges.' And I think, Dom, you had better disguise your walk, if you can, for Dermody can see with his ears."

The Wood of the Brambles

"Then I'll limp with one leg," I said.

"Limp with both, my dear fellow," said Tony.

Then we followed Dromeen across the stile; and we took hold of his arms, to prevent his running away. I took his left arm and his pike, and we went along towards Jacob.

The farm was silent and black: and there was the glow of a torch above the foot of the lane. When we reached the turn, we discovered Dermody ready. As he stood with his pike at rest, and a torch aloft, and the Rector's garments in tatters on his muscular limbs, it was difficult to believe he was blind. The glow shone on his face, and lit his eyes, and reddened the tip of his pike and the steel butt of his pistol in his belt, and the hawthorns beside him and the branches above.

"A fine night, Dromeen," he shouted.

"He can see," cried Dromeen, falling back.

"Whisper now, an' what do you want?" said Jacob.

"Scourges," quavered Dromeen.

"Then you go the right way to get them. Go home now this minute."

"That's what I want to do, Captain Dermody."

"Don't thry and be smart, for I won't sthand it, Dromeen."

A Hunt in the Dark

"I wouldn't do such a thing, sir."

"Whisper, who are those you have with you?"

"It is myself, Captain Dermody."

"There's three of you—you must have been dhrinkin'. An' one of you is lame of a leg. Come forward, cripple!" he shouted, with such a might in his voice that I made a step in advance, but I was stopped by the others.

"As for you, Masther Tony," he said, "don't I know the fall of your foot, whether you are sober or dhrunk?"

"Captain, I'm not dhrunk," cried Dromeen, "but I'm a bit hard o' hearin'."

"You've no call to be here," said Jacob.

"Please your Honour, I would hear if I could," cried Dromeen.

"Silence, Dromeen!" shouted Jacob. "I dare say, Masther Tony, you went to see your cousin: that boy has been a sad disappointment to everyone that is fond of the family. I'd never have thought one of Sir Malachi's blood would mope in the Mill, instead of havin' a merry night at the last."

"Ah, he was always a fool!" said Tony.

"Do you know, now, everyone fancied he was wrong in the head? He would skulk about like a fish; and he never could say Bo to Dromeen."

The Wood of the Brambles

"What's that, Captain Dermody?" cried Dromeen.

"Ah well, there was never much harm in him!" said Tony.

"No indeed! Worse luck for the poor boy! It was you played the divil."

As they spoke, I was waiting for Tony to give the sign for the rush. He seemed to be unwilling to stir. There was a handy look about Jacob's pistol and pike. For my part, I had never intended to shew the way, and considered it was unjust to leave the matter to me. Jacob would be alarming the sentries: they would come around when they heard that thundering voice. I began to wish I was safe in my cosy prison at the top of the hill.

"Please goodness, I will do it again!" said Tony, "but Mac will play the devil no more."

"The odds are that he has more than enough of the divil by this time," said Jacob. "Lord! the merry nights that we had at Gurty-geeheen. Who'd have thought that I'd rise in the world, an' be compelled to disthroy Roarin' Mac an' your Honour?"

"Destroy me?" said Tony.

"Ah, how things alter!" said Dermody, sighing. "As soon as you know where you are,

A Hunt in the Dark

you find you are somewhere else : he is under a quilt of the daisies, wid bullets inside him instead of the whiskey ; an' you are bein' taken up as a spy."

"I was never a spy," said Tony indignantly.

"I'll lock you up in the farm," said the beggarman, "an' if you insist on havin' dhrink, I'll be tolerant for the sake of old times. An' we'll have a gran' night to-morrow, for we'll wake Masther Dom : he was always a poor creature, and soft ; but no one expects much from the dead. Manny a fool has been a credit to a wake, afther all."

Tony grew desperate, and shoving Dromeen away from him, brought the pike down from his shoulder as if preparing to charge. Dromeen shrank from my side, and crouched, waiting to spring as soon as Jacob was busy. And I clutched my heavy pike to support Tony, and even at that instant I felt ashamed of such a barbarous weapon.

"Sthand, ruffians !" cried Jacob, in a terrible voice, flinging his torch away, and shifting his pike to his left hand, and grabbing a pistol. The torch swooped to the left, and was extinguished, with a thud on the ground. Now was the time to rush, but I was full of reluctance. I might be

The Wood of the Brambles

running straight on the pike or the pistol, and Jacob was so used to the darkness that he had an advantage. The odds were that he could only kill one of us; but that would be more than enough for me, if I was the victim.

"Sthand!" cried Jacob again; "if you move a finger, I fire!"

"What's all this fuss about, Jacob?" said a voice from behind us. We started round, as if we were shut between enemies.

"Is that you, Father Kilclare?" he shouted. "I am capturin' thraitors."

"If you were capturing lions, there would be no need of such a horrible noise," said Kilclare, going coolly between us. "I suppose you forget you have a voice like a hurricane. You are rousing the poor lads on the Hill, and that pistol will be going off of itself, unless you are careful."

Now that I was accustomed again to the darkness, I saw Kilclare: he had got rid of his cloak, and looked slim in his long coat and his tall boots beside Dermody.

"I think you'd better have somebody to assist you on guard," he went on. "It is easy to go wrong when you're blind."

"I am able to take care of myself," said Dermody.

A Hunt in the Dark

"You might shoot the wrong man. Would you like it to be known in the Camp that you arrested Dromeen? And is Mr Davern a traitor? I will let them go by."

"I suppose you think you know best, sir," said Jacob, speaking as if he was bitterly hurt; "yet though I am dark——"

"We know your zeal and usefulness, Dermody." Here the priest made a sign to Tony, who hurried on with Dromeen. I was going after, but Jacob barred the road with his pike.

"At least I must know the name of the cripple," he said.

"Should a man of your size be making war on a cripple?" said Kilclare.

"You are responsible, sir," he answered: and I went past, and caught up the others at the foot of the lane.

We hurried along the road to the right, between rocky fields that were full of nettles and furze. There were seldom any trees by the way, and there was little to hide us from the sentries on the bank of the river. We could see them at times: they were like shadows, and

The Wood of the Brambles

seemed further away than the torches they held. The night was clear to us, after that woody trough of the lane.

We paused where the roads tangled in a cluster of trees. The torches were behind us, and so we determined to run along on the grass till we reached the Ford of the Alders. So we got over a little wall, and ran through fields where the rocks, peeping from the grass, were as plentiful as the patches of sedge.

Tony was light of foot, and Dromeen ran with the nimbleness of a terrified hare. Every now and then he would wait for us. Before we took to the fields, I had been annoyed that Kilclare had intruded, and I wondered how long he had been behind us and listening. He was one of the last I would have wanted to see me attempting to pike a blind beggarman. Trying to keep up with the others, I was no longer able to think : and I was glad when Dromeen waited at the Ford of the Alders.

The Ford is at the place where the river begins to widen at last. It was familiar, for I used to be fond of trying it when I thought it was dangerous. The stepping-stones were seen in the day, unless the water was muddy. They were hidden now, and the water had a shimmer

A Hunt in the Dark

like marble. There was a clump of alders on the opposite bank, and a shock of rushes on the brink of the stream. The alders seemed distant ; and I was half afraid of the crossing. My hair had broken loose, and the ribbon was gone, and I was gasping for breath. My hesitation and my shortness of breath vanished at the crackle of muskets in the shadow behind us. Looking back, one could see sparks upon the top of the Hill. The Hill was lost in the dusk, and so the lights had a look of drifting up in the air. In a second, Dromeen was plunging on the stones in the river. Tony chased him, and fell into the water, as I was beginning to follow. It must have been the faintly remembered habit of my boyhood that led me to the stones, for I jumped with a despairing attempt to imitate the leaps of the others. Just at the last I came on something yielding, and so fell into the water ; but clutched the root of a tree, and scrambled out on the shore. Tony was dripping, and leant against the trunk of an alder. Dromeen scudded, as if death was behind him.

“That is a dead man in the water below ; he was a wag in his time,” said Tony. “Now he might give over his playfulness. I have a weakness for a practical joke, but when it comes to

The Wood of the Brambles

lying at the end of a ford, so as to souse a man into the water when he thinks he is safe, I protest against deliberate humour."

"He has come with the tide," I said.

"He has no business to be loitering here. He ought to have gone down to the sea. Why, the river was choking with the dead from the battle when Enniscorthy was taken. But what has become of that outrageous Dromeen?"

Then we saw him in a gap of a hedge, waving us to follow at once. He was too frightened to face the darkness without us. So we began running again, to get dry, though we hardly thought there was risk of pursuit, till we came to the stony top of a down, and, glancing back as we took breath, we could see lights upon the Ford of the Alders.

We were about a mile from the Slaney, and saw nothing of the river except the gleams as the flashes were reflected in the water below. From the lights that were leaping one by one, it was plain we were hunted by a throng of the rebels.

"The Devil sweep that Dark Jacob! He has been rousing the Camp just to spite everyone, as soon as he found you were the cripple," said Tony. "I wager he went up to the Mill. He

A Hunt in the Dark

could guess the way we had gone. And the boys are mighty fond of a hunt."

"It is me they want to take!" cried Dromeen.
"Oh, sir! I'm not ready to die."

"They wouldn't take you as a gift, my good man. But they are after our friend," said Tony.
"Could we hide him away?"

"Ah, your Honour, hide yourself quick!" cried Dromeen; "annywhere'll do so long as you cry that you never heard o' my name when they catch you. Ah, your Honour, promise to shout that as soon as they see you! I am thinkin' they will pike you at once."

"We must scatter," I said.

"Then, for Heaven's sake, scatter, your Honour! Red Tony an' I will keep together."

"I wish I knew of a cave," said Tony.

"I have a hole in my acre," cried Dromeen, whose hearing was improved by his fright.

"And how far is that?" I said.

"A short mile, your Honour."

"Then why didn't you say so before? Scamper! You are lazy," said Tony.

So we took to running again across the moors, and I wanted to keep in the hollows if we could, to escape the eyes of our enemies, and to husband my breath, for I was so tired that I was beginning

The Wood of the Brambles

to feel as if my legs belonged to somebody else. But Dromeen breasted the slopes with an astounding agility. And soon, as we were crossing a ridge, we heard a gay tally-ho, and saw rebels coming over the down. They were waving their torches with merry shouts of delight.

"Here we are," cried Dromeen, springing over a wall, and I scrambled heavily after him. I was so feeble that I had a mind to repose on the ground till the hunters should slaughter me with innocent gladness.

"Sir Malachi will be glad I took part in a hunt, after all," I thought. "I will be in at the death."

We were in corn, and we ran along a path through the crop.

"Get in there," cried Dromeen.

"Where?"

"Into that hole beyond."

On the left of the path there was a hole among the roots of the corn.

"Creep into a hole in the ground?" I gasped, with an attempt to be dignified.

"If you're not mighty quick, the rebels will put you in a hole in the ground," said Tony.

The happy whoops of the hunters drew near: and I slid into the hole.

Chapter VIII

In the Heat of the Day

THE cries went around the field, and I heard knocking on a door, and indignant shouts for Dromeen, who answered with shrill astonishment, but failed to assume innocence, and went on to admit he had run away from the Camp and had noticed a cripple. Father Kilclare, he said, had taken the cripple to the town; and at this the men were angry, and cursed that interference, and asked what business had anyone to meddle with their doings at all. Then they debated whether they should slaughter Dromeen for allowing them to run such a way: and then finding he was not to be found, and had slipped off without leaving them anything to drink, they gave over the pursuit, and I heard them walking back to the river very slowly and sadly.

Groping in my refuge I found it was very little, and thought of going on, but my legs were aching and stiff.

The Wood of the Brambles

"Are you there, Dom?" said Tony.

"Of course I am here," I answered, with a touch of asperity.

"They have gone away."

"And I thought you had gone too," I said.

"I was in the corn."

"And Dromeen?"

"Is miles away by now, I should think."

"Well, Tony," I said, speaking with more friendliness since his voice was dejected, "what are we to do next?"

"That's more than I can say," he replied.
"Is there room for me in the hole?"

"Not with real comfort, I think," I answered, with the air of an owner.

"Then are you inclined to come on?"

"Indeed and I am very well off," I said; for, though my refuge was vile, I wanted him to think it was luxury.

"It is odd," he said, with an ache in his voice, "I have hardly the courage to run away all alone."

"I am sorry I can't ask you in here."

"It's all very well to be in a hole, in the night. You'll be in a hole, in the morning," he said.

"To-morrow can look after itself," I said. "At present I am too lazy to stir."

In the Heat of the Day

"Ah, then!" he said crossly, "I shall be strolling onward."

"I think I'll follow you, after lying down for a little."

"I thought of a rest, but I find it is too cold in the corn. There is a deal of dew on the stalks."

"I am as dry as a bone," I said. "You mustn't think I am a dog in the manger."

"I never heard of a dog that wanted to be buried alive," said Tony, "and that would be a contemptible manger."

"Ah, you speak from the outside of it, Tony."

"Well, if I get anywhere before I am killed," said Tony with sadness, "I'll try and assist you." Then I heard him trudging away, with the heavy feet of the sick. At once I repented, and had it in my heart to forsake my refuge, and follow; but I was ashamed to acknowledge I had tried to deceive him.

The hole was big enough for Dromeen. I lay huddled, and I rested a little. The next thing I remember is the glare of the sunlight at the mouth of the hole.

My eyes were as dim as if they had been full

The Wood of the Brambles

of the dust: my tongue was swollen, and my lips were like wood. My legs tingled and ached; and I was sore with a cramp. That outer degradation had reached to my soul, and I was hunted and desperate. I heard a prattle of children, whose voices must have broken my sleep. They were on the pathway, and babbled in soft guttural Irish. Then I saw the children—two little creatures, not as high as the corn: they were hand in hand, and were laughing as if they were set free from the school. They saw me, and terror whitened their faces. Then they turned, and ran shrieking along the path in the corn. Their crying left me fully awake, and I remembered my risk and my purpose of making haste to the Wood: but now it was clear day, and it was better to lurk hidden till the night had come on. I looked at my watch, but I had forgotten to wind it. I said to myself, if I was lying there with the stalks shivering and nodding above me and heard them hiss as the wind rubbed them together, I could lie in patience for hours. But it was hateful to keep choking in the dust, and at this I remembered the children would be sure to repeat the tale of the monster they had seen, and my hiding would be detected; and so I clambered out of my refuge. My brain

In the Heat of the Day

reeled, and my eyes were misty and dazzled. The corn glistened, and the thatch of a cabin was brown in front of the leafy pile of a wood. Turning, I saw the Camp on the Hill. Crouching, I looked up through the swaying tufts, for the Camp was near enough to remind me that rebels might be out on the moors. The sun was high, and the shadows of the bushes were round. The sky had only a scum of clouds, like a cobweb. The tint of the moors had the softness of the bloom of a peach.

Seeing nobody, I went to the cabin. There was no fireplace; but a hollow was scooped in the middle of the floor for the turf, beneath a hole in the thatch. The bed was a bundle of rushes, and a rickety table and a three-legged stool and some saucepans were all the furniture there. Egg-shells were lying on the sill, and I guessed they had done duty for cups. The scooped potato beside them had a bit of a rush-light in it, and was used as a candlestick. There was no glass to the windows; but the shutters were there to block them, if the rain had come in. Yet the cabin was tidy, as if Dromeen was fond of his home. It was said Prancing Dromeen had an unlimited scorn for his puny and deaf son, who had grown furtive here from

The Wood of the Brambles

his attempts to avoid intruding on his obstreperous father.

I went on to a hedge beside the back of the cabin. It was thick, and full of the drowsy and sullen buzzing of flies. The thornbushes were tangled with vetches and hopweed and rougher leaves of the bryony. A ditch before it was crammed with a dusty crop of the nettles : I put my hands among them to feel whether any water lay at their roots, but only came on a dried layer of mud. Though my wrists and hands were all stung by the nettles, I never minded the smarting. Stepping over the ditch, and clinging to a stump, I peered through at a field with yellow blossoms and long grass that had a glisten like water. Dandelion blows were like bubbles adrift about the tops of the grass. Breaking into the meadow, I lay prone in the grass, rubbing my hot cheeks and my hands against it, and having a delight in its coolness. The hot air quivered and shook above the tips of the seeding tufts, that were as big, in my dazzled eyes, as the corn. I thought I heard the patter and whirring of a drum in the distance.

There was a wall at the other side of the meadow : and beyond it a wood was black and purple and green. Lifting my head, I saw the

In the Heat of the Day

gables of Ballymoreen ; and at this I knew where I was, and remembered I had only to cross that shaky wall and a narrow and deep bit of the high-road. My first thought was a longing for the well in the wood.

No longer troubling to keep hidden, I hastened across the meadow towards that ricketty wall. It was built of pieces of granite piled loosely, without a gate, for if cattle were put into the meadow it was simple to overthrow a bit of the wall to make a gap for them, and build it again.

Suddenly, I heard hoofs in the road. I could see nothing, for that part of the way is hollowed, and lies below the meadow and wood. Then I heard the voices of men, who were laughing and chatting in the road on my right. Again I felt I was hunted. I thought of springing down in the road and making a dash for the shelter, but my mind was divided. It was better to crouch there till the horsemen had passed ; for I made sure they were rebels. Then I heard them talking in German, and knew they were Hessians, and had a mind to hail them as friends ; but thinking of my appearance, reflected they would shoot me at sight.

The wall was so hot, that I drew back when I touched it. Peeping through a cranny, I saw

The Wood of the Brambles

them riding by in the road: they lolled in their saddles, as if they were very tired and had ridden a long way; and their faces were red and drowsy, and dust whitened their boots and drifted about the legs of their horses. They had scarlet shakos, and blue jackets with silver lacing and a showy pelisse. The white buckskin of their breeches was stained by the dust; and their waxed moustaches were limp. With their outlandish tongue and appearance, they were odd visitors for a high-road in Wexford.

I was a little above their heads, and so close that I heard the champing and the breath of the horses and the creak of the saddles. Some of the Hessians had their eyes shut and were dozing, and others had drunk more than enough. Their sodden and dull faces were dark against the background of the colourless withered grass on the bank opposite and the skirt of the wood.

I was maddened by seeing myself in fear of my life, hunted by a rabble of peasants, and now in a more imminent danger from these sots in the road. If it had been an English regiment, I might have discovered a friend in an officer: but how could I tell my condition to a German without knowing a word of his language, even if I should find myself given a chance to explain? I

In the Heat of the Day

cursed the ignorance of those dangerous troopers. The noise was growing behind them. If only I had made a dash for the wood ! I thought, and sure it was better to fling myself on top of a sleepy German, and hurl him out of his saddle, and plunge into the bushes, while the others were too astounded to fire, instead of waiting till one of them should look over the wall.

Then there was a gap in the horsemen, and looking down I saw two prisoners in the thick of the dust, bareheaded, and in rags, with their arms tied at their backs. The Rector was passing by, in the ruins of Jacob's clothes, and the want of a wig had lent him a look of age, but his face was lit by triumph and happiness. Beside him was Tony, tottering and dragging his feet, as if he was fainting : his green clothes were in shreds, and he was full of despair.

At the sight of them my hesitation was over ; and without stopping to think, I jumped to my feet, and flung myself on the ricketty wall, driving the stones down with a crash on the heads of the troopers who rode after the prisoners. The nearest Hessian looked up with a gaping and white terror, and shrank. He had a flabby and round face, and a colourless and feeble moustache. I saw him as I leapt to the road,

The Wood of the Brambles

and made a clutch at the Rector, shouting "Run!" and sprang up the opposite bank, and smashed my way through the thorny bushes on the skirt of the wood. Above the cries, and the snapping of pistols and carbines, and the buzzing of the bullets, I heard feet on my track; and looking as I burst through the shrubberies, saw Tony behind me.

Stumbling over branches and roots, and tearing my hands and face with the briars, I ran till I struck upon a path I remembered, and came to the well. There I stood, breathless, and Tony coming up with me, threw his arms about me and cried: "Ah, Dom! but it is you that are noble!" I hugged him also; and loved him with the whole of my heart.

There was a singular quietness at the well in the wood. The place was full of a green shadow, gilt where the light trickled through the roof of the branches. Then a thrush began to sing, and the song was taken up, and a scurry of hidden creatures arose in the thicket, and a rustle of leaves, as if the wood had been frightened into stillness and now was taking courage

In the Heat of the Day

again. Beetles glittered about on the water, and by the delicate cups of wet ivory floating among the leaves of the lilies.

I lay prone by the well, and water dripped from my hair. I had quenched my thirst, drinking from my hollowed hands; and had soused my head and arms in the well. That delicious sting of the cold water refreshed me for a moment, and then I was as parching as ever. Tony lay beside me, and bobbed his head in and out of the water; and he looked like a seal. The drops that fell on his coat were scattering green splashes in the cover of dust.

"Gracious Powers! but this is better than yonder!" he said.

"I was feeling tired of the hole," said I.

"And were you there all the time?"

"Sleeping, like a hedge-hog in winter."

"Ah! it is you that are lucky," he said.

"And where were you going?"

"On my way to be hanged."

"I thought you had an air of reluctance."

"Indeed I was more dead than alive," he said.

"Well, in spite of the comfort of the hole I was thirsty, and in need of a bath. And I fancy this dipping of head and hands has made the rest of me hotter."

The Wood of the Brambles

"Ah! don't talk about heat."

"And what was your crime?"

"Wearing the green," said Tony.

"And the Rector?"

"Was to be hanged as a rebel. If you had saved him, he would never have pardoned your unkind interference."

"He had his head in the air, as if he was triumphant at last. But how was it you were seized by the Hessians?"

"I thought they were Volunteers. While you were asleep in the hole, I came to the wood, and ran upon a body of rebels who were following Shamus. So I took again to the meadows, to go around to the other side of Ballymoreen. I was so down in the mouth, that I think I would have run from a rabbit. I kept my hand on my pistol. And that reminds me, it's uneasy to lie upon," he said, plucking a duelling-pistol—mounted with silver—from his pocket, and throwing it on the grass by his side. "Sir Tim gave me that," he said. "The Hessians didn't trouble to search me."

"Did you use it?"

"To-day? They wouldn't give me the time. I saw them by the side of the trees; they were snug at breakfast, and one had a big pot, and

In the Heat of the Day

was stirring up the soup with a ladle. 'Volunteers!' I said to myself; 'I could swear it from their beautiful clothes.' At once I was in the highest spirits; and ran along the wall, like a fox. I jumped over it, flinging up my arms, and I landed in the thick of them, shouting 'I'm an army of rebels!' Before I could wink, I was in the dust, with my head split by a blow the cook caught me with his ladle, and all the rest of them were holding me down. Says I to the Colonel when they dragged me up to him, 'I am an officer of the Wexford Militia.' He was a stumpy red barrel of a man, and says he, with a laugh that was more than half a curse, 'God in Heaven! this is the craziest country. And is that your uniform, Crazy? We caught a rebel yesterday, who said he was ghostly, the Reverend Carey, and would be glad to be hanged.' 'Ah!' says I, 'and have you made a ghost of poor Carey?' 'Not yet,' says he; 'is he one of your friends?' 'He is,' says I. 'Then,' says he, 'we'll hang you together: and we'll do it in the town to supply a warning to the officers and the clergy of Ireland.' "

"Hush!" I said, "there's somebody coming."

"Let him come," he replied, ducking his head into the water again.

The Wood of the Brambles

I listened, propped on my elbows, and then I sprang to my feet.

"It is Agatha Considine," I said.

Instantly he was up in dismay, and dived into the bushes at the back of the well. I followed him, and so we stood hidden by a clump of the laurels.

Looking through the shiny and stiff leaves of the laurels, I could see no one on the path, but I saw the glint of the pistol. It was by the side of the crushed grass on the brink. I was afraid to go out for it; as Agatha's voice was plain in the distance, and was so clear that I knew it a long way, though another was too far to distinguish. When I wandered across to Ballymoreen in the old times, I would know her voice in the rooms or in the garden before I knew the tones of the people with her, and yet it was the gentlest of all. Now it was like a music I had wanted for years. She came down the mossy path, and the crisp leaves underfoot made her step silent. At the sight of her happy face, I was filled with happiness also, and throbbed with an unreasoning pride. I must have stared at her

In the Heat of the Day

bright face for a minute, before I glanced at Carnaby Blake. He was gazing down at her with conquering eyes, and was splendid in the fashions of Dublin; and there was no sign of the army about his clothes, though his hair was powdered, as he was accustomed to have it when he shone in his uniform: as he swaggered, on her left, with his arm akimbo, and toyed with the hilt of his sword, there was no denying he had the air of a redoubtable gallant. They made a pleasant picture, under the green vault of the branches. Yet the sight of them was a flame in my heart. My gladness was driven out by despair; and I was chilled for a moment. While I was in danger, she found his courtship delightful, here on this path where we had lingered together. Blinded by a rush of the fever that made me dizzy beforehand, I was mastered by rage. I stepped forward, but Tony caught my arm, and I flung him off, but remained behind the screen of the laurels. As they were coming closer, he bent devoutly, and she smiled up at him with a singular sweetness. Bowing with an elaborate grace, he lifted her hand to his lips; and at this I broke away from the laurels, snatched up the pistol, and fired madly at Blake. Tony knocked up my arm, and tugged

The Wood of the Brambles

me back into the thick of the bushes. Agatha clung to Blake, and we stood so for a second. I held the smoking pistol and paused, stunned by my act. Blake was scarlet and astounded, and had his sword half way out of its scabbard; but Agatha impeded his arm: she was white, and stared at the laurels, as if she could see me. Then she drew him back, though he made as if he wanted to come forward and search, but she cried the wood was full of rebels, and he must take her away. Then they turned, as I was beginning to realise what I had done, and to think that I must shew my repentance by meeting them and confessing my crime. Agatha leaned heavily on Blake's arm, as she hurried him down the path, and I dropped the pistol and crushed it into the ground with my heel. Tony was grinning, and cried under his breath: "You are the devil of a man after all! But there is no time to be lost," and so saying he plunged into a thicket of brambles.

Chapter IX

Shamus Dhu, the Captain

“WONDERFUL weather!” said Shamus, as we broke through the bushes.

He sat at ease on a fallen oak in a glade, and was looking thoughtful and earnest, as if his sash and his helmet had gone out of his mind. I must have shown my dismay clearly, for he turned to my cousin, as if it were not easy to look solemn, and said quietly,—

“It is well to be active. When I was your age I could have run like a deer.”

“Do you mean to say you ever were lively?” said Tony, pulling himself together, and sauntering across with his hands in his breeches-pockets.

“I am not saying I ran, but just that I was able to do so,” said the other.

Tony sat down beside him on the trunk of the tree.

“Won’t you rest a little, O’Davoren?” said Shamus; “I am sure you are warm.”

The Wood of the Brambles

"I am rather," I said, and crossing over with all the dignity I was able to muster, I sat down at his left. Then I saw a number of rebels had been digging in the trees and had stopped to gape with astonishment. They were from the village; and Jim the Fool, and Thomas the Smith, and Dinny the Piper were among them, with many others I knew. But I was hardly embarrassed. My hair was hanging limp on my cheeks, and was caked from the water and dust, and my clothes were but a scandalous ruin. Still I was inclined to await the pranks of my destiny with a rueful composure. After all my pains to be free, I was in the clutch of the rebels. It was good to be still, after those unavailing exertions.

"The weather is simply astoundin' for the time of the year," said Shamus. "Laburnum was in bloom on the 7th of May: an' the hawthorn and guelder roses were out on the 19th: an' my bees swarmed on the 20th. Everything is early: the apples are in blossom already; but the leaves of the currants and gooseberries are spoilt by the drought."

"So am I," said Tony.

Shamus blew the whistle that once kept order in his turbulent school. Jim came running across.

Shamus Dhu, the Captain

"Bring a bottle of claret, Doran; and what would you say now to some chicken and ham?" said Shamus.

"A hundred thousand welcomes!" said Tony.

"And will you join him, O'Davoren?" said Shamus.

"Well, yes," I said; "thanks. I suppose it is nearly dinner-time now." I was nearly dying of hunger.

"An' knives and forks, an' a couple of plates, Doran; and be quick, my good man," said Shamus.

"Is his name Doran?" I said, carelessly.

"Did you think 'Fool' was an inherited title?" said Shamus.

"If it was it would be as common as dirt," said Tony.

"He would be a good man to send to fetch sorrow, for he would be long on the road," said Shamus, as Jim came back with a bottle, and wooden platters, a cold chicken, and a knuckle of ham. He was a big fellow, with the gentle and good face of a child.

So we divided the chicken and the ham; and we drank the claret from covered horns that were such as peasants were accustomed to fill with whiskey, and fasten beneath their coats, in a strap

The Wood of the Brambles

at their left sides, when they went off to a fair. I said to myself, "I never saw such a tiny chicken before. If I was often as thirsty as this, I would be given to drink."

"This is an excellent wine," said Tony.

I said, "It has the odour of sanctity, and is full of honour and years, as Considine would say when he wanted to pretend he could tell claret from poison."

"Mac Consadine is happy to-day," said Shamus: and went on to inform us the rebels had won a battle at Tubberneering, and now held Gorey, with nothing to keep them from a march upon Dublin. The news was fresh, and he struggled vainly to speak as if he was accustomed to victory. I knew the place of the battle well, for it lies a little distance from Clogh. The rebels were marching from Ballymore to attack Walpole, and found him coming with five hundred or so of his troops; so they lay in ambush at the side of a pleasant road under beeches. Thick hedges of hawthorn and holly, on little mudwalls, and full of bracken and furze, were a screen to the peasants in the crops and the grass. The troops were in the dust and the sun, and packed in the road, when the rebels fired and sprang out.

"Mac Consadine encouraged the charge from

Shamus Dhu, the Captain

a boulder of grey rock in a knoll of bushes an' furze at the back of the meadow on the left of the road, an' when the soldiers had run, an' Walpole an' a hundred or more of his troopers were dead, Mac Consadine was lofty an' eloquent ; but nobody listened. Then he led the way into Gorey, as full of triumph as if the attitudes he struck had been enemies," said Shamus, who was ready to sneer at the excitable nature of our countrymen, while he was struggling to hold in his excitement.

"So Considine is resting in Gorey?" I said.

"Don't trouble your head about that foolish Mac Consadine," said Shamus, answering my thought. "Though the boys are too soft to deny him such a harmless amusement as prancin' in front of them, they would tie him up to a tree if he attempted to cross them. Lord! these fools of fine gentlemen! The lads had more than a mind to kill Bagenal Harvey an' the Committee in Wexford, for interferin' to save Kingsborough lately. But I know how to master my men. This morning I hanged one of them there. 'Captain,' said he, as the noose was on his neck, 'I admire a man that knows his own mind.' I was always meant for a general. I had two impossible dreams."

The Wood of the Brambles

"Only two?" I said, "and yet you call yourself Irish?"

"An' one is comin' true," he went on. "I used to wander here with a book."

"Open and forgotten until you met someone, and then began to pore on the pages," said I.

"An' so you remember?" he said. "It was here you interrupted me once, plugin' out of that thicket, with a sword in your hand. You were such a sight, with your powdered hair and mature clothes, that I'd have thought you a Leprechaun if your face had been a tiny bit uglier. You prowled by yourself, as lonely as the ghost of a stranger that is hauntin' a place where he has never the chance to frighten one of his friends."

"This was the very place," I said, starting with a sudden remembrance. "And it was this time of the year," I went on, recalling the yellow blossoms about. The glade was as yellow and shining as the slopes of a mountain when the gorse is in bloom.

"Very likely," said Shamus, "but I fancied you remembered the place. You were here the other night."

"Here?" said I.

"Certainly. Did you come in your sleep?"

Shamus Dhu, the Captain

"No, but in the dark."

"You show a trace of your visit," said he, glancing at my bruise. "By the bye, your hair is piebald, as if it was powdered an' then half of it was dipped in the water."

"I like it piebald," I said crossly.

"There's no accountin' for tastes," he said, "I merely spoke as a friend. Well, as I was saying, I often sat here an' imagined myself a leader of men, an' dreamt of minin' this glade, an' barrin' it with a tangle of trenches, and fightin' here to death, grapplin' an overmasterin' enemy in a fatal resistance. I have seen this solitude shaken by men strugglin', an' the thickets of brambles stabbed by the flashes of muskets an' the plungin' of steel."

Speaking, he grew red with excitement.

"A pleasant fancy," I said.

"And who was the enemy?" said Tony.

"The French, or English, or anyone."

"Who was able to conquer," I said.

"Yes," he said, quietly, "that was always the end. I was to be trampled by the terrible odds, and remembered as a man an' a fighter."

"If it is only trampling you want, I can oblige you at once," said Tony.

"And your other dream?"

The Wood of the Brambles

"Was of goin' to Trinity, an' wranglin' with the doctors until they said there was nobody as learned in Ireland, an' then Poor Scholars would come from the furthest counties to hear me."

"A wilder hope," I said.

"One fulfilment is enough at a time. You see I have my followers now, an' I christened them the 'Babes of the Wood,' for that was the old name in my dreams. We have dug the trenches an' cellars. We roof the holes with the turf, an' fling the withered leaves and the bracken about them to hide the faded look of the grass. You might think you were alone, while a regiment was under your feet."

"Until you fell through a roof and landed on the points of the pikes," said Tony.

"May be, I might show you a cellar."

"Dom will be delighted," said Tony. "He loves to be in holes in the ground."

"Is that so?" said Shamus, nodding with a look of respect; "an' do you study entrenchment?"

"Not if I can help it," said I.

"Of course," said Shamus to Tony, "you must give your word to be silent about all you have seen. I think I must blindfold you besides."

Shamus Dhu, the Captain

"Blindfold me?" he said, angrily.

"I mean when you go."

"I don't see why you should trust Dom any more than me," he said, flushing.

"You forget he is not going away."

"What!" cried Tony.

"I am a prisoner," I said, quietly.

"An' under sentence of death," said Shamus, as a matter of course.

"Good gracious!" said Tony.

"You are going to send me up to the Mill?" I said.

"Jacob would put an end to you soon. You have been makin' a fool of him, an' I like you the more. You rush into my arms here in front of my men, an' I can't free you, of course."

"You voted against me," I said.

"On the Tribunal? That was when I sat as a judge. As a mere captain, I am disposed to be friendly. You deserve to be killed, for spyin' and attemptin' to slaughter a dutiful rebel."

"So you think me a spy?"

"Not for a moment: but the others believe it; an' would have thought I was lyin', if I had made out you were innocent. The facts are against you. But I like you well enough, all the time: an' the boys were delighted you got away

The Wood of the Brambles

after all, for they hope you may give them another run before long."

"They trifle with death," I said, dolefully.

"Death is mainly a good riddance an' a happy release," said Shamus. "If you have a doubt of their kindness, just look at them diggin', as if they are afraid of hurtin' the ground."

"Then what will you do with me?"

"I'll take you to Ross."

"To Bagenal Harvey?"

"He is the Commander-in-chief, or thinks he is, and so he might save you."

"I have met him," I said.

"He is a shaken irritable kindly lean little man, a duellist, and a terrible talker," said Shamus. "An' because he is rich, he is put over my head."

"What can have made the gentlemen join you?" I said, and all the time I was wondering whether Harvey would help me.

"Our ill-luck, and their fears," said Shamus. "Harvey and Colclough were arrested, and thought as they were sure to be hanged they might as well be deservin' it. Colclough is a good an' kind man that ought to live in a convent. There is nothing against him, except that he pronounces his name as if it was Cokely."

Shamus Dhu, the Captain

"He is a son of Sir Vesey's?"

"He is. An' 'Tom the Devil' got hold of Perry of Inch, an' put an end to his loyalty."

"'Tom the Devil' is in the Militia?" I said.

"An' named by his friends."

"Well, and when do we start?"

"At night. We are musterin' to join in the great battle at Ross."

"To-morrow?"

"At day-break."

"I wish to goodness," I said, "you would keep to more respectable hours. How am I to get a night's rest? Why do you begin everything early?"

"To get to the end of the work as soon as we can. You would hardly believe what a difference it makes with the boys. When they are fresh in the morning, they would fight with the Devil. In the afternoon, they would hardly fight with an angel. In the mornin' they are willin' to work, if there is no interferin' fellow tryin' to force them: but later they prefer to be sittin' on a wall with a pipe, an' hearin' scandal about the king and the gentry. Not that they really care in the least what you do; they are taken up with their troubles and dreams; but they like to have somethin' to chat about; an' the stories of

The Wood of the Brambles

all the wickedness you never committed are good when they are tired of the details of private talks between the Devil and Cromwell."

Tony had sat still with his mouth open and his forehead as wrinkled as an ape's, and now he broke in,—

"You say I am free?"

"Just as free as a star," said Shamus.

"Then I'll be moving."

"May I have a word with him first," said I.

"A score, if you like," said Shamus, getting up from the tree and striding off to his men.

"You must promise me something," I said.

"Anything you like, dear," said Tony.

"Don't tell about my firing at Blake."

"Not a word."

"I wouldn't like it to be known, if the rebels kill me," I said.

"But they won't, dear," said Tony.

"I hardly knew what I did, for I was wild with the heat."

"It's well you don't live in the tropics."

"And I was frenzied by dirt."

"Then I wish you were always dirty," he said, with emotion. "I never thought it was in you. Why, my dear, it was splendid. We must be

Shamus Dhu, the Captain

better friends for the future. I have done you injustice."

"There is little future for me," I said. "It wouldn't matter so much if you had done it; but this is one of the evils of a good character, Tony. I wish I could have my life to live over again. Your conduct was always so consistently bad that nobody minds you, and people make a fuss if you show a glimpse of propriety."

"I own it was sudden," he said, "and if that troubles your conscience, you can wait a few minutes before firing the next time; or perhaps I can take your challenge to Carnaby. Dear fellow! I am devoted to Carnaby. Listen, I'll be your second, my dear. Perhaps, you may kill him: he is easy to hit."

"Blake would let the sunlight through me," I said.

"He might. But we are certain to die sooner or later," said Tony. "And he is so neat: it would be a pleasure to have such a beautiful hole in you. You couldn't help being proud of it."

"I am too retiring," I said, "I have no ambition for holes. Here is that ruffian again."

"I'll go straight to Theophilus," said Tony.

"I have been thinkin'," said Shamus, "that it

The Wood of the Brambles

might be as well if you two were to swap clothes for the present."

"No, thank you, indeed," said Tony, with a look of disgust at my rags.

"Not for worlds," I said, considering his.

"As an impartial critic, I fancy your clothes are in an equal condition, with about enough cloth to keep the holes together," said Shamus.

"If so, why should we change?" I said.

"Sir Tim says an impartial critic is one that condemns both sides with an impartial injustice," said Tony, sententiously.

"Because you had better escape notice on your journey to Ross," said Shamus, turning to me.

"Is that the way to avoid notice?" I said, with another glance at the torn wreck of the billiard-cloth.

"Unfriendly notice," said Shamus; "an' your hair should be cropped."

"You want to make me look like a fool," I said, angrily.

"That would be wastin' my time."

"I am disguised enough," I said, "I used to look like a gentleman."

"Listen," said Shamus, "there wasn't a man, woman, or child that saw you in the Camp on

Shamus Dhu, the Captain

the Hill, but would remember your clothes. When you pass through a village, an' the people come to the doors an' stare at you with awe, you believe they are mighty respectful; an' all the time they are sayin: 'Who is that idgit, I wonther, an' where did he borrow that ridiculous coat?' For they are strict in their ideas of fashion. 'Whisper now, Biddy,' says a man, 'did you see the boy in the queer coat wid the collar up to his ears? he is the lad at the House.' 'Yerra! I might have known it,' she says, 'to see him with his nose in th' air like a turkey, an' lookin' as if he'd forgotten his wings an' was walkin' for once, an' pickin' his steps as if he was too good for the kindly mud that God made. An' I wonther he's not ashamed of his legs: he has no more calf to him than Flanagan's cow.' 'They're a shameless lot,' says the man, 'those Daverns; an old and disreputable family.' 'They are,' says she; 'an' a blot on the parish.' And may be you look in at that house the next morn, to make them happy by smilin', an' they fall at your feet. 'Yerra! an' isn't he the image o' the old sthock? Was there ever gentlemen like them in the world?' says the good woman, 'an' hasn't he the eye that can make fools o' the ladies?' 'Twas but yesterday, Biddy, that yous

The Wood of the Brambles

said he took afther his grandmother :—'twas she that was the beautiful creature,' says the man; 'but, get up for a minute, your Honour, till I wipe the chair wid the tail o' my coat, for the hen was sittin' there all the mornin'. 'Ah, I was afraid so,' he says, as he cleans the chair, 'an' manny a time Sir Malachi, God rest his kind soul! sat in that seat, an' says to me, "Moriarty, you're the best tenant I have." 'Yerra!' says she, 'he was the finest man that ever I saw; an' your Honour is his image to-day!' 'An', says the man, 'he never went away from the house without leavin' a couple o' guineas on the chimney there, so as not to be hurtin' our feelin's by handin' it.' 'A couple, Mick, he often left more!' says the woman. Then you go away, afther leavin' the guineas, an' you think to yourself, 'How easy it is to win the love of this artless an' affectionate people!' 'Hard fortune to the fool!' says the woman, 'what right has he disthurbin' the hen?' 'Anyway, he's left the gold,' says the man, 'for I watched him wid the tail o' my eye.' 'Then he's easy deluded by a pinch o' the sawdher,' says she. 'Sir Malachi never gave a shilling to anyone, unless he'd knocked yous down in a rage. And the only time he was here, was when yous put

Shamus Dhu, the Captain

the pig in his field o' pitaties, an' said the poor fellow had gone there by mistake, thinkin' it belonged to the recthor. An' that time the hens wouldn't come down from the rafters for a week, from the dread that Sir Malachi was hidin' away.' "

"Come," I said, "everyone is aware that the people respect the old stock."

"When they think it annoys the new sthock," said Shamus, "or if they are wantin' to soother you. An' all the time they are laughin' up the sleeves o' their waistcoats, an' thinkin', 'A fine old sthock of a weed it is; an' this lad came over wid Cromwell, hardly a thousand years ago yet, an' he looks down upon one that was king of all the counthry before the mountains were made.' If you were alone wid a few peasants when nobody was there but themselves, you'd be astonished to see their equality, an' critical sternness, as they talk of the king or Bonaparte, or even of you. Sometimes they are fond of a stock that is safely buried, because it can never annoy them now, an' it belongs to the past. Often the past is near as fine as the future."

"The past was fine, if you can go by the ruins," I said.

"Listen," said Shamus, "I'll tell you an

The Wood of the Brambles

anecdote. 'What is that noble ruin in the glen over there?' Mac Consadine says, the first time that he came down to the village. 'The ruin is it?' says Dinny the Piper, who was then a bit of a boy. 'That was the grandest cathedral in the world. It was built by Saint Kenny, the bishop, the ancesthor of all the Kennys in Ireland.' 'Indeed!' says Mac Consadine. 'An' maybe yous would hardly have thought it, but in that time Enniscrone was a wontherful place, an' all the sthreeets were of gold. But the Divil was angry, and changed the pavement to dirt, an' the dirt is here still.' 'My young friend,' says Mac Consadine, 'I am delighted to know that a mere peasant like you is a hotbed of these sacred traditions,' an' he gives Dinny a crown. 'A fool and his money are soon sthrangers,' says Dinny to his father. 'An' tell me what was he askin'?' says Jacob. 'He was askin' about Farahy's barn in the glen, that was deserted an' never pulled down, because it might be convenient for the cattle, an' now it is covered wid ivy, an' looks a terrible rune,' says Dinny. 'Whisper, what did yous tell him?' Says Dinny, 'I told him all he wanted to know.'"

I broke in, for though Shamus was often slow of his tongue, yet when he began talking like

Shamus Dhu, the Captain

this, he was reluctant to stop maligning his immaculate neighbours.

"Needs must when the Devil drives," I began.

"Good manners are no burden," said he.

"If you insist on my changing clothes with my cousin, there is no help for it. But what will your fellows think of our conduct?"

"I have told them you have gone suddenly mad," said Shamus, "an' no one was surprised in the least."

"Then I have their respect after all," I said.

"An' they will treat you with considerate kindness," said Shamus.

"Well, come along, Tony, and let us make the exchange."

So I put on his rags, and I fancy he was better content with the bargain when he saw my appearance. Then he was blind-folded, and Jim and Dinny the Piper led him away. I watched them disappear in a thicket.

"An' now we'll have a look at the works," said Shamus.

"I'm too tired to do them justice," I said.

"I think I'd rather lie down."

"I can provide you with a bed in a hole."

"Heaven forbid!"

"But it is cosy, and there's plenty of bracken."

The Wood of the Brambles

"I'd rather lie in the shade."

"Well, do as you like," he said, as if he was sorry for my singular taste.

So I lay in the grass, and when I woke it was the dead of the night.

Chapter X

With the Babes of the Wood

THE rebels were in ranks, as I saw them on the night I was taken. Some of them lifted torches whose flames were stiff in the stillness, and were showing that rough regiment and the gloom of the wood. I stared with my eyes misty from a shadow of sleep.

"Hurry now, O'Davoren," cried Shamus. "Fall in there, between Doran an' Dermody."

I took my place in the front, between Jim the Fool and Dinny the Piper, who were standing with torches. Dinny was a handsome and wild-looking fellow, with hair that hung on his shoulders. According to Shamus, Dinny refused to part with his hair, because it had a naturally unnatural curl. Dinny was the son of Dark Jacob, and so he had a right to be wilful. His waywardness was proved by his clothes of hare-skin, and his cap with the ears of a hare standing up. Of course such a dress was common

The Wood of the Brambles

for the children at school, but the bigger lads were ashamed of it.

Shamus shouted "Quick march!" We tramped away through the thickets. There was no noise but the crunching of the bracken and twigs, and the thud of the steady feet on the grass. The torches were in my eyes, and the flames were hot on my cheeks.

When we were clear of the black wood, and were out upon the high road, the rebels began to gossip at once. My neighbours chatted, but Jim gabbled to himself and his torch: he never looked for attention, and was afraid a listener would hold him to ridicule. So I listened to Dinny the Piper, but was heavy and dazed, and remember very little he said. I know he was condescending, and sorry for my foolish mistakes; and pointed out that his father, with only the advantage of blindness, was successful; while I, with a more envied inheritance, was on my way to be killed. Then, speaking of himself, he informed me no one had as numerous friends, for there were thousands of houses where he was sure of a welcome, and where the people would brighten, and the dogs would rejoice and scurry barking to meet him, when he played at the door. What could be more

With the Babes of the Wood

delightful, he said, than to wander away across the hills, and to know that wherever he went there would be singing and dancing, and the barefooted boys would go running to the farms in the fields and summon the folk to put their worries aside and to be glad till the dawn? When he began playing his pipes in the woody boreen, by the white wall of the thatched house in the meadows, or on the rugged side, as he strolled down to the village and smelt the smoke of the turf about the doors of the cabins, the girls would be delighted; and when they heard him going and leaving an echo of music, their soft eyes would be darkened, and pretty faces would be longing and doleful. This was his doing, for Providence had given him nothing but his looks; and his music helped him to win the love and renown.

Because I was drowsy, I determined to prove I was wideawake; and so I suggested he should be playing to cheer his comrades with disconsolate tunes. I said it would be glorious to pipe above the thunder of battle, and to feel that one's neighbours would be ready to charge upon the cannon, or anywhere else, to get away from the music. But he said it was better to keep his tunes for the happy times, and not run a danger of spoil-

The Wood of the Brambles

ing them by a bitter remembrance. He spoke glibly, with the way of a man who often changes his hearers; and he had a crop of set phrases, as if he repeated any sentence he liked. "The road lengthens when the feet lag," was one of his phrases; another was, "A sore heel and a sore heart are tiring companions." My mind has let go of his other sayings; but these struck home to me then. Dinny was so gay that I saw he must be often in gloom. I daresay he trudged many a sad mile on his rounds, and the peasants had seldom more longing to be cheered than the Piper.

So we came to Enniscorthy at last, and the town was afoot with many lights in the windows. We went through a street of ruins, and then between more fortunate houses, and halted before Nuzum's Hotel, a rough inn beside the bridge on the Slaney. The shops were open, but seemed to be selling nothing but drink. Many of the windows were broken since the day of the battle. The people were about on the footpaths and the banks of the river, to see the rebels go by. The place was full of voices, and rang with the cheering of the mob, and the shouts of the stragglers who called the names of their parishes to find their companions, and the

With the Babes of the Wood

singing of the men on the march ; for all the mustering peasants, as soon as they reached the skirts of the town, struck up ballads, and so there were many different songs keeping Enniscorthy awake. The men behind me were chanting "Wake up, my poor Croppies : you're long enough down," and this was a favourite, for it was echoed again by a troop along the road by the Duffry Gate on the hill where the cattle were driven against the guns of the yeomen. Where I was standing between the Inn and the bridge, I had a view of the steeper side of the town and the lights of the coming troop and the sombre hulk of the Castle. So we paused for a time, and I stood facing the people : but the glare of the torches was too keen to allow me to make much of the throng. At first I had only seen the lights on the hill ; but when I knew the darkness before me was crowded, I was glad my appearance was so absurd that I was fully disguised. So I tried to appear worthy to stand between Dinny and the Fool, and regretted I was not armed with a pike.

Shamus had disappeared in the courtyard. Now he came out, on a big horse that he managed with distrust as if he thought it was English. The animal plodded on, as if it was

The Wood of the Brambles

relieved to be carrying Shamus instead of pulling a cart.

"There's a place for you yonder," he said, pointing to a cart that was coming.

"On the cart with the pigs?" said I.

"You can follow them on foot, if you like," he said.

"Dead pigs would be pleasant companions, if you wanted a meal," said Dinny.

"Dead or alive, I am fond of them," said Shamus, "although there's a deal of human nature in pigs."

The cart was a rough platform on wheels; and had no sides, and was laden with the bodies of pigs. It was drawn by a donkey that was led by a boy. A place was free at the back, and I got on it at once. The cart was so low that, as I sat with my back to the donkey, my feet were almost touching the ground. I had often seen the girls sitting so, as they arrived at the chapel in the village on Sundays; but most of them had straw in their carts to increase the comfort, and some of the rich had a mattress.

"Forward!" Shamus cried, as his horse went on of its own accord; and we followed on the bank of the river. The troops I had seen on the hill were coming over the bridge. Theophilus

With the Babes of the Wood

Considine led them in a glare of the torches. He flourished his plumed hat, as the mob cheered ; and he saluted a window at the top of the inn. Looking up at the window, I saw Agatha there. I had a mind to shout to her, "Here I am ! Look at me on the cart with the pigs." But the cart was turning a corner, and the brightness was hidden. I was all alone with the rebels. In that moment of bitterness, I had no liking for Agatha or for anyone else. I wanted to go away by myself. "If I could only get rid of the thought of all these sickening people !" I exclaimed in my heart.

The shaken light of the torches struck the rebels, and then it smeared them with shadows. The faces were familiar and altered, as they had seemed in the glade on the night I was taken, and as the village appeared at sunrise on the day I returned. The simple faces of boys were hardened and resolute. Many were very sad and foreboding. There was some gossip at first, as we were going beside Vinegar Hill ; and then, as we struck over the mountain-moors, there was silence.

Then I huddled on the cart, as a child curls in a cold bed in the winter. I laid my head on a pig ; and I thought there was never so delightful

The Wood of the Brambles

a pillow. "Here I am like a prodigal," I said to myself, "but uncheered by the soothing memory of old dissipation, or any sort of a husk." Anyway, the smell of the pigs was pleasanter in death than in life. And I had grown sick of the firry smell of the torches. Then I wondered whether people who grew very old had a feeling of innocence and peace as they sank in their second childhood ; for now I was so tire that I thought I was a schoolboy again.

I thought about my going to school. I remembered I landed at Holyhead in the night, and lay alone in the coach, and started at the glimmer of dawn, and peered out of the window, saying in my heart, "This is England !" with a thrill of adventure ; and rubbed the mist from the pane, and saw a gray field and black hedges and clustering sheep, and a wizened lamb squaling like a baby sick of a fever ; and that deplorable wail kept in my ears, and mingled with the crack of the whip, and the clatter on the stones, and the singing of the men on the roof, who were shouting "The Three Jews," and it chimed with the chorus of "Isa-isa-ac-ac-ac," till I was full of sadness and sure my journey was to end in misfortune ; though I said to myself the little beast was afflicted because it was not used

With the Babes of the Wood

to the cold, and it would bound in the sun with awkward gladness, as if it was dancing with fairies visible to its innocent eyes, while its elders would watch stolidly, as if they had faint memories of a wonderful music. Then I fell asleep, and I dreamt I was in a coach, and Sir Malachi and Sir Tim and Theophilus were singing "The Three Jews" on the roof; and the guard and the driver had a share in the chorus; and when we stopped at a turnpike or a pot-house, the men who came out, with the flash of lanterns, took up a part in the melody.

Then I dreamt I was in a class at St Omers, in a library crammed with clerical students, and Sir Malachi sat teaching in a gown and biretta. He shouted, "Everyone will oblige, in his turn, with a bawdy story or a dissolute song," and all his hearers were terrified. Aghast at such a lesson, I woke and found myself in the thick of a camp.

The camp was lit and astir, and lay along the side of a hill. Bonfires were aflame with a multitude of rebels around them. A priest was saying Mass at an altar by a fire on my left; and a big peasant was lifting a torch, to throw a light on the book. The candles on the altar were dim in the smoky flush of the torch. Men were kneeling round, in the dark.

The Wood of the Brambles

By the foot of the hill, there was a glitter of fires along the ramparts of Ross. "Quick now," said Shamus. I turned, and saw him beside me. "This way," he said, and we went up under branches. The darkness was a rest to my eyes.

"The soldiers are awake in the town," I said.

"They are under arms, for they see the lights on the hill," said he.

"Are they many?"

"Fourteen hundred at least.

"And your fellows?"

"Are twelve thousand or so."

"And your leaders?"

"Have been makin' a night of it. Listen, you can hear them in council."

I heard a song in the trees. There were shrubberies at the edge of the path; and I thought it was a drive, for it curved as if it was designed to appear imposing and long. Passing on by the trees, we were in front of the house. The gravel was lit up by the windows. The air was cold; and I thought the shadows were thin, as if the dawn had whitened the sea. But still the mountains were black. Crossing to the steps, I looked in at the window, and saw the leaders at wine, in a room lit with a profusion of candles. The wide door was ajar, and there was

With the Babes of the Wood

no servant about, as I entered the hall, and hung my hat on a peg. I went to the room, and just as I was turning the handle, singers shouted inside—

“ Rollicum rorum, tollol lorum,
Rollicum rorum, tollol lay.”

Chapter XI

The Fighting at Ross

"LISTEN, and I'll read you the summons," said Harvey, standing up with a paper, as I opened the door. Harvey was a wizened and feeble little man, with a pocked face, and a wide mouth, and dull hair that was untidily fastened. Silver epaulettes on a dark coat were the only signs of his rank. Father Roche was beside him on his left, and was lolling with a humorous laziness. Mat Furlong of Raheen, a light-hearted fellow with a kind and familiar manner, a friend of Macnamara's and Tony's, was sitting by Roche.

Harvey began reading the summons, in an eager and shrill voice, as he held the paper close to his eyes. "Sir, as a friend of humanity——"

"The very reason I came," said I, as I stepped into the room.

He started and peered at me.

"Go away, my good man. That's enough now. Be off," he said, pettishly. "You have

The Fighting at Ross

no right to come begging from a Council of War."

Roche shouted a laugh. Harvey winced away from his side: but Furlong took up the laughing at once.

"Dear! dear!" cried Roche, gasping with his hands on his ribs. "I never saw any one so outrageously funny."

"It is no laughing matter," I said testily. "I have come to appeal from your Tribunal."

"Ah, get away with your tribunals, my dear!" said Roche, coming to meet me, and taking me by the hand. "This is my dear friend, Sir Dominick Davern," he went on to the others. His big hand was flabby and warm.

"Davern!" cried Harvey, blinking and craning his long neck as he peered at me. "Lord! man, what a state you are in!"

"Thanks to your army, sir!" I said with severity. Roche began to chuckle and shake.

"My dearest friend, you are a credit to Ireland. Hopping down the lane with Dromeen, and passing off as a cripple! I never thought you had any humour at all!" he said.

"But what brings you here?" said Harvey, peevishly.

The Wood of the Brambles

"I do," said Shamus, coming in ; and at the sound of that deep voice, the faces were long.

"Is that you, Captain Harragan?" said Roche.

"It is," said Shamus.

"And is he taken again?"

"He is," said Shamus.

"Dear, dear ! What an unfortunate fellow ! " said Roche.

"An' he wants to appeal," said Shamus.

"Then he has no right to appeal," said Harvey, fretfully. "We have enough to do to restrain our own fellows, without interfering with others."

"Well, we must go into the business," said Roche reluctantly. "Captain, you will join us at table?"

"Not now," said Shamus heavily, with a tone of reproof.

"I must finish reading the summons," said Harvey.

"I'll look in again later," said Shamus, striding out of the room.

"A dangerous man," said Roche ; and the others stirred with relief, and lounged again in their chairs.

"Hangs his men as if they were flies, if they disobey him," said Furlong.

The Fighting at Ross

“And they like him the more. But come, my dear Davern, you will help us to empty a few more of the bottles,” said Roche, pushing me down into a chair with his heavy hand on my shoulder. Harvey began reading again, nervously, and jumbling his words.

“SIR,—As a friend to humanity, I request you will surrender the town of Ross to the Wexford forces now assembled against that town; your resistance will but provoke rapine and plunder, to the ruin of the most innocent. Flushed with victory, the Wexford forces, now innumerable and irresistible, will not be controlled if they meet with resistance. To prevent, therefore, the total ruin of all property in the town, I urge you to a speedy surrender, which you will be forced to in a few hours, with loss and bloodshed, as you are surrounded on all sides. Your answer is required in four hours. Mr Furlong carries this letter, and will bring the answer.

I am, Sir,

BEAUCHAMP BAGENAL HARVEY,
General Commanding, &c.,
Camp at Corbet Hill.”

“Half-past Three o'clock morning,
June 5th, 1798.”

The Wood of the Brambles

"Short and sweet," said Furlong.

"And the answer will be bitter and brief," said Roche.

"Not if you draw Johnson aside, and give him our message—that we want to submit, and put an end to the Rising on any rational terms," said Harvey.

"Well, Mat, it will need your courage to face Johnson alone, because he is afflicted with eloquence," said Roche.

"And afflicts his neighbours in turn," said Harvey.

"Ah! I disagree with you there: the old man is a fine fellow," said Roche. "It is only proper that his language is fine."

"I'll slip in a word when he pauses," said Furlong.

"Mind, and be quick then," said Roche.

"I am not sure, even now, that it is right to send you into this danger," said Harvey.

"Ah, nonsense!" said Furlong.

"It would be different, if we thought they would mind the flag of truce," Harvey went on.

"That's the rub!" said Roche, gloomily. "Because we are rebels, they deny we are soldiers."

"I'll put my handkerchief on the point of a

The Fighting at Ross

pike," said Furlong. "I am sure it must fill the sentries with awe."

"I wish I could make up my mind," said Harvey. "I shall leave it to you. Go, if you think fit: after all, it will be light before you get to the town."

"Davern, you are not drinking," said Roche. "Let me fill your plate and your glass."

"I am waiting to know your answer," I said.

"Answer?" said Roche.

"To my appeal," I went on.

"Do you think we are murderers?" cried Harvey, with fierceness.

"Ah, where is your sense now?" said Roche. "Fill your glass like a Christian. Then maybe we will quarrel in comfort."

"Then," I said, with a wonderful relief, "you must let me begin with a wash."

"Brosna!" shouted Roche.

"Is that fellow drilling the troops, instead of waiting at table?" said Harvey, indignantly.

"Here he comes now," said Furlong.

"Show Sir Dominick Davern up to a room," said Roche.

"I will, your Honour," said Brosna. "This way if you please, your Honour," he said, and

The Wood of the Brambles

led me up with respect, and opened a little room in the front, and stood aside as I passed.

The room was small, and ill-furnished; and a patch of brown paper was on a pane of the window. There was no carpet, and the basin was cracked, and the jug wanted a handle. I felt at home in a minute; and after all, I reflected as I washed, there is some good in disorder. One is at ease when there is nothing to spoil. And where is the harm of a little patch on the window? Sure it is a token of thriftiness. An Englishman would try and look through the paper, and then complain he could not see through the glass.

The water was so black as I washed, that I shuddered; and the cleaner I grew, the more I was ashamed of my clothes. I stroked my chin, and reflected it was a couple of days since I had handled a razor. There was no looking-glass, but still I made shift to tie my hair with a string.

Hearing hoofs on the gravel, I looked out of the window, and saw Furlong ride off. He had a white handkerchief on the point of his pike, and waved it to the others exultingly: his gold epaulettes glittered in the gleam of the window. The day had grown, and the sky was clear with

The Fighting at Ross

the promise of a beautiful morning. I blew out the candle, and went down; and the draught from the door was very chill on the stairs. Brosna was standing out on the steps.

The leaders had gone away from the table. Harvey and Roche were left alone at the window. They had opened it, and the draught had put out the candles, and the daylight was weak. Harvey was leaning his right elbow against the shutter: and Roche was very stalwart beside him. Harvey was speaking low. "I am certain Johnson will be ready to treat."

"The risk is from the sentries," said Roche in a little voice, as if he was listening as he spoke. "We were wrong to send the lad into danger. I wish I had done the errand myself."

"They say he is adored in the camp," said Harvey.

"If harm came to him, nothing could keep the men from attacking the soldiers at once," said Roche.

"That would ruin us utterly. The Gate is strong, though the other quarters are open."

"If our men fall on, we will never get them in hand," said Roche.

The Wood of the Brambles

Neither heard me come in. "Well, and what will you do with me?" I said.

"Confound you, sir. What do you mean by coming on me so suddenly?" cried Harvey, peering up at me.

"I had no other way to come," I replied.

"Hush!" said Roche, putting up his hand to keep silence.

I held my breath with the others. The room was so dim that all the country was clearer. I saw the houses of Ross, and the river like a shadow between them. The fires were pale on the ramparts and the slope of the hill. There was not a sound, but a chirping of sparrows in the eaves overhead, and a murmur in the camp, like the rustle of a river on stones.

Then there was a noise in the silence, like the crack of a whip.

"Oh, my God!" cried Harvey, under his breath, as if he was stabbed.

"A shot!" said Roche, whispering. "Hush!"

There was a wailing at the foot of the hill.

"God have mercy on his soul," whispered Roche, crossing himself and bowing his head.

The wailing was the keen of the peasants; and at first it was faint, and then it grew in the camp. There was a patter of shots; and then

The Fighting at Ross

—all of a sudden—shouting, and a hammering fire, quickening into volleys ; and then the crash of a cannon.

“It is all over,” said Harvey, clutching Roche’s sleeve. “They can never capture the Gate.”

“Quick !” said Roche loudly. “If we swing the rest of our men upon the sides of the town——”

“They will not obey you,” said Harvey.

“We can try it,” said Roche.

“Merciful God !” said Harvey, putting his hands up to his face, as Roche hurried out. “Why did I meddle in this horrible business ?”

There was smoke in the trees, and flashes on the tower at the Gate. Steel blinked on the bridge, and on the sides of the river. Drums stuttered, and the bugles were blowing.

Harvey turned, and leapt back.

“What are you doing here ?” he cried angrily.

“Waiting for you,” I said.

“You are enough to make an angel blaspheme !” he said, choking with anger. “Have I no affairs but your folly ? Wasn’t it enough that you blundered into danger, and looked to me to protect you ? Must you plague me in a

The Wood of the Brambles

moment like this, and moon about like a nightmare?"

"Sir," I said angrily, "Nightmare is not a name that I can let pass without notice. You insult me while you hold me a prisoner——"

"Brosna!" he shouted shrilly, as he went to the door.

"Your Honour?" said Brosna.

"That fellow insists he is a prisoner. Put him under lock and key then, at once."

"Where, your Honour?"

"Anywhere, as long as you keep him there."

"Sir!" I cried, following Harvey.

"Quiet now, prisoner," said Brosna, blocking the door.

"Out of the way!" I cried, shoving him from the rug. "Sir!" I cried again angrily, as I was crossing the hall.

Harvey was on the steps, with a throng of rebels about him. Dark Jacob was leading them. I stood still for a moment.

"Where am I to go?" I said peacefully, returning to Brosna.

"This way, prisoner," he said; and marched up the stairs, going again to the little room on the front.

"In there with you now," he said; and—as I

The Fighting at Ross

went in—slamming the door, he turned the key in the lock.

I sat down on the bed, and stared stupidly at the opposite wall. “What a fool I am!” I said to myself, “why did I miss the chance of a supper? There was a pie on the table.”

The noise of the fighting was lessened, for the window was shut. The firing was like the sound when the servants beat a carpet with sticks. I thought of the rare times when the servants would dust the carpets at Davernmore and would thrash them on the beds of the garden as cheerily as if they were enemies. Remembering I was aching for sleep, and thinking no one would mind me till the battle was done, I took off my coat and dusty shoes, and lay down to forget my troubles and appetite.

When I woke from a dream of dining with aldermen and making them full of envy, I felt eager for breakfast. “Neligan is lagging to-day,” I thought. “I am sure it is time to get up, and rashers and eggs and potato-cakes will do very well as a beginning for breakfast, with a chop or so after.” I looked at my watch, and found it

The Wood of the Brambles

pointing to ten. "Neligan must go back to the stables," I said. "I don't believe he will call me for breakfast till the dinner is cold. There he is hammering a seat in the garden, spoiling a job that should be left to the carpenter. When it is his duty to feed the horses, he will call me in time." Then I heard the boom of a cannon. I was wideawake in a moment. I shrank as I took my dirty coat from the chair. Since my watch was not going, I had to guess at the time: it was the afternoon, for the trees were throwing lengthening shadows. The smoke was thin above the Three-Bullet Gate: and a red strip was on the top of the tower. The rattle of the firing was faint. There was a bar of smoke on the bridge and clouds along the quays; so the rebels were in Ross, and the troops were driven back to the river.

Trying the door, I found the lock was broken and useless. "I might have known it," I said, and went downstairs, and I saw the table untouched. There was plenty of roast chicken, and grilled bones; and the mulled wine in the silver and pewter jugs would be cheering even though it was cold. "It is a good world, after all," I thought, as I sat down at the table, and assaulted a chicken.

The Fighting at Ross

"This is pleasanter than attacking the town," I said, as I gazed thoughtfully at the wreck of the bird.

"Hungry again?" said Shamus, looking in at the window. He was leaning his elbows on the sill as he looked at me.

"And I will be to-morrow," I said. "And if you take my advice, you'll lend a hand to demolish the remains of the supper."

The meal had left me full of philosophy.

"I thought you had finished," he said.

"I'll stretch a point, to keep you in countenance."

"You'll have to stretch several points if you swallow much more," he said. "I have dined."

"Is that so?" said I; "I thought you were too busy with fighting."

"The fightin' is no business of mine," he said. "Perhaps you think I am mad——"

"I never said so," I broke in.

"To-day's fightin' is a madness beyond me."

"And the Babes of the Wood?"

"Are actin' up to their name, and sittin' under the trees, like innocent children, an' are playin' 'Spoil Five.'"

"But what would become of the Rising, if

The Wood of the Brambles

many should keep aloof when an attack is a blunder?"

"Many is it? Thousands went home this mornin' when the fightin' began. 'The battle is over,' said they, 'we never can get in at the Gate,' so they started early to be away from the crowd."

"But your fellows are in?" I said.

"With an incredible loss. It took a couple of hours."

"And you looked on from a distance?"

"Ah! I've been for a stroll in the town. It is worth seein', if you have time on your hands. But it is as well to be brisk: there are soldiers on the top o' the tower."

"Did you go far?" I said.

"To the other end of the bridge. The boys are there; an' the soldiers are doin' their best to come back, an' old General Johnson is ridin' at the head of them, callin' them his brothers, an' cursin' them. 'Brothers! the bullet is not moulded,' says he, 'that can kill General Johnson!' They don't mind that in the least, as long as the bullets to kill them are around."

"Warm work, I suppose," said I.

"There have been a number of accidents. Mind you look at the old man, in the front of

The Fighting at Ross

the gate, lyin' on a heap of the dead. He was a totterin' old fellow, an' knelt in the thick of the rush by the Gate, holdin' a Crucifix for the others to kiss. It was a long time he was there, with the bullets about him like an angry swarm o' the bees. An' in Brogue-makers Lane you'll see a bundle o' poor boys that were roasted: they were defendin' a house, an' it was fired by the yeomen."

"I doubt whether I have time to go in," I said. "Yet maybe I would find Mrs Regan."

"Sir Malachi's housekeeper? You won't have another chance, for the soldiers will be back before long. The boys are drinkin' like sharks, except a few on the bridge."

"And where are the leaders?"

"The boys have done the fightin' without them, and won't heed them at all."

"That looks bad," I said, getting up from the table. "Well, am I your prisoner now?"

"I have done with you."

"You are willing to help me?"

"I think you ought to be killed."

"But you feel it is no business of yours?"

"I gave you up to the General."

"The General gave me over to Brosna."

"Who is down on the bridge."

The Wood of the Brambles

"Then I think I shall start," I said.

"That is all you will do," he said. "The countryside is full o' the boys that are retreatin' already: when they are in the dumps, they are dangerous."

"Wait and I'll come out," I said, turning.

So I took my hat in the hall, and went and stood on the doorstep. I felt I owned the house and the land.

"Dark Jacob was here," he said.

"Yes, I saw him," said I.

"An' he was lookin' for you. I told him you were at breakfast with Harvey. 'It is a scandal,' said he. 'I'll be a traitor myself: then maybe they will ask me to breakfast.'"

"And where is he now?"

"In the town. He was fightin' like a man in the Gate; but he has kept from the bridge. Dark men are afraid of a river."

"And you?"

"I am goin' back to the wood."

"With the Babes?"

"Surely, an' I think it is time; an' the Babes will be excited at cards. Jim was robbin' them all, an' just as satisfied with himself as an angel."

"And why shouldn't I go with you?"

"You might, if you enlist as a Babe."

The Fighting at Ross

"A Babe?" I said, grinning. "I'll enlist with you as an infant in arms."

"Between you and me, I came up here to give you the chance."

"Let us go then," I said.

A rebel ran after us as we got to the trees.

"What do you want?" said Shamus.

"You are to go to the General," said the rebel.

"I am to go to General Harvey?" I said.

"He is on the hill over there," said he.

"I fancy you are under a curse," said Shamus.

"But you can wait?"

"A few minutes. We ought to be away on the road," he said.

"I shall catch you up, if I can."

So I followed the rebel, across the lawn and a shady wood, to a barren mound on the right. Harvey was there on a big horse, and was gazing through a glass at the town: a knot of rebels were standing a little distance behind him, like the staff of a general. He pretended not to see I was coming; and told a rebel to carry an order to the men on the bridge. I meant to show him I would not submit to be called a nightmare; but now as I saw him I forgot my resentment. His hand shook, as he tried to steady the

The Wood of the Brambles

glass : and he seemed to be putting a bold front on despair. He looked very small on the big horse ; and his face was haggard and set.

“Is that you, Davern?” he said, with a poor attempt to be jaunty ; and then with a glance over his right shoulder at the rebels to make sure they were out of earshot, “I saw you coming out on the steps. I had forgotten you, because I was busy with the cares of a General. I am sorry I was rude in the house : I was not myself at the moment.”

“I was in the wrong, and had no business to trouble you.”

“Under the Galway code of the duel, you have a right to a meeting. I am wrong to apologise until you have fired. But when I called you a nightmare, I only meant to express an opinion without a thought of insulting you.”

“I waive my rights, sir,” I said.

“I would be the last to allow it : but it is a time to be friendly.” Then he whispered, “And of course you are free. Here is a pass ; but only use it in need : for half of the men in my army would pike me for giving it. Ah ! you are a lucky man, Davern.”

“Do I look fortunate?”

“You are not at the head of a mob.”

The Fighting at Ross

"I'll be at the feet of a mob, unless I am careful."

"Man, it is only a question whether I'll be slaughtered by my friends or my enemies. I am leading with a pike at my back. I was mad when I took sides with the rebels. The only consolation is, I would have been hanged anyway."

"Well, that is a comfort," I said.

"Who can make anything of the peasants? The more you know them, the less you understand them at all. They welcomed me in a craze of delight, and wanted to kill me at the end of the week."

"Why?"

"I was doing nothing."

"Perhaps that was the reason."

"They forget me when the fighting begins. They stormed the Gate in sheer anger, while half the town was unguarded: and thousands marched away without fighting. And the peasants, in the countryside yonder, are ploughing their fields, and driving their pigs, and trudging beside their donkeys, without a look at the battle, because it is in a different county. Just look at them, will you?" he said, as if I could not believe him.

Taking the glass, I saw a peasant at work on

The Wood of the Brambles

a slope on the other side of the river: he was shoving a plough, as if the land was at peace: his bent body was black on the chocolate tint of the earth.

"They would be fighting, if their county had risen. They are making a show of quietness, for fear of the troops," I said, giving him the glass, and then he peered at the bridge.

I read the note he had handed me. "The bearer is one of the army of Freedom, and on an errand of mine: let him pass unmolested. B. B. Harvey."

"I was going with Harragan, but now I am afraid he is gone," I said.

"So?"

"I shall go into the town."

"Into Ross?" he said.

"Mrs Regan, my grandfather's housekeeper, lives on the Quay. She will provide me with clothes: then I can get over the river."

"To the soldiers?"

"To Johnson."

"He will save you the trouble by coming back."

"All the better."

"Then you are in no need of the pass?" he said, brightening.

The Fighting at Ross

"I might want it on the way to the Quay. But if you would rather tear it——"

"Sir," he said angrily, "I wrote it: do you think me a coward?"

The voices of the rebels were raised. We turned quickly, and saw they were surrounding a messenger.

"I'll see what he says," he said, pulling his horse round to the right. I stayed where I was, as he joined the rebels, who all turned to him speaking. I caught the name "Scullabogue."

"Merciful God!" he cried, in a shrill voice of despair, "this is all that was needed to destroy us for ever. All the prisoners burnt? Some of them were as innocent people as ever were born!"

He set spurs to his horse, and rode among the trees on the right. The rebels ran after him and left me alone. If the rebels had burnt the barn full of prisoners at Scullabogue, they would hardly be too gentle with me. I hastened through the wood and across the lawn to the drive; but there was no one about, and all the camp was abandoned. There was no longer any noise of the firing. The smoke about the bridge, and above the burning houses, appeared the only signs of the battle. There was a lull in the fighting,

The Wood of the Brambles

or perhaps it was over. So I went down the road into Ross.

Down in that road hollowed on the front of the hill, the weedy banks were like walls. The leaves of the nettles had a burden of dust. The air was smoky, with a tang of the powder. A wind was scooping the dust, and swilling the road with it.

Then, at a turn, I came on a man dead in the road. He sprawled prone, as if he was attempting to swim: he had a sleeved waistcoat and corduroy breeches, and blood was on the soles of his shoes. I could see the side of his face: and I stood staring a minute. Perhaps, I thought, Furlong had as still and contented a look while the wailing and the cry for revenge rose on the hill.

I took up his pike, and went on to another curve of the way. The sun struck on my face, as if a stream of the light was in the trough of the road. In that intolerable light I could see nothing for a moment, and then the Gate began to loom from the glitter. The dead were all about, and the blood was blackened and crisp.

The Fighting at Ross

The gate was broken, and lolled against the foot of the tower.

Picking my way, without turning for the cries of the wounded, I went into the town. A street of cabins was wrecked along the side of the hill; and many bodies were there. In that ruinous street, the smoke was heavy because the cabins were smouldering. I heard laughing and songs, and coming to a street where the houses were safe, I saw the rebels at dinner. They had borrowed tables and chairs, and were at ease in the sun. The excitement of that desperate morning and the heat of the day had lent a keener temptation and a force to the drink: and many were asleep in the gutters and by the walls of the houses. There was a fellow in the road, and he lay with his hands under his head, and smiled as a baby laughs at a toy dangled above it. I thought his face was familiar. Some of the men shouted to me to join them, and said it was a great day for Ireland, and the battle was done. But I passed on; and they were too contented to mind. All were as exulting, as if the hopes of their lives were true and their troubles were forsaken for ever.

So I came to the narrow street where the hill shelves suddenly to the shore of the water. The

The Wood of the Brambles

houses were high, with many gables, and bulged and bowed overhead; and the river shone underneath. On that steeper way, I reflected it was time to discover Mrs Regan's address: but it was hard, because the road was forsaken, and the shutters were up. Because my ears had been full of the singing and the shouts of the rebels, I had entered the street before I noticed that firing had begun on the bridge.

The blare of a bugle and the whirring and the throbbing of drums startled my quietness. A clamour arose beyond the houses on the right, and it grew as a gust springs in a moment. Men rushed into the foot of the street, and the dim passage was crammed with rebels crazy with terror. I stood aghast, and I saw the lines of the plumed helmets and red coats of the soldiers. Then the rebels were on me: I dropped my pike, and I turned. Though I ran as if that line of the red plunging bayonets was swinging in reach of me, the gasping and white rebels outstripped me. It seems to me now I only fled a few yards before I was breathless; yet I had got over the slippery cobbles of the narrower street. I remember striding across the drunken man in the road. The others sprang to their feet, and flung their weapons away, and fled before us,

The Fighting at Ross

and some staggered and fell. I plunged into a crush of men fighting to get out of the Gate. My mind winces at the thought of that struggle. I writhed as if I was strangling: I thought we were not moving at all. Above the din I could hear shrieking and the stabbing of bayonets. Suddenly I was free, and I floundered. Rebels were underfoot and before me as I ran; and the bullets were whizzing, and the men going down. There seemed to be no end to those lofty banks, till at last I saw a hedge and made for it, reeling and half-blind, as a shout rose upon the right, and dragoons swung down on us with a swoop like a sickle. They charged along the road by the camp; and I was full in their path, and not a couple of yards from the foremost, and had barely the time to fling myself in the ditch by the hedge. I fell as if I was struck, and saw only the red steel in the air. Afterwards I remembered the eyes of the horses, and the choked faces of the men, and how some stood in their stirrups, and panted as they were slashing, and how the light rushed along the hilts of the sabres. The cursing, and the thud of the hoofs, the hacking, and the swish of the sabres came to me afterwards; but then I could only mind the threatening steel. A man fell on me, and I thought I was killed.

The Wood of the Brambles

lay with my eyes closed ; and his blood was warm on my neck. The noise passed : and I sprang up, and I saw the backs of the horsemen. The sword of the last was like a stripe on his jacket as he hewed a man down. I leapt at the big hedge ; and I tore the hawthorn and the brambles asunder, and broke into a field. There the flying rebels were fewer, and one of them had the dress of a yeoman. Then I heard the shout of a bugle. It was on my left, and I thought the dragoons were coming back on the grass. I was unable to stir : my knees gave, and I felt as if there was a knife in my ribs. The man in the yeoman's uniform tossed his hands above him, and fell, as if he had been one of the walls of Jericho, and I saw it was Brosna. I would have dropped, if I had seen the dragoons. I stood deafened by that call and the hammering on a drum at the Gate. Even now I can hardly believe those sounds were not greater than in a battle of men. Then they lessened ; and the bugle was blowing the recall, and the drum was buzzing and throbbing like a wasp in a window.

Chapter XII

With a broken Army

"I DOUBT whether Nature designed me for an eminent soldier," I was thinking, as I tramped in the dust. When the pursuit was over, the rebels had huddled together as quickly as they scattered apart when they were running for life; and I hid at once in the crowd. There was no one in command, but they fell into ranks, and made off at a steady pace to the east: and I was glad to be with them, for they were going to Carrickbyrne, while another mass of the rebels was marching to the camp on Slievekeilter. If I could get to my own land and my clothes, and spend an hour in a bath, I thought I might succeed in regaining my manhood and retrieving the courage to look the world in the face. My neighbours were bent by a heavy burden of shame: we were four abreast; and I trudged between Brosna and a lumbering lad, who slouched feebly as if he was as old as the hills.

The Wood of the Brambles

There was not a word in the ranks : and our pace slackened ; and the marching was long.

We came to Carrickbyrne, and we clambered up the slope of the hill. Rebels, who had gone in the morning, were encamped on the side, and were about on the turf, as if they were past caring for anything. When the marching began, I had some idea of slipping away from the others and lying in a field by myself, for, though the men were too downcast to notice anyone yet, they might be fierce in the morning. But now I flung myself down upon the top of the hill. There was never a more silent encampment.

Brosna came toiling up the slope, with his arms full of bracken and furze. When he saw me, he cast his burden down at my side, saying, "It will be cold afther dark."

"That will make a short fire," I said.

"I went a long way to find it. All the food in the neighbourhood is eaten," he said, lying down on the other side of the heap.

"Then we have a pleasant look-out," said I.

"We thought to be snug inside the houses of Ross : an' manny are in the river," he said. "The soldiers are flingin' the dead into the water, to have the ways clear if we go back to the fight."

With a broken Army

"What lost you the day?" I said.

"I hardly know it," said he. "The soldiers were reelin' back, but the General dashed out in front o' them shoutin', 'The flag of England is aloft on the Gate! Brothers, let us fight to the flag! Damned scounthrels!' he cries over his shoulder at them, wavin' his sword. 'Do you want to desert your general? Irishmen, do you abandon your counthryman?' An' with that, they rushed, an' we broke, an' sthaggered back on the Quay. They came cheerin', an' chargin' across the bridge; an' the cannon clanked on the wood. We were dhriven, like the dust by the wind."

"You drove me, in your turn," said I.

"I saw you sthandin', with your pike, in the road, as if you had a vision o' Hell. An' I saw my brother Joe on his back in the sthreet with his hands unther his head. 'Run,' says I, pullin' him, but he laughed; an' I heard him shriek in a minute: an' I looked back, an' he was squirmin' an' kickin' as a bayonet pinned him."

"Was that your brother?" said I.

"An' a decent kind lad."

"I suppose now, Misther Brosna," a big and quiet fellow began, beside me, "you never happened to see my father to-day?"

"The old man?" said Brosna. "He was in a

The Wood of the Brambles

ditch by the road: an', if it was himself, he is there."

"Is that so?" said the other, looking down at us gravely, with his hands in his pockets. "It is as well; for he was terrible old. He had no call to make believe to be fightin'."

"A true word, Misther Leahy," said Brosna. "God pity the folk that only want to be quiet."

"My brother Joe was never good at the fightin'," he said, as if he talked to himself, as the other went away. "He was never cross with a mouse. He was happy if he sat in the sun, like an angel, an' did nothin' at all. The water will be chilly to-night. When we were boys at Enniscorthy beyond, and wore petticoats, the half of our days was spent in the river. We paddled where the water was thin on the round stones, an' it used to lap at our knees. An' if we slipped or stood in a hole, the petticoats would be dhraggled, an' then the old man would be wild, for he bade us keep away from the water. We used to grope unther the soft banks for the slippery trout; an' catch weeny fishes, an' put them in bottles, an' make believe they were salmon."

Though I was glum, I could hardly forbear smiling to think of Brosna paddling in petticoats.

With a broken Army

It was now dusk, and the fires were being lit, and they sparkled and blazed because the fuel was dry. All around us they shone: and each had its circle of lit shadowy faces. Lights began to glimmer in Ross, moving in a row on the hill. Fires were throbbing on Slievekeilter, in front of us.

Brosna lit the furze, and it crackled into flames in a moment. He looked very sad in that sudden light, and his clothes were a mockery of his former magnificence. As the glow struck him, he sat up and tried to be cheerful.

"It is a drawback of these clothes," he said, as if he answered my eyes, "that the pockets are little. An' that is one of the reasons I was wantin' to find someone to change clothes with me now. But no one would do it: yet they are undeniably handsome."

"And little the worse for wear after all, considering how much they went through," said I.

"The hedge I went through has left a mark here and there," he said, ruefully.

"It has left a bit of cloth here and there," I said, but he went on without noticing.

"It is a shame to have the hedges so thick, in a country where you never can tell how soon you may be runnin' for life."

The Wood of the Brambles

"I feel as if I had been running for life, for the greater part of a week."

"It is my belief I have swallowed a cart-load of dust. If old Tottenham, the landlord of Ross, knew how much I have taken, he'd be askin' for rent. I have made up my mind that I'll retire from the army," he said.

"And so you wish to part with the uniform?"

"And maybe I'll do it to-morrow, when the boys have had the time to get hopeful. Jim the Fool would jump at the offer. But Shamus has gone back to the wood."

"And Harvey?"

"Is beyond on the left."

"In the camp?"

"He is quiet, for the fellows are sayin' he ought to be killed for losin' the battle. Dark Jacob is leadin' them: he looks for promotion. He says Harvey asked all the prisoners of the Tribunal to breakfast: an' he is mad against you, for hoppin', and shoutin' you were a cripple at the top of your voice. He says it is hard to believe Sir Malachi would ever have done it."

"I was hoping he had gone to Slievekeilter."

"No, indeed, for Mrs Dermody's yonder. He fought well in the town: an' he came back

With a broken Army

like a hare. When the dark men are frightened, they go crazy with terror."

The fire sank, and went out; and we were left in the dark. Brosna leant back on his elbow, with a sigh, as if he was glad to be hidden.

"Lord!" said he, "how well I remember the time when Joe an' I used to run to keep with the soldiers. He was mighty fond of the music. An' he was mighty fond of me too: an' we were never asunder. He couldn't sleep without his arm on my neck. But I went into service: an' he spent his days sittin' on the wall of the bridge, kickin' his heels, an' laughin', and talkin' to annyone that came over the river. An' he was too proud to come near me. I was always fond of him too: though maybe I forgot it at times. I daresay you remember how we an' a lot of the other lads went out to Davernmore, on a Stephen's mornin' ages ago. I was twelve, and Joe was about ten, an' the others hardly as old. It was creepy an' wet; an' there was a mist on the fields. The dew on the bushes was soppin' our petticoats: the brambles were makin' our legs bleed, as we thrashed the hedges to find the wren, an' we dhrove him from his nest in the ivy. We tied him in the thick of a

The Wood of the Brambles

bush. God help him! he was frightened to death, flutterin', an' gasping, an' throbbin'. Then we went an' sang by the windows of fine houses, for pennies. It was hard to sing, if the shutters were up an' we got nothin' at all. An' we went to Davernmore: an' there were Sir Malachi and Sir Tim, with yourself sthandin' between them, lookin' out of the window at the side of the door."

"The parlour window it was. We used to breakfast there often, when the weather was cold."

"You were tiny, in your scarlet an' gold, with your hair powdered an' ribboned. We stood singin' outside,

"The wren! the wren! the king of all birds!
On Stephen's day was caught in the furze.
Though his house is small, his family's great,
An' we bring him here, to give you a treat."

We were mighty chill: an' the three of you were laughin', an' cosy in the flush of a fire. But of course you remember.

"I can't say I do. The boys sang on Stephen's day every year; and often there was snow on the ground. If they had no wren, they would tie a mouse in the bush. Later, I

With a broken Army

was alone at the window, an' threw coppers outside; though I was never allowed to give alms."

"That wasn't alms," he said.

"No, it was a regular custom."

"It was the only time I sang there: an' Sir Malachi sent us into the kitchen for breakfast. An' now he is unther the daisies; an' Joe is dhriftin' down to the sea: an' heavy an' black is my heart."

After that he was silent.

"I wish I could sleep," I said.

"There are not manny sleepin'," he answered.

"They are quiet enough. Why was there no praying?" I said.

"They are too downcast to pray."

The fires on Carrickbyrne had gone out; though a few were on Slievekeilter, and more had begun to sparkle in Ross. The rebels were lying down, and the camp was drowsy with snoring. The night was starry and clear. Below us, on the hill, was a twisted stump of a tree.

"I am thinkin' I am sleepy myself," said Brosna, and lay flat on the turf.

"Good-night," he said after a little.

"Good-night," I said, and sat staring at the glitter in Ross.

The Wood of the Brambles

Brosna was restless, and he muttered and moaned. I tried to sleep, but in vain. Brosna sat up again before long.

"I thought you were asleep," I said.

"I was for a little; but I am afraid of my dreams. I hate that stump of a tree," he went on; "it is like a woman in agony. When I look at it, I say to myself, 'All is lost: the country is given up to torture and massacre.'"

"It will look common by day."

"We will be bright in the sun: but it is hard to believe it in the dead of the dark."

"Are there sentries?" I said.

"Beside the hedges beyond. Have you anny plans for escapin'?"

I paused a minute.

"You can trust me," he said. "I only want to get away from the army."

"I want to go to Ballymoreen."

"So do I," he said.

"And when will you go?" said I.

"As soon as you like."

"I thought of waiting till dawn."

"For fear Jacob might miss you?"

"But I'll go along with you now," I said.

With a broken Army

We went down through the rebels, and saw no one to mind. Our steps rang on the stony and dry ground in the stillness. The day broke, as we were out on the moors.

Brosna led the way through a field where the grass was fit for the mowing, and then through an orchard where the cherries were ripe. We came to an old farm-house, with stunted walls, and a thick thatch as green as seaweed, and many roses about the door and the windows. Brosna knocked at the door.

"Come in," cried a man.

"Is that you, Misther Leahy?" said Brosna, looking in.

"Is that you, Misther Brosna?" said the fellow who spoke to us in the camp. He was sitting on a stool by the fire.

"I just looked in as I passed," said Brosna.

"An' welcome," said the other.

"I daresay you couldn't give us a sup of milk, Misther Leahy."

"Then I can, Misther Brosna. Annyway I have stirabout here. It will be little between you, but there is nothin' else in the house."

"I looked in, on the chance you might have plenty to spare," said Brosna. "We'll not

The Wood of the Brambles

trouble you, sir. Indeed, an' we're not thirsty at all."

There was only a little saucepan on the glimmering turf.

"You are soon back," he went on.

"I carried the old man in my arms."

"Your father?" said Brosna.

"He was terrible light," said Leahy, staring down at the turf.

A body was under the clean sheet on the bed. "God be with him!" said Brosna softly; and shut the door, and came on. I thought of the man going to find his father's body, and bringing it over the mountain-moors in the dark.

The bluff summit of Vinegar Hill began to show on our right above sycamores. We sat on a grassy bank by a wood.

"I am stharvin'," said Brosna.

"I think I am too tired to be hungry," I said.

"Wait till you see a breakfast," said Brosna.

"That means till we are safely at home."

"A thrue word, for all the houses are empty," he said. "Did you see the farm I was knockin' at?"

With a broken Army

"A pleasant house," said I.

"An' the old man was pleasant too in his time. He had an open house an' heart for the world. It was sheer terror sent him into the fightin'. If he could lug a pike in the marchin', it was all he could do."

"Ballymoreen is empty, and I hope it is safe," I said."

"The boys are plunderin' houses that belong to the generals."

"How can we get in?"

"By the panthry window, at the side of the house."

"The lower windows are barred," said I.

"The bars will come away at a touch."

"I never knew that."

"An' no more did the masther. We went in and out as we liked, long afther he had seen to the bolts. As the clock struck ten, he would see to the fastenin' of the chains, with his sword in his hand, with the misthress at his back with a light: and a little afther, we were out if we wanted."

"But thieves might have got in."

"An' why not, when there was nothin' to steal?"

"Anyway, it is lucky for us."

The Wood of the Brambles

"It is so, for I am loath to be seen. I am pinin' for a look at my livery. It was always my dream to be a captain, but now I fancy I was meant for a butler."

So we crossed the meadows, and reached the Slaney at the Ford of the Alders. We washed our faces and hands, sousing our arms up to the elbows. Brosna drank his fill of the water: but, though I was feverish with thirst, I remembered the men afloat in the river after Enniscorthy was taken. The day was hot, and we saw no one at all. We passed the moor, and Dromeen's hut, and the deep road, and went along in the wood. Ballymoreen was delightful, when we saw it at last. The old house was swaddled in ivy, and the roses were thick. The little panes in the narrow windows were gleaming. Blue wedges of sky glowed between the peaks of the gables.

Some windows were open; and so we were afraid to go up. We kept behind the cover of bushes, as we went to the pantry. The bars were reddened by rust, and Brosna lifted them off, and shoved the window open: it swung inwards, like the rest in the house, and had a mantle of cobwebs. Then he scrambled in; and I followed, like a thief in the night. He was making a needless noise, I considered; and yet he was

With a broken Army

walking on tiptoe with a tremble of shame. Creeping to the door of the parlour, he bent down to the keyhole. He pushed the door a little way open :

“Come in,” said Agatha.

Chapter XIII

A Prisoner at Ballymoreen

AT the sound of that pleasant voice, I was taken with a panic, and fled stealthily up the contorted and steep stairs to my room to find respectable clothes. Brosna crept after me, making the oaken banisters quiver and creak in his clutch. The parlour was quiet, as if Agatha thought she had heard the wind at the door. The locks in that house were old and rusty, and doors opened at the touch of a draught. Sometimes as we sat in the parlour of an evening the door would open wide of itself, and the rustle of the wind would appear to be the whisper of heavy silk, and our chatting would flag, as if all of us had a mind to believe a lady of the house was revisiting the haunts of her youth.

Whatever private terrors or creepings we might have, it was our rule to assert that ghosts were never seen in the house, except in the haunted room in the gable, where no

A Prisoner at Ballymoreen

one had the courage to look for them. That room was always locked, and was useful whenever there were strangers at dinner, or anyone was wanting to lie. When the maids had broken dishes according to their custom, they said they started at horrible noises in the room in the gable. When Theophilus had a wish to impress a fool with a belief in his wisdom, he would talk about the shrieking that came from the haunted room as he studied Aquinas at midnight. Since the ghosts had an airy apartment put aside for their pleasure, we felt they would hardly trespass, and if they did, they would shew such rudeness that we ought to ignore them.

Once, I stole the key of that dreaded room from the nail where it was hung in the pantry, and, delighting to do something forbidden, I crept up to the gable; but when I put my head in, and shivered at the creak of the hinges, I could only discover that the ceiling had fallen. The room was full of the lumber and spoilt paper of years, and dusty parchments that people were afraid to destroy because they might be important, though no one took the trouble to read them. I was very young, and I thought the wreck was the doing of those violent spirits; and felt it was no wonder a maid should drop a dish at a noise that

The Wood of the Brambles

was loud enough to ruin the plaster. As I grew older, I began to suspect the room was closed to avoid the trouble of repairing the ceiling.

Changing clothes, I was glad the household was so used to the creaking. My clothes and razors were handy, as if Neligan foresaw my arrival. Putting on the crisp linen, I thought it was a sort of hypocrisy to wear it when I was grimy. I shaved with cold water, and the unpleasantness made me at home: for if Neligan was ordered to bring a can, it was certain to be chilled on the way.

Soon I was dressed in my brown suit, and I tucked my felt hat beneath my arm, and was able to look at myself in the rickety blurred mirror, and feel upright again. I had still a bruise, and my eyes were haggard and weak. Opening the door of my room, I could hear horses outside. I went downstairs, with a mind to tell about my recent adventures. The sun filled the semi-circular hall, leaving the house dimmed by that unusual brightness. There I heard voices, and I went to the top of the broken and irregular steps. Agatha and her father and Roche were riding away. Agatha pulled up, as she answered my bow, smiling: but Theophilus, waving his plumed hat, with an air as if he knew I was awed

A Prisoner at Ballymoreen

by his triumphant appearance, said, "And so you are back from your journey, my dear lad? You must come to see me in my quarters in Wexford," and kept on, and she followed him. Roche came back to the steps.

"I thought I would find you here," he said, quietly. Though the steps were high, we were almost on a level as he sat on his grey charger, and looked at me.

"Yes, it is a natural refuge," I said.

"And now you can stay here," he went on.

"If I like."

"In any case. Will you give me your word to keep the house as a prisoner, until you are rescued by the soldiers, or let out by my orders?"

"Certainly not," said I.

"I can make you."

"And how?"

"The wood is full of the rebels."

"I shall appeal to Considine, then."

"He is nobody."

"Harvey let me go," I went on.

"And he is nobody either."

"He is your Commander-in-Chief," I said.

"He was deposed in the morning. I was put in his place."

The Wood of the Brambles

"You?" I said, thinking the house would be a bearable prison if Agatha came to it.

"Will you give me your word?"

"What am I to do for a servant?"

"I shall send you your man. You will be under my protection. Of course you will promise not to write to your friends. Well, and what do you say?"

"I agree," I said curtly, going into the house.

The house appeared to be darkened. It looked naked and chill, because I knew it was empty. I was unable to sit quietly down anywhere, and wandered about. Standing in the study, I gazed at the lawn, and expected to find the glint of a green coat or a frock in the grey boles of the beeches.

Getting a bucket in the pantry, I filled it from the pump in the laurels: and I bathed, and began to feel brighter, and to think about breakfast. I found milk in the pantry, and bread and butter and ham on the sideboard, for Mrs Considine always left meat there for anyone hungry at irrational hours. Then I took a leisurely meal in the dining parlour, and sat in the big chair that was reserved for the master. My spirits rose as

A Prisoner at Ballymoreen

my appetite lessened, and afterwards I went to the study. It was in the front of the house, and its windows had wide seats that were pleasant. Often I saw Agatha sit, with the diamond panes, and the branches beyond them like a curtain of green stuff, at her back, while Theophilus lounged in his padded chair, with a book open, and gazed with a solemn pride at the wood and the immaculate lawn. Meanwhile his wife would be at work with her homely mending in a window, and hardly had the courage to sigh with comfort, for fear of intruding on the train of his thoughts. She had a way of sighing profoundly when she was contented: but if she was troubled, she played a tune on the harp. Agatha would break in with a frivolous question, or a trifle of news, as Theophilus sat thinking of nothing; but he never rebuked her: although his eyes would fill with a passionate pity for himself, if her mother said "Oh, dear me!" under her breath, when she found her knitting was wrong. "I am fond of children, if I can forget they have souls. They help to furnish a house, and make it like home," Theophilus would say, with a proud wisdom: and again, "It is time to destroy the convention of a Natural Love. I am writing a book on the inborn antipathy of nearest relations." And yet

The Wood of the Brambles

his daughter was dear to him: though it might have been different if she had been ugly, but since she did him credit, he had come to delight in her. He even allowed her to bring her dog in the study, although he was afraid of its paws. "I love the honourable eyes and the innocent degradation of dogs," he would say at Davernmore, as he kept aloof from the animals.

When I was small, I used to sit in a window of the study and read. I used to steal there in the winter, when Sir Malachi drove me out of the House, to go and play in the drizzle. Mrs Considine would eye me with sorrow, from the neighbouring seat, and every now and then she would lead me off to partake of bread and jam and her secrets. "Really, my child," she would say, "you shouldn't read so much: it has made your head alarmingly big."

I used to love to be there when Sir Tim had come across from the House; for he was always a hero of mine, and I was happy to watch him striding across the room restlessly, or standing on tip-toe on the rug, and to listen with open mouth to his talk of the dicing at Daly's Club, and the bullies that kept the sides of the Green and knocked everyone out into the gutter, and all the noble deeds of his friends, Solomon Curtis, and

A Prisoner at Ballymoreen

Boëtius Clancy, and Toby Butler, and Blake of the Hundred Battles, and Ferdinando MacSweeney. Apparently, his friendships consisted entirely of quarrels. As he marched about in the room, with his snuff-box in his left hand, and kept tapping the lid of it fiercely, with “‘I disagree with you, Tim,’ said Amby Bodkin to me. ‘Ambrose,’ I cried indignantly,” and so forth, I was often surprised at his ill-luck in encountering such quarrelsome people.

Sir Tim did most of the talking. It never was safe to interrupt him at all when (to use a phrase of his own) he had a drop of wine in his heart. But his tales were honest: he said he hated a joke whose only point was its breadth.

Once there was a scene about dandelions. The first thing Theophilus did, of a morning, was to look out of his window, and see whether dandelions had grown on the lawn in the night; and if he discovered any he whistled for Brosna with agitation, and sent him to destroy the intruders. At a time when Sir Malachi sickened for a spell of the gout, and was so full of foreboding that it would have been reckless to go anywhere near him, I was spending the day at Ballymoreen, and was buried in a book in a corner, while Theophilus stood at the window in

The Wood of the Brambles

his purple and lace, putting his wig straight, and Sir Tim, in his faded red coat, was in a chair by the hearth. The old man was flushed, and he blinked, attempting to look exceedingly wide awake. We had just come up after dinner : and the weather was black.

Suddenly Theophilus cried, in a voice full of agony, "Oh! merciful Heaven! There is a dandelion out on the lawn."

"A lion!" shouted Sir Tim, in astonishment, jumping up from his chair, and clutching his sword.

"I said a dandelion," said Theophilus peevishly.

Sir Tim sat down, thrusting out his lips and his chin; and his face was darkened by a menacing purple. Theophilus stood there at the window. After a pause he went on—

"I fancy it is going to rain."

"A word in your ear," said Sir Tim, thrilling with anger, and strode to the other side of the room. Theophilus turned round in alarm.

"I have borne a deal from you, sir," said Sir Tim, pacing towards him. "I have stood so much that it has made me inclined to stand annythin', for what is the use of quarrellin' at this time of the day? I have been so patient," he

A Prisoner at Ballymoreen

cried, marching back to the other end of the room, "that you think I have no longer the right to resent the cruellest insult. But I tell you, you are goin' too far. It would make a stone in a rage." Turning, he stood facing Theophilus, grasping his hilt with his left hand, and went on, "Peace an' civility are essential to life, an' I insist upon both. No one could be more gentle than I am, no one more aggressively peaceful. But if you mean to imply that I am afraid of the rain, an' to hint that I am sickly an' old; you will find there is an end to my meekness."

"But," said Theophilus, with a womanish quaver, "there is an undeniable dandelion out on the lawn."

He knew Sir Tim was picking a quarrel about the rain to express his earlier anger.

"Damn all dandelions," shouted Sir Tim. "Who was talking of dandelions?"

"It is turning out a beautiful day," gasped Mrs Considine, coming in: she had heard Sir Tim's voice, and had run up the stairs to keep peace.

"Madam," said Theophilus, "how often must I beg you to think before speaking? If you would look out of the window, you will see," he

The Wood of the Brambles

was almost adding it was going to rain, but with a frightened glance at Sir Tim, he went on—"there is a dandelion out on the lawn."

"A dandelion?" she gasped in dismay: then, aggrieved that her husband should speak sternly before Sir Tim, who was her faithful admirer, "and if there is, I can't help it."

"Did I say you could help it, madam?" said Theophilus, with doubled severity. At this her courage gave way, for she was accustomed to be mild to rebukes.

"I will dig it up in a minute," she said feebly, and hurried out of the room, with a sore heart that Sir Tim should see her humbled: for every woman of his acquaintance was sure she had a share of his worship. She wanted people to think she ruled with a rod of iron at home.

As she went out of the room, Theophilus turned again to the window. "My poor dear wife," he said, "is an excellent woman: but I can never persuade her not to dig up roots with her scissors."

Sir Tim was lonely, because he had killed most of his friends. He had formed the habit of killing them in youth, and he could never get rid of it. "I hate to dirty my sword with the blood of an enemy," he would say, "for ill-will

A Prisoner at Ballymoreen

takes half the pleasure from fightin'." One of his dearest victims was Hercules Slaughter, who used often to stay with us in Sir Malachi's time. Hercules was so red that he always seemed to be blushing, and that got him the reputation of innocence. Good women wanted to cherish him from the snares of the world: the others did not like to be seen with him, for he looked as if their talk was improper. People liked him, because they said when a man's face was so warm, there was no danger of his heart being cold. Once, in a rare moment of wealth, he foolishly lent money to Sir Tim; and long afterwards, when bailiffs were hunting him, demanded it back. "I pocketed your gold," said Sir Tim, "but Slaughter, I cannot pocket an insult," and challenged him, and went to the lawyers', and made a will in his favour. "If I perish," said he, with tears in his eyes, "this will must be coals of fire on the bald head of Hercules Slaughter: he may be sorry he stabbed the loving heart of a friend." "Tim, dear," said Slaughter, stretching out his hand as he lay gasping on the turf of the Phoenix, "we will cry quits and part friends. It is but a matter of coinage: you borrowed gold, and you have paid me in lead."

Many other remembrances made the study

The Wood of the Brambles

familiar ; but if I dwelt on them now, the thread of my story would tangle in indeterminate wanderings. Glancing along the shelves, I perceived the choice of the books implied some shadow of scholarship. Some that I used to consider dull and pedantic were now among my friends, and I found one that was new : it boasted a rich binding and silver clasp, and was called "The Poems of Theophilus Considine." "He has verses privately printed," I thought, but it was only in manuscript. Since it was on the shelves, I could look at it. The verses were written out in his feminine hand, with a quantity of dexterous curves. The first poem was by Herrick, another was by Crashaw, and so on : and I saw the book was a collection of verses Theophilus would have liked to have written. I suppose he tried to imagine the verses were his. The choice of the verses was in keeping with the books : and it made me respect him, because our tastes were alike. His favourites were men who had caught an echo of the classical writers. So I finished the only book he had ever written, and then, taking others from the shelves, I continued reading for hours in the padded chair : and I paused at times to look at the shifting light on the trees, and reflect I was

A Prisoner at Ballymoreen

back in my proper place, and had done with my outrageous adventures.

I was happy till Neligan broke into the room to announce supper, with such a smile that he seemed as if he never was doleful. Waiting at the table, he said he had met Father Roche and had learned my imprisonment, and it seemed to delight him. Speaking as he bustled about, and offered me things I never liked, he went on to explain that, because we were alone, he must go daily to Wexford. He said the Considines wondered where I had been during the three days of my absence, and Theophilus had told him on Saturday night to beg me to use the house as my own, and had afterwards fancied I had gone to Dublin on business about the house I was planning. Nobody was surprised at my silence, he said, because the mails had been stopped, and neither letters nor papers could come from town, so the people in Wexford were shut out from the world. This was a relief, for it showed Agatha and her father had failed to recognise me in Enniscorthy with the Babes of the Wood. When they saw me on the steps, they had known nothing of my unfortunate days. Neligan had only got out of the Camp on the night before, after many attempts, and said

The Wood of the Brambles

the sentries were doubled to put a stop to deserting.

I spent that evening with the books, and the next week was as quiet ; for I read or lounged in the old garden, among the alleys and the angular beds, as if it was a holiday time. I had no ambitions, and even my love of Agatha grew fainter beside my relish of peace. Once, when I came to the Certosa, beside Milan, from a wearisome journey, I fancied the world could offer nothing as pleasant as the life of a monk, with a little house of his own, and a tiny garden to till, and a cloister to stroll in, among the friendly and quiet faces of brothers : but when I was refreshed, I was longing for the stir of the city. Now I was so tired that I found it good to be cloistered.

The old garden was full of hedges of juniper and holly and box, that were trimmed to resemble figures and unnatural birds. Sweet marjoram, lavender, rosemary, gillyflowers, poppies, and thyme, were thick in the beds. Rusty cages were still in little turrets above the arches on alleys. Fountains, that used to throw the water in shining feathers and canopies, were under the moss. Plum trees were stretched along the wall of the garden as if they were crucified.

Sir Tim would never stroll in the garden. "I

A Prisoner at Ballymoreen

hate anythin' old," he said once, "an' I detest the contented appearance of that ruinous solitude. Why, sir, it is proud of its age!" "You would break out of the Garden of Eden," said Theophilus, sighing. "To be sure," said Sir Tim; "do you suppose I would loll in a drowsy garden, with a lovin' menagerie of tame beasts, when a wild country was near? If that deplorable Adam had gone out like a man to look for somethin' to fight, Eve an' the other serpent would have kept to themselves." "That is so Irish!" said Theophilus wistfully, "and yet," he went on, dreamily addressing his usual imagined admirers, "we are the only nation that is fit for the Garden: the other peoples would be wanting to sin, or make money, but we could do without either." "Ah! but could we do without fightin'?" said Sir Tim. "We might leave the liquor, perhaps, if the weather was sunny, an' we had no excuse to be doleful, an' there was no drink to be had: but we would cut the Garden in unneighbourly counties."

Neligan supplied me with news, and said Agatha had admirers who drank dishes of tea in the lodgings by the bridge on the Slaney, and Roche was out on Lacken by Ross, and the Rector was home, and had been saved by an officer who

The Wood of the Brambles

knew him by sight. Then, on the Saturday, he said the Presbyterians had risen in Antrim, and the rebels were mustering, from Gorey and Lacken and Vinegar Hill, to a great battle at Arklow. So, on the Sunday, I was harassed; but his tidings were good. The rebels, reaching Arklow about sunset on the Saturday, came on the fifteen hundred men of the garrison drawn up in a curving line as a shield to the little town, and attacked them at once, on the inland road, and on the way by the sea. Murphy led the assault by the inland road, on a big horse, and was bending under a green banner with "Death or Liberty" on it. The marksmen of Shilmalier were in front, and behind them were pikes: and as many rebels were there as had been gathered at Ross. Three charges were shattered by the cannon, and the guns of the soldiers. The rebels sprang again with a cheer; and the defenders were staggering, when Murphy was shot. Then his followers quailed; and dragoons drove them, by the time it was dark.

After this there was little news, for the rebels had lost heart and were idle. The Ulster Rising was weak, because the plots were betrayed. Nobody came near me at all. Theophilus and Roche had put papers on the door, but they seemed

A Prisoner at Ballymoreen

useless, till one night, as I sat reading, a troop of rebels came through the lilacs, and poured out on the lawn. I heard them in the trees, and put out my lamp; and I saw them in the light of the torches. They were so cheerful that I fancied they intended to pike me. One of them read the papers aloud, "This is the home of Theophilus Considine," he began. "Boys, he will be useful for once, if his cellar is as fine as his coat." "They are only looking for drinks," I thought, as he went on, "Here is more, on another paper, 'No man to interfere with this house or its inhabitants.—ROCHE.'" Then there was a groan, and the fellows declared Roche was too fond of diminishing the rights of the army. They went off mournfully, as if they had been suddenly weakened.

That was the only break in my quietness. I became as used to the house as if it was my home, and dug up dandelions that grew on the lawn.

Then, on a Wednesday, Neligan brought me tidings that Roche had been driven from Lacken, and there was trouble in Wexford, for the mob was going wild with despair.

The Wood of the Brambles

During the afternoon, I heard firing. As I sat in the parlour after supper, and thought it was time to bid Neligan to see to the lamp in the study, and pull down the blinds, for the wood was blackening and seemed to draw closer, I heard hoofs on the gravel.

"Are you there, anyone?" cried Roche.

"I am here," I said, going forward.

"Is that you, Davern? Would you mind coming out?"

I went out on the steps.

"I am in such a hurry," he said, "that I haven't time to get down."

"Let me send you out something?" I said.

"No, it doesn't matter," he said; "thank you all the same: but I only want to set you free from your promise. You can go where you like."

"I hardly wish to be free," I said.

"You were in luck to be safe in prison," he went on; "and I fancy it will soon be my turn."

He spoke lightly, but I saw he was glum.

"Are things going against you?" I said.

"It is all over," he answered; "Johnson is outside Enniscorthy. Brigades are closing around us: the ships are guarding the sea. There is no escaping for anyone."

A Prisoner at Ballymoreen

“ And Harvey ? ”

“ Has been kept on the Rocks, where our men watch him with attention and pikes.”

“ And Wexford ? ”

“ Will be taken to-morrow.”

“ I shall go there at once,” I said.

“ You had better see to yourself, for I think you are in danger,” he answered.

“ In danger ? ”

“ Of being hanged as a rebel. It has been given out that you joined our army at Ross, and were at the Council, and took part in the fighting.”

“ But that is absurd,” I cried; “ and I can disprove it, in a minute.”

“ All the better for you; but will the officers listen, any more than they minded Sir Edward Crosbie’s excuses ? ”

“ Anyway, I must go to the Considines.”

“ They are coming southward with me; and your danger is worse. If you surrender to-night, you may look out for support. But if you wait till to-morrow, when the fighting is done, you will end with the support of a rope. Well, I wish you good luck,” he said, riding off; and I stood watching him disappear in the dusk.

Going into the hall, I whistled for Neligan.

The Wood of the Brambles

As there was no answer, I went to the stillroom, and found him scrawling a letter by the light of a wax candle, and bending above the paper with open mouth, like a little boy at a school.

“Father Roche has been here,” I said. “I am going to Enniscorthy at once.”

“Is it to-night, your Honour?”

“Leaving you in charge of the house,” I went on, and he brightened.

“And your Honour will be back in the morning?”

“That remains to be seen. And now I want a light in my room.”

Putting on my boots, and my cloak, and my hat, and my long sword, I went out. The black trees had a look as if they were besieging the house. The night was gloomy with a menace of storm. I struck across the wood in the dark.

Chapter XIV

Vinegar Hill

I WAS glad to escape from the darkness to the dusk of the road. Crossing the old bridge on the river, I drew near Enniscorthy. Lights were over the Hill, as if no one was asleep in the Camp. Torches were astir in the streets.

Skirting Enniscorthy, I went towards the bivouac fires beyond it, on the slope of a moor.

"Who goes there?" cried a sentry.

"A friend," I said turning.

"The word?"

"I don't know it."

A sergeant and a knot of men were beside him.

"I want to see Colonel Blake," I said.

"Your name?" said the sergeant.

"Davern."

"Sir Dominick?"

"Certainly."

"I arrest you in the name of the King."

The Wood of the Brambles

"I shall soon be unaccustomed to freedom," I thought, as I paced up and down in a respectable parlour. It had stiff chairs, and a mahogany table, and a mirror whose dim glass gave a ghostly reflection of the candle beside it. The sergeant would listen to no explaining, but took me to that neighbouring house; and said he would fetch me on his way to the general. So I was there, and a sentry was on guard at the door.

"Do you know Colonel Blake?" said I.

"Of course," said the sentry.

"I want to send him a message."

"I daresay," said he.

"And to pay the messenger well," I said.

"How much?"

"A guinea; I shall hand it to you. You can give the messenger as much as you like."

"And that will be little," said he. "Where is the note?"

"I shall write it in a minute," I said. "There are pens and ink on the mantelpiece."

I gave him the guinea and the note, and sat down; and I stared at the flush of a burning cabin outside. I wondered why the seats in the parlour were designed for discomfort. They were nearly as stiff as the Tudor chairs at the Considines'. This was the room of state, I sup-

Vinegar Hill

posed; and the people fancied uneasiness was conducive to dignity. I was annoyed by the arrest; but I took it quietly, because it was simple to explain my predicament and ragged disguises. I heard Blake in the passage.

"You want to see me?" he said, as if he talked to a stranger.

He stood on the rug, keeping the door open, as I got up from the chair.

"There has been a ridiculous blunder," I began.

"Your arrest? It is a bad business," he answered.

"It is a nuisance; but I haven't been here long, and the sergeant will let me out when you tell him."

"Oh! I can't interfere," he said. "I suppose you have come in to surrender?"

"Why on earth should I surrender?" said I.

"You were taken?" said he. "I can't help you at all. Let me know if you need anything. To-night I am busy."

"But I tell you it is all a mistake," I said, as he was turning; "the rebels wanted to kill me."

"Why! you have been one of the leaders," he said.

"Would you say a fox was the leader of a hunt?" I replied.

The Wood of the Brambles

"What do you mean?" he said.

"If you'll have the common civility to come in and shut the door, I can tell you," said I.

"Why, man, everyone knows you were a rebel," said he, shutting the door.

"All the more reason to be sure it was false."

"It was in the papers," he said.

"I never heard yet of anyone believing the papers."

"Well, I am astonished," he said. "But you were at Ross?"

"As a prisoner."

"And fighting."

"I was running," I said.

"They all ran, to be sure. Mind you, now, I don't contradict you: but the men on the tower above the Three Bullet Gate said they saw you go in as a rebel in green clothes with a pike. The sergeant who has taken you now was one of them, and knows you by sight."

"Who is he?" I said.

"Rossiter, the son of a tailor in Enniscorthy below."

"I wish he stuck to his last."

"He will stick to you, I should think. I would rather be taken up by a bull-dog."

"I was escaping," I said.

Vinegar Hill

‘A war-like kind of escape. Then there’s Brosna, who was Considine’s butler.’

“What of him?” I said.

“He was nearly hanged, for a note of Harvey’s was found on him saying the bearer was a rebel and messenger.”

“Well?” said I.

“He said it was yours, and pretended he found it when he happened to be dusting your clothes, and put it in his pocket to give to you. I believed him; but now I had better catch him again.”

“It was mine,” said I. “I daresay he stole it, to get him out of the clutches of any rebels he met.”

“And then why are you keeping me?” said Blake, angrily.

“Harvey wanted to save me from his followers.”

“Lord!” said Blake. “Do you think I was brought up as a lawyer?”

“The matter is simple,” I said, crossly.

“Explain it then to somebody else,” he said.

“I’d much rather,” I answered.

“Tell me now what are you driving at?” he said. “What is it you want to make out?”

“That I was a prisoner with the rebels.”

“And never joined them.”

The Wood of the Brambles

"Never. I can give you my word. And I have witnesses."

"Who?"

"Harvey, and Roche."

"And much good they will do you," he said. "The rebels help one another, and will all hang together. And serve them right. And we haven't caught them as yet. So have you any one else?"

"Neligan, and Brosna," I said.

"Both rebels, I hear."

"And Tony."

"The less said about poor Tony the better. I am going to try to get him out of the country."

"Why? What has he done?"

"Joined the rebels with you, or was he also a prisoner?"

"Not exactly," said I.

"A rebel?"

"Certainly not."

"That's enough now," said Blake. "Either you are trying to fool me, or you and your friends have been behaving like madmen."

"But will you go to the general?"

"What is the use?"

"To get me out."

"Of this world?" he said. "Listen, is there

Vinegar Hill

no way to show your loyalty now? Could you put your hands on a leader?"

"I am not an informer," I said.

"I am not talking of that," he said angrily. "But you had better take sides with us now, and show your zeal if you can."

"I was always on your side," I said.

"Well, you took an odd way to show it."

"Had you no enemies in their camp?" he went on.

"Little Murphy was savage."

"He is dead."

"And another bore me a grudge."

"Hunt him down then," said Blake; "fairly, with no tricking at all. Let him have his turn as a prisoner. And where were you kept?"

"Latterly at Ballymoreen."

"With the Considines?" he said, with a flush.

"I was alone in the house."

"Without guards?"

"But on my word to remain there."

"A strange prison," he said; "the house of one of the leaders. And where are the Considines?"

"Going southward with Roche."

"The ladies too?" he cried.

"So I think."

The Wood of the Brambles

"What madness! The old fool should surrender. But Roche is up on the Hill."

"He has gone off to the south."

"Against Moore? and so our spies were mistaken. Well, that news is worth having; and may be it will quiet the General. I'll see what I can do. I am glad you have been falsely accused."

"More than I am," said I.

"Ah! you know what I mean," he said, striding out of the room, and his spurs clinked on the pebbles.

"It was fortunate I came in a hurry," I said, as I sat down on the sofa. "My friends would believe me a murderer if anyone said it." I lounged there for a time, looking at the candle, and wishing I had something to read. Then I fell asleep, till I started at a crashing of thunder. The room was darkened, for the candle was out. The flush out of doors was fainter, as if the fire were decreasing. There was lightning, and a peal of the storm overhead, and a rush of rain on the window. Going to the beaded and blurred window, I saw the lights were few on the Hill.

Vinegar Hill

"Preserve us! What a morning!" said Blake.

He was in the door, and behind him was the gleam of a lanthorn. It struck his epaulettes, and his powdered hair; but, in spite of it, his face was in shadow. I was in doubt whether he had come as a friend.

"What news?" said I.

"You are free for the present," said he.

"What?" I said.

"If you give your word," he went on, "to keep with the brigade till the General has looked into your business."

"A hobbled freedom," I said.

"The old man had more than half a mind to condemn you to be shot without trial. But your news was important, for he was thinking of waiting for Moore's arrival; and also he is kindly because the rebels are surrounded at last."

"You have surrounded the Hill?"

"We have fourteen thousand men, and the fighting is beginning at once."

"Before dawn?"

"The day has broken now in the dark. The storm is hiding it.—What a flash! and the thunder seems to roll in the garret!"

The Wood of the Brambles

“Well, I give you my word. I shall stay here till the storm passes,” I said.

“As you like,” he said, turning, and going out of the room.

A regiment came by with a measured splashing in the watery road. The light strengthened in a lull of the storm. I saw the sober and cool faces of the men, and the glimmer of the guns, and the officers wrapped in their cloaks. The swinging stride of the gaitered legs was monotonous. Over the silent ranks I could see the hulk of Vinegar Hill: it was grey in the dawn, and the top of it was black with a crowd. The squat stump of the Mill, with its banner, was a blur on the sky. All through that night, the rebels had seen the fires on the moors, and heard the creaking and the groan of artillery. I thought of the women and children in the Camp, and the old men who had taken part in the Rising, vainly and with reluctance, and now would have a share in the ruin.

The troops kept passing in silence. Bugles and a feverish pounding of the drums on the left startled me; and, snatching my cloak, I hurried out in the rain. There was firing in Enniscorthy: the soldiers were charging into the town. Then the flashes were away on the

Vinegar Hill

bridge; and then were over the river. There was silence, as I went down by the road I had come up in the dark.

It was day, and a black morning; and the country was visible. As I came to a rushy field by the water, the bugles clanged, and the cannon crashed, and the rebels cheered with an irresolute firing. A regiment swung in on the left, and planted a battery. The broken firing above stopped and the cannon and the shrieking of shells were answered by the cheers as the mob shouted a despairing defiance. Then there was a blowing of bugles, and a hammering of drums, and the bands struck up, and the troops charged with the bayonet. The mob wavered to meet them. I winced, and turned away to the river.

END OF BOOK II

Book III

Justice

Chapter I

The Cave in the Cliff

WHEN Neligan plunged into my room in the little tavern at Wexford, I felt as if I was going reluctantly on a journey in winter. I had told him to call me at daybreak, but the window was black. I could hear a querulous muttering of the wind in the chimney. As I tried to shave by the foggy flickers of the candle, I thought of the fighting on the Hill, and my coming in the track of the army. I would not think at all of my errand.

Taking my glass and pistols and sword, I went downstairs to the coffee-room. A rough breakfast of bacon and eggs was spread on a corner of the table, beside the wreck of a supper and empty bottles and broken churchwarden pipes. The room was lit by the guttering stump of a candle, and was smelling of smoke. As I was finishing breakfast, I heard a clatter of horsemen on the stones of the street. Taking my hat and

The Wood of the Brambles

cloak in the hall, I went and opened the door, wincing in the chill of the night.

Neligan was holding my horse, and the troopers were drawn up in the street. One of them was on foot with a lanthorn that gave a wandering glimpse of the men in their cloaks. Sergeant Rossiter saluted in silence, when I told him I intended to ride to Ferrycarric and pass over the water.

Then I rode down the narrow street to the ramparts. There were gleams aloft in the tower; and as I looked through the window of the room by the Gate, I saw a cluster of soldiers at a shivering fire. When the lock groaned, and the hinges squealed, and our echoes rang in the old arch, I could fancy Cromwell was encamped on the hills.

The slam of the gate, and the pattering of the hoofs, and the jingle of steel, were loud in the silence. The night was heavy and grey, but I could see for a distance across the shadowy moors. There was no sunrise, but the hulks of the trees grew brown, and their shadows became clear in the water, and the clouds began to whiten and lift. It was light before three, I remember, for I looked at my watch as the desolate moors began to glimmer around us.

The Cave in the Cliff

By the time we reached Ferrycarric, and went over the bridge, with a hollow clatter on the shuddering planks, it was a threatening morning. The trees were throwing black walls of shadow on the silk of the river. The country was dark; except the pools in the meadows, where the water was shining. The white walls of the ruined cabins were ghostly. There was nothing astir, but the rooks above the tops of the elms, and the wild-fowl that rose from the rushy spans of glittering water, and wavered to the dimness beyond.

Soon the road curved along the side of the beach. The sea was hazy and calm; and there was only a slice of it visible, like the blade of a sword. We passed Garryspillane, where the roads met, and the hedges were full of little crosses of wood, put there when the funerals had halted to pray. Then we went along in the hills to Aghavrin; and we reached the Glen hidden between the Wood of the Brambles and the back of the cliffs. The thatched roofs of Enniscrone, at the other side of the narrow Glen, had the look of an irregular rampart.

I stopped at the Fairy Thorn in the Glen. The tree was stunted and warped, and the south side of its branches had a cover of lichen. I told

The Wood of the Brambles

the sergeant to choose half-a-dozen of his fellows and bring them with me on foot, and to bid the others hold themselves ready, by the side of the tree, to bring us help if we called. Dismounting, I gave my horse to a trooper, and led the way towards the brow of the cliffs. There was a mask of mist on the ground, and I slipped on the spongy mosses and turf. The path was little more than a winding dent in the grass. Then the grass grew rougher and dim, and there were pieces of grey moss, and sea pinks, and many patches of sand with the triple footmark of gulls.

The sun was a red blur, and the water looked as if it was frozen. The cliffs were battered and sheer above the nooks of the shingle. Peering over the brink of the crannied rock, I could see the light of the foam along the edge of the water. I had often clambered below on the wet rocks and the weeds, watching the sleek waves as they lifted the tangle, or looking for impossible treasures brought to land by the tide.

About a foot from the brink, there was the narrow beginning of the path to the cave: it was a step in the rock, and it was hard to discover. Beneath it on the right was another step, and the path sank along the front of the cliffs. If any work should exhibit signs of an

The Cave in the Cliff

unnatural patience, it is our custom to fancy it was done by the Devil. So the peasants said the Devil had cut the cave, under the orders of an unsociable saint. A man who was the glory of Wexford, in the time of Elizabeth, lived in that refuge while an army in chase of him encamped in the Glen: if he was hard pressed he would vanish at the brink of the cliffs, and would peer out of the cave, and laugh at his enemies searching for his bones on the beach. Although half the countryside knew there was a cave, yet the secret of the path had been kept by the Kilclares, who had been the heads of the Catholics, and had hidden the priests, when saying Mass was a crime.

As the troopers came up, I heard the sound of a bell between the turf and the sea. Six times it was rung.

"It is a signal," said Rossiter, as he stood on my right: he was very tall, with a chiselled, ponderous face.

"It is the Sanctus," I said. "There is a priest saying Mass."

"Is that so?" he said. "But where is he hidden?"

"In a cave in the rocks. The path is here."

"For the seagulls?" said Rossiter.

The Wood of the Brambles

"If you will come close you can see it."

"I am close enough, sir, I think."

"It would lead you straight to the cave," said I.

"To the bottom," he said.

"There are rebels inside."

"The more fools they," he said.

"We must get them out," I went on.

"Then we'd better get tents: for if the rebels are certain we are goin' to wait as long as they want, they will surrender at once. If they have to be prisoners, they will think they may as well get it over."

"I said I would be back before twelve."

"Then we had better go home," he said.

"Rebels are over there," said I, "also."

"The Babes of the Wood?" he said.

"They are at the other end of the wood, but if we are long, they may attack us," I said.

"Well," he said, "we will put the babies to sleep, an' provide work for the robins." .

Since the priest was saying Mass, it was evident he was not alone in the refuge. Perhaps he had taken others to hide with him. I fancied the cave full of a congregation whose anger would give me a hurried shrift if I broke in on their gathering.

The Cave in the Cliff

"I am going down," said I.

"Where?"

"To the cave."

"I do my duty, your Honour, but I draw the line at a precipice."

"You will wait for me here."

"I will, sir, an' how long will I stay?"

"If I don't come back? Oh, a quarter of an hour is enough."

Holding the brown rock with my right hand, I began to follow the path. Six years had outdone the damage of centuries, and the path was a ruin. My boots were wet from the dew on the grass, and they were awkward for climbing. I could not think, until I had nearly come to the cave. Then I stopped on a ledge, to regain my breath and allow my beating heart to be quiet. I could hear the grumble of sandy waves on the beach. The narrow slab that was used to cover the refuge from the weather or enemies, was jutting in sight. It had been my seat on the last day I was there. The bell rang three times again. The priest was saying the "Domine non sum dignus," I knew, and I thought of the time

The Wood of the Brambles

when I served Mass at St Omer's. Going on again, I could hear a monotonous voice murmuring Latin. I took my pistol in my right hand, and shifted my sword forward, as I got to the mouth. I listened to catch the sound of the hearers, expecting to find the noise of a country chapel, the coughing and heavy breaths, and the scraping of the feet on the floor.

The cave was dim, and I darkened it further as I stood on the threshold. Kilclare was saying Mass at an altar on a ledge at the back. The smoky glimmer of a couple of candles was on his vestments, as he looked at a little crucifix in a chink of the rock above him, and his murmurs were hollow. Agatha was kneeling behind him, and was serving his Mass. Her dress was dark, and the yellow glint of the candles shook on her hair.

I took off my hat with my left hand, as if I entered a church : and hid the pistol behind me. Kilclare turned to me, jerking his vestments with the resolute clumsiness I remembered so well. "Benedicat vos," he said, with his hands out to give the blessing, and then he met my eyes, and he stopped. So he stood with a white face : and Agatha knelt untroubled between us. Then he flushed and went on, whispering, and meeting

The Cave in the Cliff

my eyes, ‘*Omnipotens Deus, Pater et Filius et Spiritus Sanctus ;*’ and she answered “*Amen.*”

As he turned again, Agatha got up to move the Book to the left side of the rough altar, and seeing me as she handled it, let it drop on the floor. Kilclare started, and looked over his right shoulder, as if the clap of the heavy book on the stone had been the noise of a pistol. Reddening, she put the book on the altar, and knelt down in her place. The priest went on with the Mass.

Now that my eyes were accustomed to the dusk, I perceived a bundle of straw in the corner on the left of the ledge, with a cloak and hat and a long sword in a scabbard. Agatha got up from her knees when the Mass was finished, and came to me holding out her hand with a smile.

“Oh, I am so glad you are come,” she said.
“It is so good of you, Dominick.”

I was unable to take her hand, as I was holding the pistol. Kilclare went towards the bundle of straw.

“I must ask you to leave the weapons alone,” I said.

He turned towards me, as Agatha drew back in astonishment.

“You have come early to Mass,” he said.

The Wood of the Brambles

"I have come to arrest you."

"Oh, what do you mean?" cried Agatha.

"You come single-handed?" he said, "and do you think I will yield? I am a priest, but yet I have the rights of a man. If I should take up the sword——"

"It would be no use," said I, raising the pistol.

Agatha cried out, but the priest went on in a hushed voice, with his hands behind him as if they had been clenched at his back.

"You have taken me by surprise: but for all that it is a long fall to the sea. If I run the risk of your shot."

"I have men on the cliffs," I said.

"Is that so?" he went on. "If we fell, she would be alone in the cave, and at the mercy of troopers."

"This is all a mistake, Dominick," cried Agatha. "I refuse to believe it. How could anything change you so much?"

"I suppose you learnt the path from a traitor?" said the priest.

"I was the traitor," said Agatha.

"You!" he cried.

"Oh, it was a long time ago, now. You have a good memory, Dominick."

The Cave in the Cliff

"I never thought you were here," I said, facing her.

"It is not too late," she said; "nobody has seen us but you."

"They heard the Sanctus," I said.

"The soldiers?" she said.

"So if I lied, and told them the cave was empty, they would never believe it."

"But they would obey you," she said.

"You ask me to put my neck in a noose," said I. "If it was known that I shielded a rebel now——"

"He is not a rebel," she broke in.

"Then he need not shrink from a trial."

"Would you wish to be tried by a court martial, yourself?" said Kilclare.

"I expect to face one," said I.

"And that is why you are here?" he said.

"Even if it told against you"—said Agatha.

"As it certainly would," I said.

"It would be better to suffer than to betray another as innocent."

"You have no right to talk of betraying," I said.

"If you must take a prisoner," she went on, "I surrender. I am a rebel's daughter at least."

"Sir," said Kilclare, "you have me at too

The Wood of the Brambles

great an advantage. I will go as your prisoner, if you leave me untied, on my giving you my word to obey you unless I should be rescued by force."

I said, "You have no chance of a rescue."

"You agree?" he said.

"Yes."

"Then there is no need to be lingering."

Turning, he put off his vestment over his head, and undid his girdle and white robe, and he laid them flat on the altar. Mud and straw were on his coat and his riding-boots.

"I am going with you," said Agatha.

"You can only help me by staying," he said, and stooped to her, whispering. I turned; and, after the dimness, the grey clouds had a light as if the morning had cleared. The air was chill in my throat.

"Oh, I am so glad I can do something to help you," she was saying, as I turned back: she was holding his hand, and looking up at him with tears in her eyes. He took his cloak and hat from the bundle of straw; and then he lifted the sword: there was a coat of arms on the hilt.

I said, "You can leave it here if you like."

"It was a good sword," he said; "a gentleman's sword."

The Cave in the Cliff

Standing beside me, he swung it out of the cave; and bent, leaning his right hand on the slab of rock, as he watched the weapon swoop in the air and dive below in the sea. Then he shoved the slab, and it spun, and crashed against the cliff, and was shattered in splinters that reeled out from the rock. I saw the tuft of foam on the sea, and then I heard the splash in the distance.

The ledge was so small that he had barely the room to pass, and I could feel he was shrinking. Agatha was kneeling before the altar with her face in her hands. A gull flapped over me, showing the ribbed lining and black tips of its wings, and whimpered as I followed Kilclare.

“So you came alone after all?” he said, as I joined him on the top of the cliffs.

There was not a sign of the troopers.

Chapter II

A Ride to the Gallows

A MOB with banners and pikes were coming out of the village. Two horses were tied by the stunted tree in the road, but all the troopers were gone. The cries in the distance were too faint to dispel the hush of the morning. That stir was only able to deepen the quietness of the wood and the Glen.

"Do you see the horses?" I said; "the troopers were there."

"And now here are my friends," he said; and I looked at them through the glass I had brought.

"They are coming too late," said I. "You have given your word."

"Because you said you had soldiers. You misled me; and I take it back now."

"It is easier to break it than take it. I'll not try to force you," said I; "but if you are keeping your promise, you ride with me."

A Ride to the Gallows

"Ride hard to the gallows?" he said.

Turning, I went down to the tree. I had gone some way when I heard his steps on the grass. By the time I got to my horse, the mob was approaching us lazily, with music and songs. As I had my foot in the stirrup, Kilclare was behind me.

"Since I gave my word, I am coming," he said.

I rode away without answering.

There was a shout from the mob, but it was only a greeting. He caught me up in a minute: he seemed proud and alert, as if he was on a journey to happiness. So we left the Glen, and we took the grassy road under trees.

The cabins on the side of the hills, or in the meadows, were safe, because they were away from the road. Blue ringlets of smoke were wavering above them; and people were at work in the fields, but none were in the range of a musket. Instead of the noises of the farms, and the crowing of the cocks, and the shouts of men discussing the weather or politics in neighbouring fields, there was silence: for the cattle and poultry were gone, and the people were in the shadow of death. They stopped to see us go by: and the only sound was from a man who

The Wood of the Brambles

was chopping wood by a clump of trees on a hill. Because the road bent, that monotonous echo was distinct for a time.

I was thinking about the way I had spent the evening before. After I had ridden into Wexford with Rossiter, who took pains to be near me, I had stopped at the tavern, and had dined with the soldiers in the coffee-room, and there I had met old General Hunter. The captain of a brig that had anchored at Rosslare was ashore, and had mentioned a fire seen in the cliffs of Enniscrone as he was nearing the harbour. I had been ill at ease, for the General had met me with a scanty civility ; and that had made me the more eager to talk : so I had broken in, while the others were discussing the light. "You say you guess what it is?" the old General had said to me, eyeing me with open distrust. "Yes, there is someone in hiding in a cave in the cliff," I had answered. "You have grown so loyal," the General had said, "that no doubt you will assist us to find him." "Certainly, if you like," I had said, flushing at his tone and the doubting looks of the others. "Right, I shall take you at your word, and you can go in the morning. Blake, what is the name of that serjeant? Rossiter, is it? Rossiter shall go with you," he had said,

A Ride to the Gallows

“and shall take an escort to guard you.” At this the others had laughed ; and although I had regretted my hasty speech and consent, I had no chance to draw back.

Turning round to Kilclare, who was on my left, I began :—

“I thought the Considines were off to the South ?”

“Considine is perpetually changing his mind,” he said quietly, “and so he surrendered ; and the ladies are at Ballymoreen.”

“Surrendered ?” I said.

“It was the best thing he could do. His fine friends and relations in Dublin will be certain to help him.”

After a little pause, he went on. “How did you find out I was there ?”

“Your fire was seen on a vessel coming in after dusk.”

“I should have put the screen at the door,” he said, “but the smoke hung in the cave, and I thought there was no danger, because the path was unknown, and I meant to be riding off in the morning.”

“You only went there last night ?” I said.

“Roche warned me to keep away for a time, as it might be known that I had been to the

The Wood of the Brambles

Camp. The troopers were scouring the country, and rode into the village; but I heard they were coming."

"They didn't meet with the Babes?"

"Harragan is deep in the wood."

"You might have gone to him."

"No, that would be joining the rebels."

"She had no business to be down in the cave," I said, after we had paused a few minutes.

"None at all," he said promptly.

I said, as if he had contradicted me, "Still, she was bound to keep your secret, you know."

"But she didn't, you see," he said.

"Why did she go, then?" I said carelessly.

"She had something to tell me."

"And she served your Mass?"

"I wanted to say Mass before riding. There is an altar-stone in the cave."

"In the ledge," said I.

"Put there in the Penal days," he went on.

"When she was a girl she was wilful," I said: "she was always climbing the cliffs. This was a thing she would have done in a moment: but I thought she had changed."

"Changed her dresses," he said.

"She is just the same as she used to be," he went on; "and as for wilfulness, just look at

A Ride to the Gallows

the way she has ridden about with an escort of wild worshipping fellows. She went to Vinegar Hill, as if she was reviewing the rebels; and out to the camp on the Three Rock Mountain, where Harvey begged her to save him from his assiduous followers. She rode to Nuzum's Hotel at Ennis-corthy, on the night of the muster at Ross, to watch the rebels go by, and to meet her father: and poor Mrs Considine was crazed with anxiety, in their lodgings by the bridge on the river."

Then at the corner we met little Dromeen, stooping under a creel of turf, as his coat trailed in the mud. He was talking to himself with the look of a child praying, and at the sight of me flung his hands up in terror, and dropped his stick, and made a plunge to the left and over the wall; but his creel was entangled, and it held him a prisoner. As we rode past, he was wriggling to be as small as he could, and to duck his white head below the top of the creel.

At Aghavrin, I took the road in the bog to Garryspillane. It was a shorter way, but I kept the sea-road in the hills in the morning because it was more roomy and hidden. When we had gone by Aghavrin, I heard shouting behind us, and looked back at a throng of the rebels coming out of the shady neck of the sea-road. They

The Wood of the Brambles

were on foot, and they cried to us to go back : and Kilclare was silent ; but I thought he was looking about with anxiety.

On either side, there was a wet and forsaken desert of bog. On the right it was spacious ; but little more than a quarter of a mile on the left, it was bounded by turfy hills that were stained by the drifting shadows of clouds. They were a screen to the longer road, but a loop of it was open, and wound on the near side of a hill. The only shade on the little road in the bog was from a cluster of beeches on the left of it and facing that loop.

There was a wind like the hiss of a tumbling wave, and at times it was as hoarse as the shingle in the grip of the sea. The darkness and the wind were foreboding. I heard a whine in the hills, and thought a storm was awaking ; until it changed to the buzzing and the crooning of pipes. Then I thought Huntly was going down with his Highlanders from Arklow ; and next minute remembered I would have met with him sooner. So I stopped beside the cluster of beeches.

The piping grew as we stopped : or it was plainer, perhaps, because our horses were quiet. Behind that screen of the beeches, we were

A Ride to the Gallows

hidden from any one passing by on the loop: and this was lucky, for rebels began to appear on it, marching northward around the foot of the hill.

"Rebels," said I, taking out my glass from my pocket.

"Under Anthony Perry," said Kilclare.

"It was their vanguard we saw," I said.

"And those in the Glen were coming out to them."

"Well, it was fortunate they kept on the sea-road."

"Fortunate for you," said Kilclare. "This was too narrow: and they like to be in reach of a hill, for they are afraid of the cavalry."

("This was why he was jaunty and at ease on the road," I said to myself.)

"You knew they were coming?" I went on.

"That was what Miss Considine told me. They were marching on Wicklow. I meant to ride in their track."

"Where do they come from?"

"The Three Rock Mountain, and some of them escaped from the slaughter at Vinegar Hill, through the gap left in the circle of regiments by Needham's delay."

"They will just miss you," I said.

The Wood of the Brambles

"I must take the chances: but anyone on the hills would perceive us."

"Of course they are blocking the Cross of Garryspillane," I said, "and so I would be caught in a trap."

It would be hard to imagine a more disconsolate multitude. Some were trailing muskets and pikes: but others had empty hands, as if they had flung their weapons away. They were in tatters, and were dragging their feet as if they had been utterly tired. So many women and children were among them that the march of the rebels had the look of the going of a people to banishment.

The pipes began playing a sadder tune, and the rebels joined in the "Wearing of the Green," and it sobbed along the road in the hills.

"They are beyond hope and endurance," said Kilclare.

"That is a new song?"

"To an old tune," he said. "It is as old as despair in this unfortunate country. The soul of a peasant has got into the music."

"You are in luck after all," I said a little later; "a woman in dark clothes, and a hood that keeps her face in a shadow, has come over

A Ride to the Gallows

the brown hill on the left. I could almost swear she was watching us."

"Lend me the glass," he said curtly, and looked through it, leaning breathlessly forward. He leant back in the saddle, dropping the glass, and it lay broken between us. He was so white and despairing that I thought he would fall. The woman had gone over the hill.

So we sat until the rebels had gone, and the peevish sorrow of the pipes and the quavering ballad had dwindled to an echo, and then I shook my reins and went forward. Kilclare kept at my side: but he looked like a man wounded to death.

The rain thickened, and nobody was at work in the fields. Nothing made a noise, but the hoofs splashing in the puddles and spurning the stones, and my sword slapping the wet side of my boot. Either the priest's gloom or the sorrowful weather darkened me, for I grew as despairing as if I was the prisoner. Indeed I was a prisoner also, in as imminent danger.

So we came to Ferrycarric, and crossed the water, and went down on the highroad. The grass beside it was rutted by the wheels of artillery. The rain shook above the roof of that huddled town in the old ramparts: and the sea in the mist was like a river in autumn.

The Wood of the Brambles

Kilclare sighed as he said, "God pity the man who thinks he knows the heart of a woman!"

As we rode along to the Gate, we saw a rider approaching on the road from the Mountain. He was a big man on a white horse, and was stooping with his chin on his chest, as if he was tired out, or in heavy thought or foreboding. I glanced at him with negligent eyes: but Kilclare started, and leant backward to look at him.

"Ah! it is poor Philip," he said.

Then I turned and saw it was Roche. He was pricking to meet us, and saluted me, flourishing his soft hat with a jolly resolute air.

"You are the man I wanted to see," he shouted: but, in spite of his bearing, his eyes were as dull as if he was attempting to master sickness or misery.

"Then I am glad we are meeting," said I.

"Ah! is that you, Father Pierce?" said he, with pain in his voice.

"Ah! Philip, do you mean to surrender?" said Kilclare.

"Indeed I do, then," said Roche. "But I

A Ride to the Gallows

could wish you were further from danger, though your friend is beside you."

"You are my only friend in the world," said Kilclare.

"And what about Sir Dominick here?"

"He has taken me prisoner."

"Ah! nonsense, man!"

"Are you certain it is wise to surrender?" I said.

"I have no choice. And I am glad to be able to give my sword to a gentleman," said Roche, drawing a weapon with an elaborate hilt.

"No, sir, I'll not take it," I said. "I am sorry you should think me an enemy."

"All who are not with us," said Roche, "will be against us to-day. I fancied you would side with the English. We gave you little cause to be friendly."

"I shall let the by-gones alone."

"You do me a barren kindness," he said, "for I shall have to surrender to a soldier, and follow at his dangerous mercy."

"You could try to escape," I said.

"Would this be the road? The men will be spared, if the leaders are given up or go in."

"If the men go back to their houses, and deliver up their arms," I replied.

The Wood of the Brambles

"Yes, that is the worst of it. When we debated the offer in the camp, it was said surrender would be useless, for no one would dare to stop unarmed in a cabin."

"So you come by yourself?" said I. "Ah, sir, you are wasting the sacrifice."

"A little sacrifice, sir. Even if I escaped, do you think I could live happy with the thought of the people I abandoned, or look the world in the face, as I remembered the heads of my comrades on the Court-house beyond? Do you think I have the courage to live? But I have the courage to die," he added, tossing his head with his old swaggering way. "I have done with a general's part; but I can still play the man."

"You are only too brave, Philip," said Kilclare.

Roche turned to him, "Pierce, did you say Sir Dominick took you?" he said in an incredulous voice.

"To make friends with the soldiers," said Kilclare quietly.

"And so, sir, I was right when I warned you that the soldiers suspected you?" said Roche. "But sure, you know he is innocent."

"You forget he was a judge in the Camp," said I.

A Ride to the Gallows

"And so was I, but we only interfered to be merciful."

"Then I had enough of your mercy," I said.

"Listen, my dear sir, and I'll tell you the whole thing in a minute," he said.

"I saw it for myself," said I. "Now there is no use in discussing it. If your mind is set on destroying your chances, you can come to the town, and give your sword to an officer."

"Ah, sir," he said earnestly, "you have no kinder friend than Kilclare."

"Then," I said, "I am much to be pitied."

"If you had heard him speak of you when he came to implore me to ride with him to the Camp to assist you——"

"Thanks for your assistance," said I.

"If you knew how highly he thinks of you, and I am sure I agree with him," said Roche with his ponderous courtesy ; for he never would flinch from a compliment, and often offended people by extravagant praises of their clothes and appearance, making them believe he was turning them to ridicule while he only wished to be civil.

"Ah, stop now, Philip," said Kilclare.

"It is all one to me now," I said. "You talk of the past: and here we are in sight of the Gate."

The Wood of the Brambles

"Well, sir," said Roche, "if you are only wanting to prove your loyalty by serving the English, give me up instead as a prisoner."

"And do you think I would agree?" said Kilclare.

"Perhaps, sir, we had better be moving," I said.

"I am glad you will be near when I die," said Roche, taking the other's hand for a moment. "Come, let us be bright to our enemies."

The streets were as empty as if the town was forsaken. I saw no one looking out of the windows. The walls had been bespattered with mud. The place echoed with the sounds of an army, the throbbing march of a regiment, the hushed and demure mutter of the drums, and the sudden song of the bugles.

"Why, I thought you were dead," said Blake with a look of an unwelcome surprise. He and Tony were arm-in-arm in the street. Tony met me with delight, and proceeded to shake hands with Kilclare.

"Did Rossiter say so?" said I.

A Ride to the Gallows

"He said you had gone over a cliff."

"So I did, and came back."

"He only waited a quarter of an hour ; and came home when the time was up : he was nearly caught by the rebels."

"He has taken you prisoner !" cried Tony as he talked to Kilclare.

"Who are the gentlemen with you ?" said Blake.

"This is General Roche, who has come in to surrender."

"Well, I am astonished," cried Blake. "Roche, is it ?"

"It is, sir," said Roche. "And glad to meet you, sir, and give you my sword."

Confused by such politeness, he took the sword. "And the other ?" he said.

"Is Father Kilclare."

"But he is not a rebel, you know," said Blake with annoyance.

"Of course he is not," said Tony.

"All the better for him," I said.

"Come with me, gentlemen," said Blake ; and he went on, without heeding me. The priests turned, and rode after him. Roche waved me a friendly good-bye, and he was humming a tune. Tony went along with Kilclare.

The Wood of the Brambles

Going back to the Inn, I found Neligan laying my suits of clothes on my bed.

"You were right to unpack the valise," I said crossly; "but you ought to have taken the clothes down before brushing, instead of doing it here."

This was unjust, because I was aware that of course he had no room to himself, and would sleep upon a table or sideboard.

"Clothes?" he said. "It was only this mornin', your Honour told me to put clothes on the bed, because it was chilly."

I had forgotten it. "Did I?" said I.

"An' 'deed your Honour was right," he went on; "an' it is often I put my clothes on my bed, for they are warm, an' it comforts me to be sure they are safe."

"I meant you to get a blanket," said I.

"Blanket?" he cried astonished, and then went on with a brotherly indulgence, "an' then it was by mistake you said clothes? Ah! your Honour, I have been mistaken myself before now."

As he went off with all the suits in his arms, I heard him laugh aloud in the passage, he was so amused at my blunder.

After I had dined I went out for a stroll, but

A Ride to the Gallows

I met few in the rain. The people were very quiet, because they had hung branches and green flags from the windows when the rebels came in. The cramped streets were dull: and I went down to the windy shore, and looked at the tarry quays, and the coils of rope, and the schooners tossing at anchor, and the waves scudding beneath a darkening sky. That wide harbour was limited by a shadow of rain: and the long arm of Ross-lare, clutching it in the distance, was hazy. I passed the bridge on the left, on the wide neck where the Slaney comes to the sea. Although the bridge was wooden, the people were very proud of its size: and it was the fashion to walk on it, and pretend to be listening to the band in the little house on it; just as I had seen the Parisians parade on the Pont Neuf in the sun.

The blinds were up in the lodgings by the end of the bridge: and I thought of enquiring whether the ladies had come from Ballymoreen. Because I was too muddy and wet for a call, I went again to the Inn, and found Hessians in a line at the door.

Chapter III

The Court-Martial

“So you have come to see the trial?” said Boyle, as I went into the coffee-room.

“What trial?” said I.

“The court-martial,” said he.

“Who are the prisoners?”

“Considine, and Roche, and Kilclare,” he said.

“Quick work,” said I.

“Just to make an example, you know,” said he, turning back to the others and taking part in the gossip.

The room was dark, for the rain curtained the window. There was a clatter in the street and a cry of “Halt!” and an escort stopped at the door. The officers sat down at the table, with an endeavour to look as if they had been on so many court-martials that the employment was tiresome: and Roche came in with a sergeant and a couple of soldiers, and nodded to me as he was putting his cloak and hat on the window-sill.

The Court-Martial

"You are to sit there, sir," said Boyle.

"Is it here, sir?" said Roche, taking the tall chair at the foot of the table with its back to the window, as I sat down on his right.

The mirror on the sideboard was dingy, but reflected the powdered hair and the red coats of the officers. Blake was at the head of the table as President, with Boyle on his right, and the four others were strangers. It was hard to distinguish the coloured prints of the prize-fighters on the opposite wall. Roche's eyelids were swollen: but I saw he was neat, as if he wanted to look a gentleman on his way to the gallows. Rough as he was, the man was always a gentleman.

Boyle stood up in his place. He was a red, portly fellow of fifty, with hair frizzled and puffed out at the sides.

"Your name is Philip Roche," he said sternly.

"I know it," said Roche, standing up and folding his arms.

"These," said Boyle, "are the charges. First, that the prisoner was a general, a colonel, a major, or a captain, in the rebel army during the recent rebellion. Second, that he was present at the murder of Thomas Joicey," on

The Wood of the Brambles

Vinegar Hill in the county of Wexford on the 3rd day of June 1798."

"I plead guilty," said Roche.

"Guilty?" said Boyle.

"Of helping a tortured people, and of trying to save Joicey," said Roche.

"Why, you were one of his judges," said Blake.

"To save others," said Roche. "The prisoners were untouched in my camps. If there was cruel work on the Hill, do you think it was strange when you were hanging our men? I voted to save Joicey, and can call on a witness."

"Sir, we have no witnesses ready," said Boyle; "and we intend to adjourn the trial, if you plead you are innocent."

"The charges are true," said Roche. "I know it will be all one in the end. My witness is here; and I appeal to Sir Dominick."

"He has not come to give evidence," said Boyle.

"But he will, when I ask him."

"I am only here to look on," I said. "I would be glad to give you help if I could."

"I thank you kindly," said Roche. "I am past help, and I only want you to clear my honour in this."

The Court-Martial

"I must refuse to be a witness at all," I said.

"Ah, nonsense! my dear sir," said Roche; "I tell you this trial was over before it began, and I am sure of the gallows. I only want you to back me up when I say I voted for Joicey."

"I am sure you did——"

"There," he said to Boyle.

I went on, "because I know you to be a man of your word."

"But you saw it," he cried.

"The voting was over when I was brought from the Mill."

"Sir, I saw you stand behind Joicey," said Roche.

"When the trial was done," I said. Flushing very deeply, he stared at me for a moment, and then turned to the President.

"Ah, well!" he said, sighing, "I was wrong to appeal to him. I thought he might have stood by me now. Come, sir, I was guilty of leading the rebels in Wexford."

"The Court is unanimous in a sentence of death," said Blake after the voting; "have you anything further to say?"

"Sir, I am not guilty of treason," said Roche; "the English are only invaders who are guarded

The Wood of the Brambles

by violence: they broke the hearts of the Irish, but not the spirit of Ireland. Above all, I am not guilty of plotting. You remember how these unfortunate people crowded from their huts to the houses of the magistrates, and begged to be given scraps of writing that named them as honest and quiet, and carried those 'protections'; and how the cabins were empty, night after night, before the Eve of Whitsunday, because the peasants were asleep in the hedges out of fear of the yeomen. They were driven by blind terror to a crazy resistance. It was only despair that made them trample your guns. Was it a light thing that could rouse that rabble to march, with pitchforks and scythes, against the armies of England?"

"Come, sir," said Boyle, "we know your partisans say England maddened this county into rebellion because it was weak, and could be crushed, and its fate would strike terror into dangerous plotters. You can hardly expect us to agree with you."

"Sir, I am talking only of the things you have seen," said Roche, standing erect with his arms folded defiantly. "Martial law was declared; although many of the magistrates said the country was quiet. The thumb-screw,

The Court-Martial

the pitched cap, and the lash, were employed at will to extort confessions of plots, or of hiding muskets or pikes. I saw a man stagger out of a house in Enniscorthy: his hands were tied, and the pitch was scalding his face: he tottered against a wall; and the people were afraid to befriend him because the yeomen were looking."

"And I have no doubt he deserved it," said Boyle. "There was a need of desperate remedies."

"It was the desperate remedies that drove the men desperate," said Roche.

"If people meddled with sedition, perhaps their skins were in danger," said Boyle. "The country was all awake to rebel."

"It was always ready," said Roche. "But Wexford was the quietest county. The people were slow to rise or surrender."

"They rose too soon, I believe," said Boyle.

"Because there was no plot in the county. The news that a Rising was at hand had been whispered in all the cabins of Ireland. The Dublin men were betrayed, and the plotting counties were warned that the Rising was put off; but the Wexford people knew nothing, and were stung by the savage tyranny of the weak and despised. The drunken squireens, the poor

The Wood of the Brambles

tradesmen and farmers of our Irish militia and yeomanry, had absolute power. God pity the weak, when a peasant has a mind to be cruel! What were these men but peasants with a passing authority? Did you think they were saints, that you should trust in them so? Some of them were kindly, and others drove inoffensive men mad. Your Viceroy has condemned them, and Moore, the best of your generals in this struggle, has said that if he was Irish, the sight of their tyranny would have made him a rebel."

"If you begin quoting authorities, I can tell you your hero, Wolfe Tone, has said a Rising would mean a massacre of the gentry," said Boyle. "Do you think we forget the massacres at Scullabogue and the Bridge? We have been fighting for our lives and our homes."

"The massacres were the work of the men who made the Rising a pretext for disorder and violence," said Roche. "I am no more to blame for the massacres than you for the doings of 'Tom the Devil' or Hepenstall. I did all I could to prevent them. You were standing aside from the troubles of the ragged and common peasants around you. My heart burnt at their sufferings."

"Enough of this, sir," said Blake. "We are

The Court-Martial

not come to listen to rhetoric. I must pronounce sentence of death."

"A kind sentence," said Roche. "You could do nothing harder than condemn me to live."

"You are sentenced to be hanged on the bridge."

"I claim the death of a soldier."

"Bring in Mr Considine, sergeant."

"Well," said I to myself, "it is difficult to get at the truth in Ireland: it is trampled between us. When a man tries to be just, he only earns the contempt of people of every shade of opinion."

The noise of the rain grew with a timid pit-a-pat on the window. There in the dark room we were silent as spurs clinked in the passage. The two soldiers brought in candles, and Theophilus Considine followed serenely. The light struck on his green and gold and his snowy and elaborate wig. He sat down, folding his arms, and looked at Blake with an air as if he saw no one, and wondered what had become of the prisoner at the head of the table. Blake was red and embarrassed.

The Wood of the Brambles

"Mr Theophilus Considine," said Boyle, rising.

"You mean General Considine," said Theophilus sternly.

"General, I beg your pardon," said Boyle. "The charge is that you were a general, a colonel, a major, or a captain in the rebel army during the recent rebellion."

"All Europe knows I was the general," said Theophilus. "Have you any other charge to bring forward?"

"None, sir."

"I plead guilty at once."

"For heaven's sake stop, sir!" said Blake.

"Why should I stop?"

"Sir, if you will be guided by me," said Boyle.

"And why should I?" said Theophilus.

"If I may presume to advise you," said Boyle.

"Sir, it would be presumption."

"To plead not guilty," said Boyle. "At least it would allow a delay. Sir, we are inclined to be merciful."

"To deny my rank, sir! You talk of mercy to me!" said Theophilus slowly, with lifted eyebrows. "This insolence——"

The Court-Martial

"Sir, I assure you nobody has a wish to offend you," said Blake eagerly. "But if you should plead guilty——"

"I have done so," said Theophilus.

"Then," said the President, sinking back in his chair, "I have nothing to do, but take the votes of the Court."

"We have no choice, and we are bound to condemn you," he said, after taking the votes. "Do you wish to say anything?"

Theophilus rose, and began to speak with an eloquence that was wasted on me, for I felt as if the man was an actor. He had his speech by heart, and it followed the tone of the theatrical heroes of the French Revolution: it was about citizens, and the planting of trees of Liberty by the dung-heaps and thatched huts of our disorderly villages. As he waved his arms with his winding gestures, and lifted his voice as if he spoke to a multitude, the President watched him with a rueful dismay, and Boyle looked as if he thought it was hard to see why a man who professed to welcome the poor as brothers should rebuke him for insolence.

It was a long speech: and I hardly listened, but looked at the dim mirror, and noted the round marks of hot tumblers on the mahogany table,

The Wood of the Brambles

till Considine's voice began to quaver and sink, as if the mighty assembly he had made believe to address was dwindling to a court-martial of enemies. Suddenly he changed to my eyes, and was no longer an actor, but a man who had a lengthy delusion. With a sting of pity, I felt he had been fooling himself by all the pomp of his life. Perhaps he was even fond of Catullus. The scattered words he understood might have let him believe he was tasting the fruits of the learning he never had the chance to acquire. Perhaps his heavy classics were toys to delude himself with his neighbours. Judging him now with a new charity, I was drawn by an eager kindness towards him ; as if I wanted to make amends for injustice. Now, as his voice weakened and shook, I saw he was facing death and not assuming defiance.

Suddenly, he stopped short, and sat down. Crossing his arms on the table, he bent his head to avoid the eyes of his judges.

"Sir, you are sentenced to be hanged on the Bridge," said Blake in a low voice.

"Sir," said Theophilus, throwing back his head proudly, but speaking in a quavering voice, "I would prefer a guillotine."

Boyle said, "Bring in Father Kilclare."

The Court-Martial

Theophilus strode out, and his walk was feeble and tired.

I wished the trials were over. There was a delay, for the soldiers took Theophilus to the parlour above. I heard their steps overhead.

"I have known Considine for years, and I think I never knew him at all," said Boyle, coming round to me.

"I never thought of him fairly," I said.

"Never judge a man till he dies: then if you are wrong, he won't be able to prove it."

"Things may come to light," I said.

"Ah, but you can refuse to believe them. But Roche was always the same," said he.

"He is a man easy to know," I said.

Kilclare came in with his hands tied at his back.

"Untie the prisoner's hands," said Blake. The sergeant cut the rope: and Kilclare took the seat, and leant forward, clasping his hands. Boyle read the charges hurriedly as if he was tired. They were the same as he had read against Roche.

"Guilty or not guilty?" he said.

"Not guilty of the first."

The Wood of the Brambles

"You admit the second?"

"Do you call it a crime to be present among thousands of people when a murder is done?"

"If you have a share in the guilt."

"I had no part."

"But you admit you were present?"

"If I was there, it was only to stop murder," he said.

"We know all about that," said Boyle. "We have had enough of the praises of your chivalrous Rising and benevolent friends."

"I say again," said Kilclare, "if anything took me near the rebels at all, it was an errand of mercy."

"I meant to keep aloof from the trials," I said, "but since I was forced to speak in another matter, I wish to give evidence in the prisoner's favour."

"In his favour?" said Blake.

Kilclare looked down at the bracelets of the rope on his wrists.

I said, "I saw him help Doctor Carey."

"Doctor Carey rode in to give evidence, as soon as he heard you had taken the prisoner," said Boyle.

"And he is coming?" said I.

"He thought it best to keep back," Boyle

The Court-Martial

went on. "And how do you say the prisoner helped him?"

"By defending him, and voting to spare him."

"How did he come to be voting?"

"Why, as one of the judges."

"Ah!" said Blake, "and that is your evidence?"

"You saw him sit as a judge?" said Boyle.

"Only on that trial," I said.

"And he was present, at the murder of Joicey?"

"So was I."

"All in good time!" said Blake. "Maybe, we will deal with you yet."

"As far as I know," I said, "he had nothing to do with it."

"Is that all you have to say, sir?" said Boyle.

"Yes, I only want to bear out the prisoner's statement."

"You might credit us with common intelligence," said Blake.

"You have heard the witness?" said Boyle to Kilclare.

"And he is speaking the truth," said Kilclare quietly. "I'll tell you the story: it will not keep you a minute. I kept away from the Rising, because I knew it was hopeless. Late

The Wood of the Brambles

one Saturday night, I heard the Rector and Sir Dominick Davern were prisoners ; and I rode in the dark to Carrickbyrne, and persuaded Father Roche to befriend them. It was a long way ; but we reached the Hill before the trials began. There were many dangerous fellows in the Camp on the Hill : and Father Murphy was pitiless, though he used to be gentle. Our only plan was to sit on the Tribunal, and out-vote him for mercy. Father Roche attempted to save Joicey ; but the others out-voted him : then I took a place ; and we set the Rector at liberty. But the rebels were sullen and fierce, and Father Roche was afraid that if we acquitted Sir Dominick in the face of the evidence, our verdict would go for nothing, as neither had authority there. So I stood aside ; and the others condemned him : but Father Roche was enabled to put off the execution, and keep him up alone in the Mill. That night, when all the Camp was asleep, I took the sentry away from the Mill ; but Sir Dominick would not trust my assistance : and so I got a friend, who was up there in disguise, to give him my cloak, and take him off without telling him that I was watching to ensure their escape."

"This is all very well," said Blake. "But

The Court-Martial

even if it is true, did you never reflect that sitting as a judge would destroy you?"

"There was no other way," said Kilclare.

"Sir, there is a vote in your favour, but the rest have decided you are guilty," said Blake after the voting. "And now, it is my duty to sentence you to be hanged on the Bridge."

Chapter IV

Sir Tim

I HAD supper in the parlour, because the coffee-room was kept for the soldiers. It was the way of the Inn to look upon the serving of meals in the wrong rooms as a sign of distinction. I daresay McKenna, the landlord, would have doubled my bill, if he had ordered the waiters to serve the meal on my bed. There was a discord underneath ; for the officers vied in the loudness and the depth of their voices, as if they wanted to prove they were accustomed to speak above the din of a battle.

All at once I could hear a louder noise that betokened an important arrival.

There was a husky and fierce voice on the stairs : Sir Tim Desmond was coming, and pausing on every step to take breath, and shout over the banisters to McKenna, whose tones were full of a frightened and pathetic remonstrance. Apparently Sir Tim was enraged,

Sir Tim

because the weather was wild and the inn was crowded by visitors. Then I heard him bully the waiter.

"Who did you say? What? Davern? Do you say an infant like that has the best room in the house?"

"Ah! but, your Honour, we never knew you were comin'," said the waiter.

"An' why didn't you know? An' why should you know? Did you fancy I would throuble to write?"

"No indeed, your Honour."

"What's that you say? Where's the room? In there, is it? Then, what do you mean? Why, that is an infamous cupboard."

"It is, your Honour."

"Tell me now, would you insult a respectable thrunk by puttin' it here?"

"I would not, your Honour."

"Do you threat me worse than a thrunk?"

"Humbly beggin' your Honour's pardon, it is the only room in the house," said the waiter.

"Hasn't the landlord a betther room of his own? Then tell him to sleep here, an' move my things to his apartment at once."

At this I groaned in my heart, because my room was beside McKenna's, and the partition

The Wood of the Brambles

was thin. Sir Tim loved making a noise, as if he considered loudness was a proof of his rank, since no one would bear with such a steady disturbance by insignificant people. I think his hatred of being ever alone ~~was~~ one of the causes of his riot: he made a din to keep himself company.

As that truculent voice grew fainter in the storey above, I rang the bell on the table, and went and sat by the fire. I attempted to scan a paper, but my eyes would not gather a meaning, for I thought of the trials. The coal was wet, but a skein of smoke above it was widening to a shivering veil. The fire was so depressing to see, that I grew indignant with Neligan for not obeying my summons to clear the cloth; and I went and opened the door, to make sure of his catching the sound, and then, as soon as I rang, there was a noise of his stumbling from precipitate speed, and knocking his tray against the side of the banisters.

I was back in my chair before he entered the room; and I made believe to be busily reading the paper, for I hated to look idle, and was hardly disposed to give an ear to his gossip. As a rule, he would talk with a mingling of esteem and affection, like a son chatting with a dutiful

Sir Tim

father. But now he came in with such an air of disaster, that without looking up at him I knew he was wretched. He was like a cold wind in the room, as he was clearing the table: and he succeeded in giving such an intimate grief to the clink of the glasses and dishes as he knocked them together, that I was glad when he spoke.

"Humbly askin' your Honour's pardon," he said, "but might I be speakin'?"

"Well, what is it?" I said, putting the paper down by my side.

He stood at the far end of the table, with the tray in his hand, and had a look of doleful anxiety.

"Savin' your Honour's presence, sir, the boys do be sayin' you took Father Pierce and were a witness against him."

"And what then?"

"Nothin', sir—nothin'—I was only wantin' to know."

Neligan went out of the room with such a tottering sadness that I feared he would drop the tray on the floor. Then coming in, he folded the cloth with a careful unhappiness, as if the sight of a crease in it wrinkled his heart. As I glanced at the paper, I thought it would be wiser to get a servant less apt to

The Wood of the Brambles

tumble into depths of despair. He carried the cloth away, as if he had shrouded his hopes in it: and then he began to tidy the room. As he put the books in a circle around the table, and shifted the chairs to the corners where he thought there was least likelihood of anyone going, I felt he watched me with wishing eyes, and my temper grew rapidly worse.

"That will do," I said. "You can leave the rest till to-morrow."

He went to the door, and then stopped, clutching the handle, and gave a look at me sidelong.

"Humbly askin' your Honour's pardon," he said, "but I'd be leavin' your service."

I dropped the paper, at this; and turned to him, clasping my hands at the back of my head.

"Leave my service?" said I. "I thought you were contented enough."

He gave me another look, as a child peers at a retributive master.

"Indeed an' indeed, sir," he said, "there's no kinder master in Ireland."

"And yet I am not surprised at your leaving. I meant to speak to you sooner, but it slipped from my mind. I may be going abroad,

Sir Tim

and I thought you would be reluctant to travel."

"Sir, I'd have followed you to the end of the world."

"Well, I meant to give you the choice. You would be weary travelling, when your heart was behind you. So I thought of a change. Old Ryland is feeble and useless, since the House was destroyed. I hear he hobbles about among the cinders and ruins, as if the site was a graveyard where his people were buried. So I shall give him a pension, and a house near his daughter, Mrs Kane of the Hill. What I want now is a man for out-of-door work, and I shall give you a trial. You can live in the lodge, and be a light in the county."

"Your Honour is mighty good now," said Neligan, with tears in his voice. "Who so kind as your Honour? But I must be leavin' your service."

"Well, then, you are slow to be pleased."

"Wouldn't I worship you all my days for your goodness?" he said.

"You have a better place, I suppose?"

"No place, nor anny hope of a masher."

"Then what has come over you? Ah! I see what it is; you have quarrelled with Miss Con-

The Wood of the Brambles

sidine's maid. Why, man, where is your sense? You will find her longing to see you. I have no doubt that she is weary with crying. If she is in the wrong, she may be slow to forgive: but buy her a present, and you will be pardoned the sooner."

"I've no quarrel with Molly," he said, nearly blubbing. "Now I'll have no chance with her father."

"Ah, then, you have slipped into trouble. Many a wiser man has got into trouble, and has lived to forget it. You are wrong not to trust me; you would find me a friend."

"Ah, your Honour," he said, "it is because you took Father Pierce."

"Because I took Father Kilclare?" said I. Then, after a pause, "You can get your wages from Ryland."

As he went down, I heard him sob on the stairs.

I took the paper, and read something about the Viceroy and the Ulster Rebellion: but I found I was growing bitterly angry with everyone who was named in the news. So I flung it into the fender. Why should I trouble about a servant's opinion? If one of the others had chosen to spite himself by foolish ingratitude,

Sir Tim

I would not care in the least. But I had a weakness for Neligan, and I liked to be haunted by his faithful affection: in my dreams of the future I had come to imagine him as a loyal retainer.

Neligan had a likeness to Tony, although the worst of his faults were that he was given to lie a little, in an unintentional way—with no malice or wish to win an advantage, but rather as if he shrank from the prose of truth—and at times he would be flustered, from rash confidence in his gifts as a toper, and was gloomy when the girls were unkind: but that was a brief sadness; for though constantly loving, he was inconstant, and many had his worship before Agatha's maid, a rosy trim little woman, with brown sorrowful eyes and a heart full of laughing. The faults of both were outweighed by their simple and unreasoning kindness. I was flattered by their open affection and occasional follies. They would be all the more welcome among my chosen surroundings, if their failings taught Agatha to look up to my wisdom.

Then I brightened, and I fancied her in the comfortless chair before me, or moving about the parlour and making its ugliness pretty. Her looks would have made a dungeon delightful.

The Wood of the Brambles

When we were married, we were sure to stay sometimes here at the inn, on the nights that she took me to a dance in the town or in the country beyond. That was a disquieting thought, for I was afraid she would wish to go to every rejoicing, and would doom me to dance, or to see her followed by forsaken admirers. Well, she might tire of being jolted along the difficult roads in the dark for the pleasure of a dance; and perhaps I might grow out of my jealousy.

At this there was a step on the stairs; and, all of a sudden, the door was flung ajar with a bang. Sir Tim Desmond strode in with his left hand on his hilt, and his old three-cornered hat upon the side of his head. His eyes were aching with anger, and he seemed the ambassador of a mortal defiance. Then he beamed with affection, and came to me, with both his hands out, and cried—

“Is that you? It is hunthreds of centuries since I saw you, my dear.”

“And what have I done, sir, to make you meet me with such a terrible frown?” I said, getting up.

Sir Tim

"Frown—my dear lad?" he said, as he was clutching my hands. "Sure I never saw who you were, and I thought you a stranger."

"And so you were angry?"

"Angry is no word for it, dear," he said, sitting down; "the insults I have been bearing for hours are simply incredible. Never did I see annythin' like it. Then, to outdo them all, that scandalous McKenna sends up a shiverin' waither. Mark you, he sends a waither instead of comin' himself; and if he'd the face to approach me, he'd never do it again. Listen to me, he sends a shudderin' waither, that keeps shrinkin' back on the threshold, as if I was a wild animal, an' if he hadn't stopped there he'd be there still: an' says he, 'Please, your Honour, the supper will be laid in the coffee-room.' 'Tell your scounthrel of an employer,' says I, 'supper will not be laid in the coffee-room. Am I a farmer or a tailor that I should sup in the coffee-room? Is this an inn or an Emperor's Palace, that I should be ordered about? Supper will be laid in the parlour,' says I. 'May it please your Honour,' says he, 'it was my mistake; an' I meant supper will be laid in the parlour.' 'Then how dare you?' says I. 'Isn't the coffee-room public? Haven't I as good a right to be there as annyone? an' a

The Wood of the Brambles

betther right too? Am I a disgrace to this pot-house? Am I a leper, that I should be shut up alone?' It was then that I missed his head with the boot-jack."

"The mistake was deliberate," I said; "probably he mentioned the coffee-room, to make you insist on being put in the parlour."

"If I thought that, I'd go and kill him at once," said he.

"But why should you be fierce 'with a stranger?"

"Sir, I'd have been fierce with a lamb, if I'd found him sittin' here in the room that is set apart for my supper. He'd have gone out; even if I had to force him to leave his body behind him. An' I wonther why that insolent dog should keep me out of the coffee-room."

"It is given up to the officers."

"What?" said Sir Tim, jumping up. "Am I to be insulted for soldiers? I'll turn every man of them out."

I made him sit down by telling him that they were only militia. "Why, sir," I said, "Boyle is one of the loudest of the fellows below."

"And am I to be yieldin' to Boyle?" he cried.

Sir Tim

"Well, sir, it is he that should grumble. They are huddled together, while here we have the room to ourselves."

"Grumble? I'd like to see him do such a thing. What more does he want? I'll go down an' teach him his place."

"Well, you should be satisfied now, for he is under your feet."

"An' so he ought to be, sir. I am aghast at his outrageous impertinence. Grumblin' because I have a room to myself! Tell me now," he went on, "what is there the matter with Tony?"

"Nothing at all," I said. "I saw him to-day."

"I met him out on the road; an' he was ridin' as if the bailiffs were afther him."

"To-day?"

"It was at dark: an' he shouted he was goin' to Dublin. I heard he had been foolin' with Considine. So Theophilus is condemned to be hanged. He just sent me a note by Brosna to ask me to go to dinner to-morrow. An' you must come too."

"He hasn't asked me," said I.

"You have lived abroad for too long," said Sir Tim, sadly. "Does an Irishman wait to be

The Wood of the Brambles

asked to dine with a friend? I'll tell him you are comin'," he said.

"But he is in prison," said I.

"In his lodgin's by the bridge on the river," said Sir Tim, "with a sentry in the passage to guard him. You see the prison is crammed, an' they think a deal of Theophilus," he went on, with a chuckle. "But he is not in danger: his friends will pull him out of the hole. All Dublin believes him a great scholar with an ocean of money. If you only swagger enough, the people will say, 'That fellow has private reasons for thinkin' he is a man of importance.'"

"But you are a friend of his, sir?"

"An' so I have a right to abuse him. Ah, dear!" he said, growing suddenly darkened, "pray that you'll never be old. All my friends have been vanishin': as I walk in Dublin, I see faces that are dust looking out of familiar windows, an' shudder at the loneliness in the thick of a crowd. The kindly voices of friends call to me from desolate houses in the Green, and I wander in a city of ghosts."

"Why, sir, you have an army of friends."

"Ah! what is the worth of the pityin' friendship of the young for an old fellow that

Sir Tim

is laggin' behind? An' you have no cause to be friends with me."

Here a waiter knocked at the door, and looked in to discover whether it was safe to advance.

"I'll forgive everythin', if you hasten the supper," cried Sir Tim, cheerily.

The man laid the table, but kept an eye on the door. Sir Tim put his hat on the mantel-piece.

"You'll pardon my rudeness in wearin' my hat," he went on, as he took his place at the table. "I feel unfinished without it."

"You used to wear it about the House, I remember."

"At Davernmore, do you mean? The walls of that house were built entirely of windows. I would sooner live in a field. It was impossible to get away from the weather. If there was a cloud you would see it at every turn: and if ever you had a heart to be doleful, the summer would shine in on your face. And so the draughts were incredible. Upon my word, I am not exaggeratin' at all, when I say that in rough weather I was blown up an' down the corridor like a leaf in the wind. But listen to me now. Don't talk till I change this chicken

The Wood of the Brambles

to a cluster of bones. One folly is enough at a time."

"All right, sir," I said; "and I'll go on with the paper."

"Tell me now," he said, immediately afterwards, "what has become of that decent boy Neligan?"

"He is leaving me, sir."

"Is he now? I'd like to secure him."

"You might do worse, sir," I said; "he is very willing and honest."

"He has such a brogue that you can tell he is Irish before he opens his lips," said Sir Tim. "An' his eyes speak with a brogue."

"He is none the worse for that," said I.

"No. The week I was in London I got an English accent, an' I never was able to get rid of it since. But my heart is kind to the brogue," he went on in all seriousness. "When he brought me my boots at the House, he always left me an odd pair that belonged to somebody else; but he never meant to annoy me. An' he used to give the men the wrong swords, as they went out, but I never parted from mine. I can recommend you another man in his place, Brosna that used to be with Theophilus."

"Surely somebody said he was a rebel?" said I.

Sir Tim

"He has got a pardon through Blake, and begged me to employ him, just now. The truth is, I am afraid of his eyebrows, an' his dignity also. How often I laughed to see him struttin' behind Theophilus on the way to the club. You see, I am stately myself."

"Well, I think he will do," said I, and he went on with his supper, till all the claret was gone, and the chicken was little more than a memory.

As he stood on the rug, he hardly seemed to be older than I always remembered him. The faded coat, and the frowsy wig, were familiar, as if they were the same he had worn when I was a child: and his square face, with the squeezed lips and the prominent ears, were as little changed as his sword or his angry taps on his snuff-box.

"Tell me now," he said, bringing an enamelled toothpick-case out of his deep pocket, and putting on his hat, "do you find it tirin' to sit there like a stone? I would die, if I sat still for an hour. But you were always an oddity. I am brimmin' with life, and so I keep on the move."

So he went marching off down the room.

The fire was blazing, and flung his lessening shadow upon the wall and the ceiling.

The Wood of the Brambles

"Tell me now, are you listenin' to me?" he said, as he came striding towards me, "Do you see much of Agatha Considine?"

"Much too little," I said.

"Come now, that's a good hearin'," he said, pacing to the end of the room with such a twisting swagger that the tip of his sword kept knocking his right heel as he went.

"Why should you care, sir?"

"Care?" he said, marching towards me, "of course I do, because we are rivals."

"Rivals?" I said.

"Yes, boy, it is time you should know it," he said, making a pause on the rug, on tip-toe, with his hands in his pockets. "An' I learnt that you cared for her, by a cowardly ambush."

"An ambush?"

"On the day of the fire at Davernmore, I was crossin' the wood in the mornin' to visit her, and just by the well I saw the pair of you comin'. 'It is like that infant's impertinence to interfere with my courtin', says I, 'an' to confront him the better, I'll step out from the bushes an' sthagger him.' So I stood behind the laurels and waited: she was half turnin' to you, that looked as dazzled as if you had the sun in your eyes. Then you spoke of me, and Miss Considine called me a

Sir Tim

funny little old man. How could I come out afther that? I crept away through the thickets."

"Indeed, sir, she never thought you were there."

"What? My soul! you are a desirable comforter. Of course she knew I was hidin', and she said it in fun. How could she have said it in earnest? She wanted to make me sorry I hid—the sweet rogue—and she succeeded entirely, bad luck to her! It was only later I was sure she was jokin'. Why, she looked at me, lad."

"I remember that something stirred in the laurels."

"I was the rustlin', for I started in agony. 'It is only a rat,' says you, as if you were jealous. 'It is not in bushes that the rats are in Ireland,' says she. Says I to myself—'Must I submit to be branded as a rat by a puppy?'"

"Indeed I am afraid of your rivalry," I said.

"And small wonder," he said, and paced again, without heeding the shadow dwindling before him. "Though I am humble, I can see myself fairly. I should be a fool to deny my advantages. Though I am a short man, I have a fine leg."

"You have indeed, sir," I said, "and it is greatly admired."

The Wood of the Brambles

"I know it," he said, coming back, and his shadow sprawled on the ceiling. "I have the three things most admired by the women—a warm heart, an undeniable courage, an' a fine leg—things that the innocent creatures seldom possess. May be, you will think I am proud," he said, as he stopped short on the rug, thrusting out his chest, "but the knowledge of all that I might have been has taught me humility. Listen now, I might have been wonderful. Sometimes I think my statue is at the gate of the Phoenix: it looks on the boys that prance beside the coaches an' chairs, an' whisper nonsense to the ladies; it hears the merry bark of the pistols, in the grey of the mornin'. An' if ever a poor lad in the dumps—thinkin' of his babyish sins, with the dolefulness an' heavy repentance of youth—sees it, he takes heart, for he says, 'Sir Tim had a long fight with himself, an' manny a fall into the filth of the gutter, an' there he is standin'.'" Pausing, he went on with a sigh—"Then I know it will never be there; an' if it was it would sadden the good, an' leave a grin on vile faces. Ah! I broke my heart when I began playin' the fool. That was when I was young."

"What was your ambition?" said I.

Sir Tim

"What wasn't?" he answered. "I wanted to be an irresistible swordsman, an' the head of the Thrappists——"

"Trappists?" I cried.

"Why are you grinnin', boy?"

"To think of you as a monk."

"Ah! you don't understand me at all," he cried.

"What would you have done if the Master of Novices had told you to plant cabbages upside down in the garden?" said I.

"I would have planted him upside down," he said, sternly, striding away and lifting his feet well as he went. "Ah! we are all wasted in Ireland. We all know in our hearts that we were born to be great. Manny a poor fellow, whose finest work has been to fatten a pig, thinks he would be a wonderful author, if he only knew how to write. Come, let us talk of pleasanter things," he said, turning; "I hear Roche is to be hanged in the mornin'."

"I was afraid so," said I.

"An' Kilclare on Sunday; and poor Theophilus the next mornin': of course he will be sent a reprieve. An' so this is the end of the Unlucky Kilclares: pity an old family should go out in disaster. It was whispered they were

The Wood of the Brambles

under a curse. It was all nonsense, but I think I believe in it."

"I never heard the rights of it."

"It is one of the stories the peasants whisper by the turf in the twilight, afraid that the Little Good People may be passin' the house. It was about an old woman who used to live by herself in the very heart of the wood, till Black Phelim Kilclare decided to demolish her hovel. You will have a right to be happy, when Kilclare is forgotten."

"I, sir?"

"He is a cousin of yours."

"And so you think I dislike him? It is such a distant relationship that I seldom remember it."

"It would make you his heir."

"But he has nothing to leave."

"Well, there's the claim, you know."

"What claim?" said I.

"Oh, some nonsense or other," said Sir Tim, marching off again. "As I was sayin' just now," he said, trying to change the subject, "the reason I love little Agatha Considine, is because she is like the girls I used to adore. When I was younger, all the girls were delightful. Now they try to copy the men. Shall I ever forget

Sir Tim

poor Malachi's severe indignation, when there was a girl at a meet, in a hat and feather and coat, and with her hair in a bag! She was blockin' the road; and poor Malachi took her for a lad, an' he cursed her, in his kind innocent way, with his usual astoundin' indecency of language; and when she faced him, he dropped his whip on the ground, for he was modest by nature."

"His gold-handled whip?" I cried in astonishment.

"He did indeed; an' I met him comin' back in the lane. 'Is it sick you are, Malachi?' says I. 'Sick at heart,' says he, 'sir, to think of the misconduct of women. Sir, it is a degenerate time.'"

"Talking of claims," said I; "has anyone a claim on my land?"

"What do you mean?" said he.

"Kilclare, for instance," said I. "A ruffian named Harragan, who used to be master of the school in the village, spoke to me once of important papers he had found in the lumber left at Ballymoreen."

"By the Kilclares?"

"Yes, and now you spoke of a claim."

"What have I to do with it, sir?" he said, crossly.

The Wood of the Brambles

"Well, you would be likely to know; for you were in Sir Malachi's confidence."

"And what then?" he said, scowling.

"Every Irishman thinks he is entitled to land that belongs to somebody else," said I. "If there was any sense in the claim, I ought to know it; but perhaps it is based on a will somebody could have made if he liked."

"Sir, it is no business of mine," he said, angrily. "An' listen to me; I think it is an outhrage to thry an' dhraw me into it! Yes! I take it ill of you, boy!"

"Well, sir, I am sorry I spoke. I shall ask somebody else, as I suppose there is truth in it."

"An' why should you think so?"

"From what you say."

"Sir, I said nothin' at all," he cried, indignantly, striding down the room. "Do you mean that you would let it alone, if I should say it was nonsense?"

"It is more than likely," I said.

"Then what right have you to mean such a thing?" He went off again, and a flicker made his shadow tremendous. "Tell me now, are you listenin', boy?" he said with a purple frown, as he came back. "There is nothin' in his claim: it is all foolishness; confound his impertinence!"

Sir Tim

"So I thought all along," said I.

"Then why did you annoy me about it? You must allow me to tell you, your manner is distinctly offensive."

"If it is, sir, I am sorry," I said, getting up. "You would be the last man in the world that I would like to offend."

"And you are the last I would quarrel with, dear," he said, putting his hand on my shoulder. "But this is an unfortunate subject."

"By all means let us change it."

"An' leave it by for the future. I have passed my word," he said, dolefully; "I have burnt the Rubicon."

"You should set the Thames on fire next."

"What do you mean?" he cried. "Sir, I did not speak of the Thames."

Then the noise grew louder below.

"I can hear Blake above all," I said.

"Blake? You never said he was there! Sir, I have walked in Grafton Street with Carnaby Blake!"

"Indeed, sir?" said I.

"And it needs affection," said he, "to make me go arm-in-arm with a man of that preposterous height. I'll be off to see him at once."

The Wood of the Brambles

I could hear the tip of his sword bump on the stairs.

As I sat again by the fire, I heard him welcomed with shouts. The flames were mirrored in the tiles by the fender, and mocked with a ghostly resemblance by the splinters of light on the smooth rim of the mahogany table. The wind growled like a dog worrying a bone, and at times hustled the house, spattering the windows with rain. All the room was full of Sir Tim, and his brogue echoed in the shadowy corners, and the smell of his snuff lingered in the air by the hearth. He had taken such a hold of the room, that when I tried to imagine Agatha in the dusk of the parlour, his ruddy face and small eyes were beneath the sheltering straw of her huge hat, and his voice came huskily to my listening ears. Then I heard him shouting below, giving the company his cheeriest song—

“An old woman tossed in a blanket,
Seventeen times as high as the moon.”

So I decided to take refuge in bed.

I had been asleep for a time, when I awoke to discover someone was ascending the stairs and

Sir Tim

shouting a chorus of "Rang do didlo dee." It was Sir Tim; and his voice was full of delight, until he got to his room. Then his song changed to a weary groan of repentance. "Ah, Timotheus!" he said, "this has been a night of disgrace. You have lied, an' you have dhrunk more than was good for you. Lord, man! will you never grow up to years of discretion? But listen to me now," he went on, as if he answered himself, "what else could I do? Didn't I de-sthroy the lad's home? Must I be sthrivin' now to make him a pauper? If by an untruth—There's no excuse for a lie: and I am sorry you should mince a dishonour. Ah! tell me now, was it for anny good of my own? You are too old to begin now as a liar. I'd have you know, that's a word I'll not take from anny-one: and as for the dhrink, I can carry all that I hold."

Then he opened the door, and flung his shoes in the passage. Then there was a hush that was broken by a sigh like the sound of a heavy wave that grinds upon shingle, and he said, in a voice aching with misery—

"Ah, dear, dear! I wish I was a Thrappist!"

Chapter V

At the Well in the Wood

BROSNA knocked at the door, with a discreet tapping whose deference made me think of his mighty summons when he called me to face the Tribunal in the Camp on the Hill. When I replied, he came in, and went stealing about, like a methodical ghost, and making everything tidy, with a forethought and care welcome after the loving neglect of that stern moralist, Neligan. I used to think myself lucky if Neligan had left clothes or a pair of boots; for more often he had taken them to brush, and intended to restore them at leisure. If he said it was eight when he called me, he only meant it was near that time when he first began to think of arousing me. He used to treat my clothes with contempt, as if care for such things was only fit for a miser or a wretch unaccustomed to carry a respectable suit: but he never forgot to give an elaborate shine to the silver

At the Well in the Wood

buckles on my shoes and beside the knees of my breeches.

Now as Brosna opened the shutter, I heard rain on the window.

“Raining again?” said I.

“It is so, your Honour,” said he.

I lay still as he went off, and I thought how I used to lie in my narrow room, of a morning, and hear the rain buzzing in the leaves of the sycamore, and, although I hated it, would be glad, for I hoped Sir Malachi would stop in bed until dinner. To my mind in those days, there was nothing as vicious as pelting showers, or as creepy as the whispering of the rain in the twilight. Sir Tim used to say I resented its coming down alike upon me and the servants without any improper respect for my rank.

Once when I had driven out with Sir Malachi on the jaunting-car, and we had been drenched by the rain on the open moors, and were coming back through the village, where the people were strolling, with their usual disregard of a shower, and saluting us with solemn and grieved looks that were scarcely a mask to their delight and amusement, my heart was in despair, as I crouched with my face slobbered as if I had been crying, while powder was streaming in a paste on my

The Wood of the Brambles

neck ; and my grandfather grew so full of anger against the weather and neighbours, that he thundered and swore at me for getting wet and appearing an effeminate fool.

Now I was depressed by foreseeing a rainy day at the Inn, and the wet people passing by in the road. It was the sight of the cooling water that made me get up ; as I was loath to admit laziness by ringing for more, if it was chill in the jug. I dressed with a feeling that no one had such ill-luck, and a wish that I had never been born in a world where there was nothing but rain. "No one can deny that my grandfather neglected me," said I to myself bitterly ; for this was the grievance of my life, and came back to me whenever something else had depressed me. "It was mean," I went on, "not to light the fire in the Bookroom, when I was sitting there all alone. The room was very cold in the winter. Of course it never came to his mind, and I would rather have frozen than have asked for it ; and nobody dreamt of such a thing, for that fire had never been lit, and the room was only meant for an ornament. Still it was my grandfather's fault," said I. "I got a chill in my heart then, that has never gone out of it."

The breakfast only blackened my mood. I

At the Well in the Wood

determined to send for McKenna the landlord, and tell him what I thought of the scandalous tea and rashers and weather. Rashers were always cut in too generous slices there, for the cook would have thought it was miserly to be making them thin.

Brosna brought a note on a salver; and this filled me with indignation, that anyone should presume to annoy me by writing: but I was a little soothed by his dignity; for Neligan could never get rid of the belief it was a practical joke to bring a letter on a dish, and he did it as if he was indulging my playfulness. The address was in a delicate hand, with wilful dashes and flourishes. Turning the note over, I found it had the Considines' seal. Then I opened it, and saw it was signed by Agatha, and asked me to visit her at Ballymoreen. I felt it was an outrage to ask me to go there on such a morning as this. She should have foreseen the weather, I reflected, and then I decided not to stir out-of-doors. Then I told Brosna to bring the horse to the door, because I was going out to the Considines'.

"An' am I to go with your Honour?" said he.

"Of course not," said I, sternly, with a little relief at being able to imply a rebuke; although

The Wood of the Brambles

I was wrong, for it would have been natural to take him to follow me.

Up in my room, I noticed the Greek Testament lying on a table with other books ; and I handled it, thinking of our custom at school of opening à Kempis or Virgil at random and attaching importance to the words that we found. But the little Testament opened at the Prodigal Son's parable as it did in the Mill ; and I put it into my pocket when Brosna tapped, for I was ashamed of the custom, although there was little chance of his suspecting my foolishness.

So I rode off through the narrow streets and the old Gate in the ramparts. The moors were misty and desolate. My head was meek to the rain. The water was trickling down the back of my neck and making me wretched.

Said I to myself, " Upon my word, I believe my grandfather told them never to light the fire in the Bookroom." In spite of all his extravagance in the dining-room, he used to be thrifty and was hard with his tenants. It was true he made a show when he journeyed with his throng of retainers in their moth-eaten liveries ; but he had to do that, for a traveller of pretensions would take enough wine and lemons

At the Well in the Wood

and food for himself and the strangers he might meet, and perhaps bedding besides, as the only thing that was sure to be good upon the road was the whiskey, and the fare at the inns would be hardly fit for the servants. No one looked for more than a shelter and a fire and a drop of whiskey at an inn by the road, seeing that there was nothing to pay for the room, because the landlord would scorn to put a trifle like that in a bill, if a gentleman had ordered his servants to drink heavily for the good of the house. That was a duty the servants would perform without flinching. Of course, a traveller paying nothing for his room would be bound to enrich the inn by his fees and to lavish gold for the liquor. The bill was paid by the servant who had the purse; and it was seldom a master was so mean as to look at it. But Sir Malachi would examine the bill, as soon as he was away on the road; and if it was more absurdly unjust than usual, he was careful to shun that house for the future. He was able to fling a penny with a look that would make every one believe it was gold. I used to see the beggars pick up his bounty with unlimited blessings; and then gape aghast at the coin, as if they fancied the Devil had transformed it to copper.

The Wood of the Brambles

There was reason for this thriftiness too; for he was pestered by mortgages, and when he was younger, had lost miles of the moors that his father, Sir Terence, had saddled with the price of the House. Sir Terence had pulled down his old home, and had built the House, and embarrassed the estate to provide it; and so Sir Malachi might have found himself penniless, if he had not possessed the village and the Wood of the Brambles. Thinking of the force of the man, and the steady will that was with his kindly bluster, I fancied he would have been dangerous if he had been driven much by misfortune. Not only was he grim with defaulting tenants, but he used to meet trespassing beggars with rage, and set his dogs at the wretches who would dare to come near the front door or the avenue. Of course, the kitchen was always open to beggars who came up with discretion in the trees, and would stand waiting for the scraps of the dinner. But it was the rule to refuse money; and the thought of that led me to a bitter remembrance: for not long after I had fallen from favour and had been shut from the dining-room, Sir Tim had presented me with a guinea to solace my affliction, and a woman came begging in the

At the Well in the Wood

hall on a snowy night, and I handed her the money, and went in to proclaim my virtue to Mrs Regan, who turned and rewarded it with a box on the ear. I suppose her troubles as Dame of the Buttery had tried her beyond bearing, and she knew my unwise gift would bring beggars from all the country-side to lurk at the door. As she struck me, she drew back in dismay, feeling she had gone too far, and I staggered as if she had committed a sacrilege. I went into the cold Bookroom and sat with a volume, but my mind had been numbed by that amazing indignity. I never spoke of it at all or forgot it. At the time I was just as astounded as Considine was when he was bit by a dog. "The brute must be demented!" he cried. "Stuff and nonsense! a most intelligent beast!" shouted Sir Malachi. "Of course he is mad!" said Theophilus. "He bit me, I tell you."

Dwelling on such things, I rode on until I came to the wood. The rain stopped: but the branches were so wet that the wind shook down drops that were almost as heavy as a shower, and were pattering as loud in the bushes. When I was small, I used to shrink from that sullen dripping, and kept out of the wood as much as

The Wood of the Brambles

I was able in winter, unless it was black and the snow lay on the branches: for I hated the creaking of the twigs, and the smell of the clammy bark, and the yielding of rotten leaves underfoot; and longed for the yellow mist of buds, and the brightness when cuckoos hailed one another across the thicket of trees. I used to love it most of all when the lilac and laburnum were out. Then Theophilus would say to his visitors, "The Fairies are festooning the shadows with the perishing wealth of the threaded gold of laburnum"; and his neighbours would wonder what on earth he could mean.

In that time, I could never resist the temptation to throw stones at the rabbits in the grass of the glades; although if I hit one I was full of remorse, and in fear and pain as the animal crawled into the thickets: just as once, when the mowers had been working in front of the House, and I went out in the warm field in the twilight, and amused myself hopping across the mellowing swathes, I was terrified when I came on a nest of birds that had been killed by a scythe; or when I had looked at the workmen cleaning the old pond in the garden, and catching eels in the mud and knotting them as if they were twine, I woke in the night, shrieking

At the Well in the Wood

in my terror, "You mustn't tie me up in a knot!"

Now as I rode up, I could hear Mrs Considine singing to her harp; and the words—

"Where the bee sucks, there suck I;
In a cowslip's bell I lie"—

were like an echo in my thoughts of my childhood. So I feared Agatha was out, for her mother was accustomed to hang round her and worship her, attempting to say or do something to give her pleasure indoors, so as to secure her companionship. "Agatha will never be able to recall an unfriendly look from her mother," Mrs Considine said, whenever anyone hinted at a danger of her spoiling her daughter. "I only wish someone had attempted to spoil me," she went on. "I have never been given my own way for a minute. No one would ever let me do what I wanted." Yet she insisted on giving way to her husband and daughter, and I am sure had been always as servile to her people at home. If she had been childless, I know she would have pampered a pug with unkind tenderness and killed it with sugar. No unwisdom could spoil Agatha greatly.

It was wonderful what grief Mrs Considine

The Wood of the Brambles

expressed in her merry song if her daughter was more wayward than ever, or if Theophilus had twisted his ankle. All the other men that we knew, took pride in their inherited gout, and did their best to increase it : but Considine said his self-denial kept off that affliction, although whenever he drank port I would find him the next day with his leg bandaged and put up on the seat in the window, while he was sipping gruel dejectedly. "Hurt your ankle again, sir?" I would say. "It is quite painful, my dear lad," he would answer, delicately evading the question ; "really the steps must be mended." Sir Malachi would roar till the window shook, if the gout gripped him : "For what was the use of being at home," he would say, "if a man cannot make a noise when he likes?"

The steps at Ballymoreen had been broken by Cromwell's troopers, when they were hanging Murtagh Oge Kilclare from a gable window for hiding all the family treasures he had never possessed. Every owner had meant to rebuild them as soon as he had money to spare. After all, no one had to walk on the shattered side of the steps. If they had been mended, I think they would have looked as unseemly as fine glass would have been in the place of those

At the Well in the Wood

little leaded obscure panes clutched by the lingering trammels of ivy.

Although I had never doubted Mrs Considine's welcome, I could see she was thinking, "Oh dear me, what an unfortunate moment for the lad to arrive!" as the maid ushered me in, when I had fastened my horse at the clump of laurels, because I took it for granted that the stables were shut. She said Agatha had gone for a stroll; and I replied I would go and meet her, for I guessed I would find her on her favourite path.

On the grassy and damp path to the well, I made up my mind to explain everything, and so put an end to misunderstanding at once. Yet I feared it would prove awkward, and foresaw her astonishment. If Tony had been trying to kill anyone, the neighbours would think it was a pity to see such a lively and good fellow careless in keeping count of his tumblers. But then, he had acquired a prescriptive right to be foolish. My heart sank, and was dreary. Seeing myself in her confident eyes, I would have found the reward of virtue without its difficult endeavours, as if I had come to the saintliness that once I foresaw. I would be sorry to see knowledge instead of trust in her eyes. If she, who was

The Wood of the Brambles

so innocent, thought me better than I had wished to appear, it was time for her to put away that illusion.

I saw Agatha and Blake at the well, as I had seen them when I hid in the bushes. She was in grey, and he glowed in all the pride of his uniform. His red coat and his powdered hair were distinct against the laurels behind him. He was embarrassed, as if he also had a mind to confess an iniquity; and as he was speaking Agatha looked down at the water. I was quite near before they turned, for my steps were soft on the mud.

Agatha flushed, and came a little to meet me, and said, as we shook hands, "I was thinking the weather had prevented your coming."

"Has it been as bad as all that?" said I; "in Wexford we had nothing but rain."

"And what more do you want?" said Blake gruffly.

"How do you do?" I replied. "I didn't see you before."

This was untrue, and it was meant to annoy

At the Well in the Wood

him, because he was glaring as if he thought me a trespasser.

"I couldn't answer your note," I said, "for I only got it this morning."

I wanted to show Blake that she had asked me to come.

"I gave it to Neligan last night," said she.

"Neligan must have forgotten it, thinking of his troubles," said I.

"We have all trouble, ever since the day we were here," she said.

"And what wonderful changes," I said, guiltily, for I knew she was speaking of our stroll in the morning before the fire at the House, and not of the Monday when I hid in the laurels.

"Yes, and even the weather. Do you know," she said, turning, "I could tell the weather by looking at Sir Dominick's face."

"Indeed?" he said gloomily, as if he thought that was paying a heavy price for the knowledge.

"Yes, for he is dark if it rains."

"Was I looking depressed?" said I; "I was never fond of the wood on such a morning as this."

"And Colonel Blake," she went on, smiling, "is afraid of the bushes."

The Wood of the Brambles

"Not afraid now," he said.

"Well, he dislikes them, for he thinks there is something unnatural——"

"Unpleasant," he broke in.

"Well, unpleasant about them," said she.

"And just now he was certain he saw the ears of a hare above the top of a hawthorn."

"So I did," he said doggedly.

"That was unpleasant and unnatural surely," said I. "If the hares are growing so big that they can look over the bushes, I should think they'd be dangerous."

"The ears were of an average size," he said, scowling.

"Then," I said, "the poor beast must have been climbing the hawthorn to see you go by."

"And the last time we were here——" said Agatha.

"On the day of the fire?" said I.

"It is the last time I was here with Colonel Blake that I mean," she said, flushing a little. At this he puffed out his chest, and gave me a glance to see if I was looking discomfited.

"A man shot at him," she said.

"Astonishing!" said I. "I can scarcely believe it."

At the Well in the Wood

"The bullet went up there in the branches," she went on.

"You don't mean to say you were climbing?" I said to him.

"The other knocked up the scoundrel's weapon," said Blake, testily.

"Were there two?" said I.

"Yes," said Agatha. "And oh! they were frightful! The man who fired had a savage face, and he was horribly ugly."

"The other had red hair, and his clothes were green and in tatters," said Blake, thoughtfully.

"Oh, I think you are wrong," said Agatha. "That was the man who fired, and the other was in black."

"I assure you, Miss Considine," said Blake, reddening, "I know I am right."

"Indeed, Colonel Blake," said Agatha, "I am certain, for I dreamt of it since, and I saw him at Enniscorthy that night."

"Pardon me, Miss Considine, now," he said, flushing more, "it was the other had green hair and red clothes."

"Oh, then, he was in the army?" I said.

"Army?" said Blake with anger. "Tell me, what do you mean?"

The Wood of the Brambles

"I am positive, Colonel Blake," said Agatha, speaking with dignity, because she resented his contradiction, "the man who fired had red hair that was the image of Mr Antony Davern's."

"That explains it," said I. "Tony was always fond of hunting the squirrels."

"I said it was at me that he fired," said Blake indignantly.

"Well, it was a blunder," said I. "If he had looked at you twice, he would have seen he was wrong: but that was always his way; when he shot the squirrels he hit the robins and weazels, and half the time he would kill nothing but leaves."

"Man, I tell you his hair was as dark as yours," he said.

"But indeed, Colonel Blake," began Agatha.

"But I saw him, Miss Considine," said Blake, with affliction.

"There was hardly room for a doubt," I said. "If the villain was over there by the laurels——"

"How do you know about the laurels?" said Blake; "we never said he was there."

"Never said he was there!" I repeated, in pretended astonishment.

"Indeed, he said it himself; I heard him,"

At the Well in the Wood

said Agatha, turning to me, with tears in her voice.

"The man said it?" I asked.

"It was Colonel Blake," she replied.

"Miss Considine says you were the man yourself, after all," said I.

"I ask you how is that possible?" said Blake with alarm.

"You are very stupid," said Agatha fiercely.

"Well, then, who was the villain?" I asked.

"It was you," said Dinny the Piper, jumping out of the laurels.

For a minute, none of us spoke. We stared across the well at the Piper: he paused with the loftiness of a king who denounces a slave; and he leant upon his pike, as he pointed his right hand at me sternly. He was clad in hare-skin with many ribbons about him. The ears of a hare were prominent on the side of his cap.

"And may I ask who are you?" said Blake loftily.

"It is only the Piper," said Agatha, pulling herself together again.

The Wood of the Brambles

"A rebel," said I, and his green ribbon and the pike were in proof of it.

"Then, how dare you spy on us?" shouted Blake, as if he was glad to thunder in a passion at somebody.

"Spy on you?" said Dinny.

"Don't deny it," said Blake. "I saw your ears above the top of a hawthorn."

"They are not my ears," said the Piper indignantly; "they belong to a hare."

"They belong to an idiot," cried Blake.

"They would suit you better than me," said Dinny. "You have been makin' a hare of yourself comin' here in the wood."

"This is too much!" cried Blake, but Agatha said—

"He is right. And you were rash to come here, with the wood swarming with rebels. I said so, you know; but still I thought you were safe with me."

"He is so, because he came with you, Miss. But he will have to respect officers in the Army of Ireland," said the Piper.

"Indeed, he will respect you," she cried. "We must be going back to the house."

"I must detain you, Sir Dominick," said the Piper.

At the Well in the Wood

"What do you want?" said I.

"Why, what has he done?" said Blake, hopefully.

"He has called me a villain," said the Piper.

"Who told you?" said I.

"I heard it myself with my own ears."

"Or with the ears of the hare?" said Blake.

"It was not a minute ago, you called me 'the villain over there by the laurels.'"

"I was not referring to you, and I apologise for it," said I.

"For not referrin' to me?" said Dinny.

"And I will wish you good morning," I said.

"Stop!" he said sternly; "it is not for that I detain you."

"Come now, Denis, what is it?" said Agatha.

"Sure, he fired at the Colonel."

"It is sad to hear him talking so wildly," I said. "But he was always eccentric."

"But it is important to quiet him," said Agatha in a low voice, "for he may summon the others."

"You had better agree with him," I said to her.

"Of course he did, Denis," she said soothingly. "And why not, if he liked?"

The Wood of the Brambles

"I was hidin' in the bushes beyond."

"You seem to spend your life in the bushes," said Blake.

"When Sir Dominick fired, an' the bullet went up over my head," said the Piper.

"You are wasting our time, fellow," said Blake. "I saw the ruffian myself."

"He was in green," said Agatha.

"Sir Dominick was in green, when he joined the Babes of the Wood, an' went marchin' through Enniscorthy to Ross."

"But, Denis, this is foolish," said Agatha. "He was in Dublin all the time."

"Why do you think so?" said Blake.

"I know it as a fact," she replied. "He said so himself."

"Pardon me, I think you are wrong," said I.

"It was in front of the house," she said.

"I know the time that you mean," I began.

"Well then?" she broke in.

"I never said I had been in Dublin at all."

"I don't know what has come over you," said Agatha plaintively, "you have done nothing but contradict me to-day."

"If he was in green," said Blake with disappointment, "it proves that it was somebody else."

At the Well in the Wood

"Colonel Blake——" she began severely.

"If you would be lettin' me speak," said the Piper with dignity, "I could say Red Tony was with him."

"And so he did it," cried Agatha. "He is always so thoughtless!"

"It was going too far," said Blake bitterly.

"He didn't mean it," said Agatha. "No one could be kinder at heart. He would never hurt a fly in his life, if he would think before killing it."

"A consolation to the flies that he shoots," said Blake.

"And he is only a boy," said Agatha.

"If you'll listen to me," said the Piper. "Red Tony was in green——"

"So I told you," said Agatha to Blake.

"Fellow, you contradict yourself flatly," cried Blake.

"If you were there with him," said Agatha, turning to me, "although I don't understand how you had time to get back from Dublin so quickly, it must have been you that caught his arm and prevented his firing straight: it was noble——"

"Unluckily, as it happened," said I, "I was the criminal."

The Wood of the Brambles

"You?" cried Agatha astounded.

"You fired at me, Davern?" cried Blake.

"I said so, all along," said the Piper.

"Then what on earth do you mean by it?" thundered Blake; "and what right had you to take such a liberty?"

"I will explain it all," I said.

"I should think so," said Blake.

"But not now," said I.

"I will find you a more suitable spot," cried Blake.

"Let us go to the house," said I.

"Not so fast," said the Piper. "It is not for that I detain you."

"What do you want now?" I said angrily.

"I want you to come with me."

"Where?" said I.

"To the Captain."

"To Harragan?" said I.

"To Shamus Dhu, for the scouts told him you had ridden to Ballymoreen, and he sent me to bring you back if I could."

"Then," said I, "go and tell him you couldn't."

"You refuse to come with me?"

"Certainly."

At the Well in the Wood

"Babes of the Wood! come forth!" cried
Dinny, brandishing his pike in the air.

Rebels sprang out of all the bushes beside us.

"You refuse?" he repeated.

"I have changed my mind," I said sadly.

Chapter VI

In the Thick of the Brambles

"I AM glad to see you, O'Davoren," said Shamus, the Captain.

"Then this meeting is a pleasure to one of us," I said to him coldly.

Shamus was enthroned in the mossy and lifeless shell of a sycamore. He had put a seat in that ruined husk, and had taken shelter inside. Sitting there, he could watch his fellows without minding the rain. His indoor life as a master had made him accustomed to shun wetting; though few of his followers would think of a shower. The rain was over, but all about us were wet.

The Piper had blindfolded me quickly, and had ordered a couple of rebels to lead me. I had heard nobody speak, and, because I was blindfolded, had felt as if I had been drinking: the wet grass had been in tangles about my feet, and the branches swinging back, as my

In the Thick of the Brambles

guides passed them, had thrown drops on my face. The sash was off, and I stood looking at Shamus.

"You might stand back there a little," he said to his men, and they went off to a distance. There was a mob of rebels in the glade, and a net of trenches around us.

"You must excuse my inviting you with a lack of formality," he said as he was folding his arms.

"Well, what do you want?" said I.

"There is no need of this shortness," he said.

"I only wish for your good."

"You go a roundabout way," said I.

"It was hard to arrange a quiet meetin', you know. The game is up, I am thinkin'," he said in a low voice.

"And you want me to befriend you?" said I.

"I am hardly fallen so low: I am plannin' to do you a good turn, but I never asked for assistance. Never in all my life," he said gravely.

"A good turn? You have been making a fool of me."

"And my fellows would be makin' a corpse of you, if I let them alone. It is wonderful how much they dislike you. Dromeen told them he

The Wood of the Brambles

met you ridin' off with Kilclare. When the scouts arrived with the news that you had come to the wood, all the Babes were rejoicin'. You mustn't blame the poor fellows, for the life is monotonous."

"So you sent them to take me?"

"I checked them, by telling Dinny to catch you with politeness an' tenderness."

"Many thanks," said I.

"Gentlemen are a class I despise," he said.

"That is strange when they respect you so much," said I.

"But I like you, because I think you a gentleman," he went on; "and I can do you a service. People have been talkin' against you."

"That is a matter of course," said I.

"Just what I say," said he. "I never trouble my head about anyone's opinion at all. Why should I grudge the poor fellows a little innocent slander? I am fond of talkin' scandal myself. You will never know what anyone thinks of you, unless you are helpless. If people tell you, they will probably lie."

"But no one could be slandering you," I said, feigning astonishment.

"Thousands!" he said, with indignation. "I wish I had them here in the wood."

In the Thick of the Brambles

"Well, what do people say about me?" I said carelessly.

"Plenty," he said; "an' most of it true. You have more than one side to your character," he added judicially.

"I would be ashamed to own anything that hadn't more than one side to it," I said.

"After all," said he, "it is never safe to be critical. Virtue is only skin-deep, and the saint may be a sinner to-morrow. Then he will regret his severity. An' it need trouble you little. It will be all one to the dead."

"You think my life will be short?" said I, airily.

"You an' I are lucky," he said. "Few in the world have such short troubles before them. We are in the thick of the brambles."

"It might be worse," said I.

"So might hell," he said.

"And you think there is nothing at all to be done?" said I.

"Says the docthor, on the ship, to the man dyin' in the midst of the sea, 'Nothin' can cure you, except spendin' a month on the top of a mountain this minute.' 'Docthor, dear,' says the poor fellow, lookin' down at the water, 'are there any mountains below?'"

The Wood of the Brambles

"I understand you," said I; "you think our case is as hopeless."

"Worse," said he. "The docthor was nearly sure to be wrong."

"And you are sure to be right!" I said.

"I am afraid so," he answered.

"Yet you ought to be happy," I said. "This was always your dream."

"Not many want their dreams to come true. What a fortunate man I was, when I was only a master!" he said. "I used to write the letters for all the country-side, an' so I was powerful. Other masters would lodge with all the neighbours in turn; an' borrow a room, or have the school on the grass, or in the lee of a hedge. But I had my own house, an' my twenty pounds a year from the village. An' every child had to bring me a couple of sods of turf every mornin'. If a boy came without them, I sent him home with a beatin'. Ah! that was a pleasant old custom! Many a long mile did I walk with my slate an' my doeskin satchel of books on my back, an' my couple of sods under my left arm, in the kind days when I was goin' to school. I chose as little and hard sods as I could find on the stack. Many a long hour did I shiver, with no shelter but the mist on the mountain,

In the Thick of the Brambles

while lame Donogh Kildorrey was teachin' us our Ovid an' Virgil. There was not a decent or dry rag among the master an' scholars. An' the stream muttered in the pit of the glen."

"Well," I broke in, for I was afraid he would go on for an hour, "what makes you fancy my position is desperate?"

"It is like this, you see. The soldiers will want to kill you because they believe you were a rebel, and anyway the people will murder you, because you took Father Kilclare, and you and Carnaby Blake, between you, captured the General."

"General Roche?" I cried. "He surrendered."

"To you," he said.

"To Blake," said I.

"But you took him in to Wexford, and now Rossiter has discovered the pistol."

"What pistol?" I said.

"The one you fired at the Colonel."

"At Blake?" said I. "You know about that?"

"Dinny reported it the day you were sleepin' in the grass over yonder."

"Rossiter came and searched?" said I.

"Yesterday."

The Wood of the Brambles

"Why didn't you kill him?" I said, reproachfully.

"Why should we be wantin' to hurt decent John Rossiter, although he is so good that he feels he ought to take up his neighbours at random? Sure I have known him for years. Between you an' me, the Babes were all delighted to think he was goin' to find out your iniquity. They know all about it, you see."

"Rossiter is a meddlesome fool," I said. "And what do you want with me?"

"Since you took Father Kilclare," said he, "I was afraid you might lead the soldiers into the wood."

"Not I. It is no business of mine," I said.

"You an' I are the only people who know the ins and outs of the glades. At least, you knew them when you were small," said he.

"And what about Dromeen?" I said.

"Dromeen?" he said. "Indeed, I forgot him."

"He knows the thickets by heart," said I.

"An' because he is such a coward, he is sure to be treacherous. I am glad you mentioned him. I shall hang him at once. Tumaus!" he cried out to the smith, "catch little Dromeen."

"What about the good turn?" said I.

In the Thick of the Brambles

"I am coming to that. I have some papers to give you. There is a pedigree from Gillananeave."

"Is that all?" said I.

"Man, I took a winter compilin' it."

"Then you had better keep it," said I.

"O'Davoren, you are wantin' in courtesy," he said.

"If you had been taken up by a Piper, and blindfolded, and led off when you happened to be talking to a lady," I said, "it would have ruffled your temper."

"A lady?"

"Miss Considine."

"Was it little Miss Considine?" he said with as near an approach to a grin as was ever seen on his long cadaverous face. "Ah, well, I can make an allowance, if you seem inconsiderate. As I was goin' to say, I have a document I found at the Considines'. I kept it because I had a grudge against old Michael Kilclare, and I was well disposed to Sir Malachi."

"Indeed?" said I.

"Because he was a handsome unscrupulous old fellow, an' kindly as long as you never got in his way. An' his sense was remarkable, considerin' he was trained as a gentleman. You

The Wood of the Brambles

might have noticed I have a cravin' for power. I like to order people about."

"That comes of being a master," I said.

"So I liked to see Sir Malachi swagger; an' to know I had a whip that would startle him, if he tried to annoy me. An' it was a pleasure to duck to Squire Kilclare, an' to feel he was payin' a heavy price for his insolence. And yet I gave him a chance."

"What chance?" said I.

"I waited at the door of the chapel with my hat in my hand," said Shamus, "when the Squire came out in his black clothes as a gentleman, with his hair powdered, and his sword at his side. 'Humbly askin' your Honour's pardon,' says I, 'might I be presumin' to speak to you?' 'What do you want?' says he sternly. 'I have found some old papers that belonged to the family. Will you come an' see them, your Honour?' says I. 'I may look in, if I pass,' says he loftily. That afternoon, he marched in, with his three-cocked hat on his proud head, as if he entered a pig-stye. 'Are these the papers, fellow?' says he, touchin' them as they lay on the table. 'You might have put them in order at least.' 'I am but a simple ignorant man,' says I meekly; 'what can I know about them,

In the Thick of the Brambles

your Honour?' 'True enough,' says he curtly. 'Will you do me the honour of sittin' down upon one of my chairs?' said I. 'I am sorry I have nothin' better to offer you.' 'The deeds are rubbish,' says he, 'they are as old as the hills.' "Think of that now!" says I, 'what a thing it is to be learned! So your Honour can decide at a glance?' 'They are only fit for a bonfire,' says he, taking his lace handkerchief, an' wipin' his fingers. 'I must ask you not to plague me again,' he says. 'Never again, your Honour,' says I, an' he stalks out from the door."

"You remember grudges," said I.

"I am Irish," said Shamus. "An' then I took a fancy to you."

"You surprise me," I said.

"I often wonder myself," said he; "but the wisest are mistaken, you know. You had a civil tongue then: an' you spoke as if you thought me a man. I never mistook your pleasant way for a friendship. You were so lonely, you would talk to a dog. I knew you looked down on me all the time, and you showed it every now and then by a thoughtless word or a glance. All my life I was forced to cringe to every noisy squireen, and see the ladies go by

The Wood of the Brambles

as if I was a pig in a gutter. So I was thankful for small mercies, an' was glad to befriend you."

"You befriended me by keeping the document?" I said.

"But when Sir Malachi died, an' the old Squire had been long buried, I took it off to the Rector, an' pretended I would take his advice; for I hoped it would annoy him an' puzzle him, because he was fond of you an' hated Kilclare. But he said at once, he would tell you. I had begun to think I was wrong to be keepin' it, for I knew you had money: and although Father Kilclare was one of those aggravatin' harmless affectionate people that every one is tempted to injure, I had no reason to hurt him."

"The long and the short of it is, that you are going to give me this remarkable paper?" I said impatiently.

"Dinny!" he cried, "will you fetch the papers I showed you last night, an' deliver them to O'Davoren when you have led him back to the path? I'll tell the Babes you have repented, an' promised to rescue Father Kilclare," he went on.

"I never said so," I answered.

"You will when you have studied the documents," he said, standing up. "You must be

In the Thick of the Brambles

blindfolded again. I wish I could show you the defences, but the Babes would be hurt. O'Davoren, what a fight it will be!" he cried, flushing a little. "It will take an army to drive us. I shall have men lurkin' in secret places around. I am only afraid the soldiers will set fire to the thickets: it would be a scandalous thing, after all the time I have spent."

"They will hardly be so selfish," said I.

"The Babes increase every hour," he said; "they are a wonderful family. The yeomen are out: an' the people are forgettin' their fear of the wood at night, an' are happy to be hid in the tangle."

"So you kept away from the Hill?" said I.

"What was the use of stopping there to be slaughtered?" he said. "Some of my poor fellows are there. Jim is under the red turf, with the pole of the banner tight in his hands."

Here Dinny came up to us.

"I daresay we will meet before long," said I.

"I doubt it," said Shamus.

Dinny blindfolded me then, and led me away. When we got to the well, he undid the sash, and he handed me some papers, and said I was to go from the wood. Putting the papers in

The Wood of the Brambles

my breast, I went down the path with an easy air as if I had enjoyed my adventures. As soon as I was screened by a turn of the path, I examined the papers with eagerness. There were only three, and the first was headed "An account of O'Davoren's School at Cahermacnaghten, in the Burren of Clare, compiled by Shamus O'Harragan." The second was "A Proof that Duaid MacFirbis, the Scholar, was often at O'Davoren's College." I looked with impatience at the third, and I found it was "The Pedigree of Loghlen MacGillapatrik of Fahanlunaghtamore in Clare, who was hanged in 1705; with his full descent from Gillananeave Oge O'Davoren, known as 'Gillananeave of the Girls,'—and an account of the claim he could have proved to the lands of Ballydoora and Lissylissheen, if he had not died, and if the O'Davorens had been extinct, and if the estates had not been unjustly confiscated in 1650."

I thought Shamus was indulging his humour, and that left me indignant. Then I feared I had dropped a paper, and went back to the well. But there was nothing on the path, and the place was still and deserted.

"Denis!" I cried; "are you there, Mr Denis Dermody?" addressing the bushes.

In the Thick of the Brambles

There was no answer. "Does any Babe of the Wood hear me?" I said.

"Several," said Johnnie the Dim-Eyed, putting his head out of the laurels.

"Will you take a message?" said I.

"I might," he said.

"Will you take a guinea?"

"I will," he said.

"Then I'll give you one, if you take a note to the Captain."

By way of answer, he extended a brawny and wide hand: so I tore a strip of the pedigree, and scribbled a note to Shamus. "I find the papers are about the O'Davorens' School, and Macgillapatrik: although I am delighted to get them, I fancied there was talk of another."

I sat down on the mossy seat as my messenger, went off, and tried to look as if I forgot that a number of rebels were watching me through the leaves; and I rubbed the back of my heavy watch with my handkerchief, and toyed with my signet ring, to impress those lurking spectators.

An answer came before long. "The Piper has stolen the document and gone to his house. Have the kindness to kill him."

Forgetting my desire to impress the rebels by my calmness, I crumpled the note; and hastened

The Wood of the Brambles

out of the wood, in a rage against the Piper and Shamus. I decided to chase Dinny, and as I hurried across the lawn, I perceived Blake on the steps.

"Where are you going in such a hurry?" he said, as I unfastened the bridle.

"To catch Dinny," I said, as I had my foot in the stirrup.

"The Piper, is it? What has he done?"

"He has stolen a paper of importance," I cried over my shoulder, as I went.

"Despatches?" cried Blake. "I'll get my horse from the stables, and go with you, and teach the scoundrel not to spy on a gentleman."

Very soon I could hear him galloping after me; and it grew to a race between us, because he was better mounted; and then he passed me by going recklessly down the hilly road under chestnuts.

"Stop," I cried, "that is the house," as he passed Dermody's cabin.

"Give me up the Piper," he shouted to Jacob, who sat drowsily in his chair in the door.

The beggarman looked lazy and prosperous.

"Remember the dark man!" he said mournfully.

In the Thick of the Brambles

"Where is your son?" cried Blake, pulling up his horse, with a jerk.

"I beg your pardon, your Honour?"

"Your son Denis?" I said.

"Denis, is it? I am sorry I can't oblige you, your Honour; but I have never a son of that name: an' I fear it is too late——"

"Dinny, or whatever you call him," cried Blake, as I drew rein at his side.

"Is it Dinny?" said Jacob gladly. "Ah, why didn't you say so before? He is my son, I believe: an' a harmless lad in the bargain, though I say it that shouldn't. Whisper, an' I'll tell you a story——"

"Is he here?" shouted Blake.

"You can see," said the beggarman. "It is I that am dark."

"Is he in the house?"

"Ah, the House is desthroyed! It was burnt an'——"

"Come, no more of this foolery," cried Blake.

"In your cabin, I mean?"

"I'd look in a minute to oblige you, but you know I am dark," said the beggarman. "He was certainly here a week ago, or some one that talked in the same voice, an' was just as fond o' pitaties!"

The Wood of the Brambles

"He is trying to keep us. There is Dinny, beyond, running for life, along the slope of the moor," said I.

"Ah, an' is that you, Masther Dom?" cried the beggarman. "Sure, an' I am happy to see you. Why didn't you say you were there? Come in this minute, an' have a dhrop: an' we'll talk of how we fought in the Army. I have repented, an' have got a protection: an' you have gone over to the King, so the pair of us can chat at our leisure. An' the other gentleman must come in wid you too. Dinny's friends are welcome, at all times."

"Is he far?" said Blake to me.

"Nearly on the top of the moor."

"Then I'll tell him you want him," said Jacob, coming out in the road.

"Dinny," he shouted in a terrible voice; and the fugitive stopped to listen. "You're wanted. Whisper, Dinny, my son, will you come back for a moment till the gentlemen kill you?"

The Piper vanished over the top of the hill, and Jacob turned again to us, saying—

"He'll be here in a minute."

Said Blake, as the rain began heavily, "You are throwing away the protection, for I'll have it

In the Thick of the Brambles

revoked. We'll come in, and you'd better tell us all that you can."

"An' I want nothin' betther," said the beggarman mildly.

As we fastened our horses to the post by the well, and went into his cabin, he took a cup and a drinking horn from a shelf.

"Your Honours will excuse me," he said, "for not giving you glasses: I wish you had sent me word you were comin'."

"I want nothing," said Blake.

"Do you tell me so, now? Ah, but these are wonderful times," said Jacob. "But come, Masther Dom, it is a kind heart that never can say 'No' to a glass."

"For once I'll be unkind, and refuse it," said I.

"Ah! what would ould Terence-na-fion, or Sir Malachi, say if they heard of it? I'll have to keep myself company, by dhrinkin' enough whiskey for two," said the beggarman.

"Your son is a thief," I said.

"Is it Dinny?" cried the beggarman hopefully; "tell me what has he taken?"

"Papers," said I.

"He never thinks of his father. What is the use of papers to me?" he said ruefully, as he emptied a cup. "This comes of educatin'

The Wood of the Brambles

the respectable poor. When did I steal a paper? Ah, it is well to be you, Masther Dom. Because I am dark, it is difficult to steal annythin' useful. I knew a gentleman once, an' he was able to read, an' so he stole a wood an' a village."

"But this is important," I said.

"It is a despatch," added Blake.

"No; but it relates to my land," said I.

"You said he took important despatches," cried Blake indignantly.

"No I didn't," said I.

"Sir," cried Blake, "do you fancy I came galloping here on your private and ridiculous business?"

"So it seems, and I certainly never asked you to come," said I.

"I tell you now, Davern," he shouted, "you are going too far."

"You mean you have come too far, I suppose," I said peacefully.

"You shall hear from me, sir," cried Blake as he strode out of the cabin.

"Whisper now, Masther Dom; that is a great lad," said the beggarman, sitting down on the table; "an' what is his name?"

"Blake," said I thoughtfully.

In the Thick of the Brambles

"A good name," said the beggarman. "A hot temper is a sign of good breedin': it is only the sthrong that can afford to be passionate. Says I to Dinny, 'Whisper, you should swear like a man—or nobody will think you're descended from King Diarmid an' me.'"

As he spoke I was looking at his roomy and snug cabin, and saw it was lined with dishes and tins, and had fitches on the rafters and by the chimney, and all the air of prosperity.

"What is that in the window?" I said.

"A bird," he replied.

"So I see: but what sort?"

"A dead one."

"And when it lived?"

"Ah, it was dead when I got it."

"It looks like a hawk."

"An' why not, when it used to be a hawk in its time?"

"That was all I wanted to know."

"And you go askin' a dark man instead of usin' your eyes?"

I had spoken absently, wondering what I ought to do about Dinny.

"I use them more than you think: for I saw you put the bird in the window as we fastened our horses."

The Wood of the Brambles

"I expect the rain is goin' to stop," said the beggarman.

"And I think the bird is a signal to warn people away: for one or two have come peeping, and gone off in a hurry."

"What a thing it is to have eyes," he said.

"And besides," I went on, "if there was no signal, the village would gather to have a look at the horse."

"Maybe you are right," he said. "I am thinkin', I hung it on account of your friend. But I'll take it down, if you wish."

"It is all one to me," said I.

"If the village gathered, you might want it to separate. Do you know they are mighty bitter against you."

"The men are yonder with Shamus," said I.

"Bad luck to him! He ordhers them all, since I have got a protection. They think nothin' of me; an' afther all that I did for them; an' they hate you for turnin'."

"I was never with them," said I.

"I got a protection from old General Johnson because I was harmless, as my blindness prevented my doin' annyone mischief. Says he, 'England does not war on the blind.' An' I want to befriend you," he went on, "for I

In the Thick of the Brambles

thought a deal of Sir Malachi. Once he pitched me out of the House. An' so it is but fair I should help you. An' it was like this it occurred. It was when I acted Beelzebub," he said, as I stood watching the rain.

"You were one of the mummers?" I said.

"Yes, an' we were up at the House."

"I never saw you among them."

"This was ages ago. I had a hump, an' a red mask, an' a wig; an' of course I had a club, and a fryin' pan. Then there was Oliver Cromwell, an' St Pathrick, an' the Divil Doubt was Dromeen."

"But he is deaf as a stone," said I.

"He was the only man that would take the small Divil's character: the other little men wanted to have the part of the Giant," said Jacob. "Sir Malachi had us into the dinin'-room."

"That was always his custom."

"It was full of genthry and servants. He gave us dhrink, an' he shouted like a boy as we acted. An' Dromeen was so deaf that he squeaked out of his turn:

'Here I bees, little Divil Doubt,

If yous don't give me money, I'll sweep yous all out.'

Maybe I was holdin' enough dhrink, for I grew

The Wood of the Brambles

mad wid Dromeen, an' I missed shatterin' his head wid the fryin' pan. Sir Malachi cheered, an' I shouted an' banged the club on the table, makin' the glasses an' the company thrimble. An' Sir Malachi grips me by the neck an' the shoulther, an' runs me out of the room an' down the hall, an' he pitches me out of the door; an' my pan was clashin' on the steps an' the gravel before I could speak. It was the right thing to do, an' I'd have done it myself. There was not another man in the House that would have dared to interfere wid my pleasures. Ah! he was a pearl of a man. Before that we were rivals, an' I envied his place in the esteem of the county. I looked up to him aftherwards."

"And now you can give a proof of your gratitude."

"He is under the daisies."

"Yes, but I am above them," said I.

"You never flung me out of the House."

"I had never the chance," I said.

"Well, now, Masther Dom," he said affably, "tell me what you want, and perhaps I may be able to help you."

"I want the paper."

"That was found by my son?"

"Stolen," said I.

In the Thick of the Brambles

"I never talk about stealin' among friends, for it is hard to be honest."

"And I am willing to pay for it."

"To be sure, if you want it. Whisper now, if you promised to get a protection for the lad, he might give you the papers cheap, I am thinkin'."

"A protection?" said I.

"A line sayin', 'I know the bearer to be honest, an' come of a family that can prove its descent from King Diarmid': and then the yeomen would spare him."

"You wish me to declare he is honest?"

"A line from you would hang him at once, and he would be piked by the boys if they thought he was your friend: but perhaps you could make someone assist him," said the beggarman.

"Well," said I, "I'll do what I can."

"Your heart is in the right place afther all," he said. "It is almost a pity you are sure to be killed. Ah! but these are terrible times. Would you like to be dark, an' to fear every stranger on the road is an enemy? It was only yesterday an innocent piper, Caoch Phaddy Modreeny of the Cross at Aghavrin, began playin' a tune as he heard horsemen approach. 'They

The Wood of the Brambles

are cavalry,' he thinks, an' he plays 'Croppies lie down!' He was lyin' down in the ditch, before he could stop. It was rebels they were: an' the poor lad was so alarmed that he plays nothin' but jigs, though his heart is just as sore as his head. An', would you believe it? the Divil has been seen in the neighbourhood!"

"By a dark man?" said I.

"It was by a couple of children. They were runnin' across the acre at the back of Dromeen's house, on the mornin' when you should have been shot on the Hill, an' they saw the Divil lookin' out of a hole in the ground. An' the Divil hid Father Kilclare's cloak in the hole, an' Dromeen discovered it aftherwards."

"Wonders will never cease," I said, looking at my watch. "And the rain is over, I think."

"Would it be the same if we burnt the paper, your Honour?" he said as I went out of the door.

"Why, it is important," said I, turning.

"An' so you will desthroy it yourself?" he said.

A throng was in the road on the right. Scores of women with shawls upon their heads were together; and old bent fellows and little

In the Thick of the Brambles

children were by them. Those quiet faces in that poor and familiar street were turned to me watchfully. I said to myself as I mounted, "One would think they had never seen me before, or fancied they would not see me again."

Chapter VII

Confessions

“THERE was nobody like Hannibal Ram,” said Sir Tim, as we waited meekly for Neligan. Sir Tim had brought him along to help in serving the dinner. The little parlour in Considine’s lodgings by the river was cheerful, and lit by a big fire that was welcome, because the wind had grown, and the rain was screening the windows and almost hiding the long bridge and the misty shore with the thatched cabins and furzy uplands beyond. I was opposite Sir Tim and the windows, and Theophilus sat, in his uniform, on my right, at the head of the table, with his back to the fire. I had only just been in time for the dinner; although I had ridden quickly from the beggarman’s cabin: and now I tried to forget my intention of going back, all the way, to see what Agatha wanted. For once, I was afraid to encounter her.

“Yes,” said Sir Tim, who was in a talkative

Confessions

mood; "if Hannibal went out of the gates of Ramsfort, he drove in a coach an' six, with three footmen runnin' on each side to call out 'Way! way! way! for Misther Ram!' 'He was solemn, an' big, an' looked as wise as a bull, as he listened to the shouts of his men; though there was no one to hear, except the crows that kept cryin' 'What? what? what?' as if they were surprised at the fuss. If there was a cart in the road, the footmen would tumble it into the ditch. 'If you see the Ram comin',' the peasants said, 'you will find the shortest way home, is to get over the wall!' 'The Great Ram of Gorey' was what they called him, because he hated any pun on his name. It was his own brother, Bartholomew Ram of Ramsgrange by Ballyhack, that destroyed Cæsar Colclough of Tintern, for speakin' of ramifications of pedigree. After that, no one would ever talk about sheep to him.

"Well, I heard the call of the runners, as I was ridin' along, with a sore heart an' a fierce temper for the sake of a girl that has been forty years ugly, but was beautiful then. I was in blue velvet an' silver, with a fair periwig, because I had gone courtin', only to find the girl had been usin' me as a warmin' pan in her heart. There was the coach in a flood of dust under

The Wood of the Brambles

trees; an' the footman on either side of it yellin' at the top of their voices, 'Way! way! way! for Misther Ram!' I drew my sword, an' rode for that periwigged coachman, an' shouted, 'Clear the way, miscreant!' He thought I was a robber; and pulled his horses in with his might: and the men stopped; an' Hannibal put his head from the window. His wig was so tall, that he never could wear a hat in the coach.

" 'What do you mean by this outrage?' he enquired with astonishment.

" 'What do you mean by tellin' me to give way, sir?' I said, puttin' up my sword as I reined my horse at his side.

" 'Desmond, is that you then?' said he.

" Said I, 'I am surprised at you, Ram.'

" 'Sir,' he said haughtily, 'I allow no one to address me as Ram. Sir, I am not a brute of the field——'

" 'Sir, if you have the name of a brute,' I broke in.

" 'Sir,' he went on, 'I am Misther Ram to the world, but as you are my equal, more or less I suppose, you may address me as Hannibal.'

" 'Sir, I may address you as cannibal,' I said, 'but you're an obsthruction, and I shall

Confessions

thry to remove you. You shall meet me to-morrow.'

" 'Sir Timothy,' he began.

" 'I cried, 'I was christened Timotheus, and I allow no one to address me as Timothy.'

" 'Sir, I daresay,' he says.

" 'Daresay?' I cried. "Do you mean to throw a doubt on my word?"

" 'Certainly not,' he says, 'you ought to know best.'

" 'Ought to know best? Do you deny that I do?' I shouted.

" 'Sir, I deny nothin',' says he.

" 'Then, sir, I shall send you my seconds,' I said, 'as you refuse to deny that you were meanin' an insult.'

" 'Ah, now, will you listen to reason?' he cried, for he was so proud, that he was slow with his weapons.

" 'This is too much, sir,' I cried out in a frenzy. 'Did you call me unreasonable?'

" 'Nonsense, man!' he said.

" 'What? An' do you say I talk nonsense?'

" 'If you would let me speak for a minute,' said he.

" 'Sir,' I cried, chokin' an' thremblin' with

The Wood of the Brambles

anger, 'this is the last camel that breaks the straw: do you say I interrupted you rudely?'

"It was on my lips to address him as a 'pernicious caterpillar': an' that is as far as a gentleman can go in disapproval of another; for anythin' stronger would be almost an insult.

"Said Hannibal desperately, 'I only assert that I never meant to impede you. For the future my men shall have orders to leave the footpath, an' run along in the ditch, or on the top of the wall, when they see you.'

"'Say no more, sir,' I said, 'I hate any quarrel, or unpleasantness, always. Your coach would be too broad for the ditch; and so I will ride by on the path.'

"'Sir,' he said, grippin' my hand, 'you are always kindness itself. Come to dinner tomorrow.'

"'I will,' I cried, 'an' to breakfast.'

"'My dearest friend,' he said with delight, 'come and stay a month with me.'

"'I will, an' two,' I cried, and after that we were brothers."

"Well," said I, "that was a warm beginning of friendship. What has become of him?"

"That's more than I can say," said Sir Tim, "but it is many years since he died. I fear he

Confessions

would make throuble below, for he was prouder than Satan. But Satan could subdue him, by telling the little devils to laugh at him. Once he had a dispute with his tenants: for they were stealin' the turf from his bog; an' they said they had a right to it, because it was lyin' there without annyone usin' it, and because it was created by God. So they sent him deputations, and then they thrained the little children to run afther his coach, singin':

‘Peg! Peg! let go of my leg!
Or I'll butt you wid my horns.’

That was an allusion to his name, you perceive. It is said, he writhed in his coach as if he had been swallowing spurs. An' next day, he owned they had a right to all the turf in the country."

"Well," said I, "that was a sure way to be popular."

"Hannibal haunts the moor by the sea," said Sir Tim. "When the days darken and the wind whoops in the twilight, the children hear the shout of his men, 'Way! way! way! for Mистер Ram!'"

Neligan came in with a pie, and Theophilus

The Wood of the Brambles

shrank away in disgust. Neligan was so guilty and red, that I was certain a fatal secret was in the heart of the pie. He whispered low to Theophilus.

"Speak out," said Considine, who was a little deaf. "I despise an underhand tone."

"But it is a secret, your Honour," said Neligan.

"I have no secret from my affectionate friends," said Theophilus.

"Judy told me to keep it a secret, your Honour," cried Neligan, "an' said, above all things, I musn't mention her name."

"What have I in common with Judies?" said Theophilus sternly.

"An' at your age!" cried Sir Tim, as if he was shocked.

"As for that," said Theophilus, with a touch of resentment, "I was very young when I married."

Sir Tim, who had the greatest contempt for short or elderly people, chuckled incredulously.

"It is Judy Harragan," cried Neligan, despairing; "an' she told me to beg your Honour to take the pie-crust yourself."

"The pie-crust!" cried Theophilus, shuddering.

Confessions

"The whole of the crust," said Neligan, doggedly.

"Oh, this is a wile of the English: a trap of my cruel enemy, Pitt!" cried Theophilus, springing up and pacing the room. "Is there never peace for the great? Must I fear the very pies on my table?"

"This is one to admire," said Sir Tim, cutting the pastry.

"What I detest about the merciless English is that they won't poison you fairly!" cried Theophilus.

"Kingdoms an' agonies! Did you say it was poisoned?" said Sir Tim, dropping his fork.

"Sir," cried Theophilus, "who would waste poison on a venomous crust?"

"Is that all?" cried Sir Tim.

"What more do you want?" said Theophilus testily.

"A helpin' of pie," said Sir Tim, loading a plate.

"This fiendish plot shall be remembered in the annals of Ireland," said Theophilus, coming back to his seat. "Thus the English murdered Boyle in Kilmainham, by giving him so much brandy that he never got over it. What could be more sly and insidious?"

The Wood of the Brambles

"Nothin' is more insidious than brandy. I have noticed it often," said Sir Tim. "Pass me that plate, Dom. Gad, this is a resolute crust. What's this?" he said, taking out a bit with the fork. There was a point of steel in the pastry.

"It is a dagger," said Theophilus, folding his arms, and speaking with stately gloom. "To make sure of my death, they trusted I would swallow the dagger."

"If you could do that, you ought to show at the Fairs," said Sir Tim; "an' it is only a file."

"May it please your Honour," said Neligan, "Judy meant to give Misther Considine the file, so she said he was to keep all the crust."

"She was bribed by Pitt," said Theophilus. "Is this Judy Harragan, English?"

"I don't know, then," said Neligan. "She is the sister of Shamus Dhu at the village."

"And what was he to do with the file?" I said.

"Cut the bars, your Honour, an' get out of the window," said Neligan.

"Expect me to get out of a window!" said Theophilus. "What is the meaning of this atrocious impertinence?"

"Ah, your Honour," said Neligan sadly, as he went out of the room, "she means nothin' but

Confessions

kindness: she is terrible fond of you, and made the whole of the pie an' the apples herself."

"Fond of me!" said Theophilus gravely. "Miss Julia Harragan, he said? I remember her now. She is a pretty child."

"She has a mouth on her that darkens the daylight," said Sir Tim.

"I was not aware that you knew her," said Theophilus, blushing. "I may think of somebody else."

"You couldn't if she was annywhere near you," said Sir Tim.

"I refuse to believe she was anything but an innocent tool," said Theophilus.

"An' sure the file is no more," said Sir Tim.

Theophilus went on—"And I have been rewarded by Heaven for denying myself the pleasures of pastry."

"An' the pains," said Sir Tim.

"And yet I have feared that I was often too hard upon my brother, the Ass."

"I never knew you had a brother at all," said Sir Tim. "And how does he deserve such a name?"

"You mistake me," said Theophilus, peevishly. "Speaking of my brother, the Ass, I refer to my ridiculous body."

The Wood of the Brambles

"I shall not deny," said Sir Tim, "that your body is ridiculous, sir."

"You mistake me," said Theophilus.

"Then, sir, I prefer to mistake you," cried Sir Tim, testily. "Though I am too humble to mind bein' in the wrong, I object to annyone provin' it."

"Our wretched bodies are all vile and ridiculous."

"You seem determined to madden me," said Sir Tim with a scowl.

"Indeed, sir," replied Theophilus in a quavering voice, "I should be sorry to vex you."

"Sir, I am an old man, and you presume on my age. No one has ever laughed at me yet."

"No one," said Theophilus.

"To my face I mean."

"And so did I," said Theophilus.

"Do you hint people laugh behind my back?" said Sir Tim.

"No, indeed, sir."

"If they do, they had better keep an eye on my turnin'. No one has ever called me ridiculous."

"And I would be the last, I assure you. I only spoke of myself."

Confessions

"Right," said Sir Tim.

"And yet," said Theophilus, with a wish to recover his dignity, pouring out a bumper of claret with a shaky hand, "I imagine there is much that is laughable in our natures: and what could be more barbarous than a craving for food?"

"A cravin' for drink," said Sir Tim, as he lolled; "and if you hand me the wine, I shall mortify my soul with a bumper. That decanter is a cripple, apparently. If it was a mad bull, Dom would be no slower to pass it. I keep a rigorous check on my taste for self-denial an' virtue," he went on, as he was sipping the claret. "My heart is with the good: an' my life is in the ranks of the Devil."

"Many a lad is in Hell whose heart is in Heaven. It is a quick traveller that keeps pace with his heart," said Theophilus, getting up and pacing the room, as if he had caught something of Sir Tim's restlessness, or wanted to keep time with the regular steps of the sentry who was out in the passage. "Our hopes are still out of reach," he went on, straightening a deplorable picture as he passed, and regarding the others with a critical eye, as he used in his house, for he would never sit still if one was

The Wood of the Brambles

hanging unevenly. "I was just as happy before I won Tubberneering. I have wasted my life in the dusky kingdom of dreams. I have shut my soul to the sunlight, when the larks were aloft."

"A dreamer lies to himself," said Sir Tim, sententiously, as he lifted his glass, "just as a madman is one sleepin' awake."

"Ah!" sighed Theophilus, standing at the window, as if his audience was out there in the rain. "I am the stone upon the roof of the house to keep the thatch from the storm, hearing the folk laugh as they gossip in the shine of the turf. I am the silken and turbulent flame that climbs the column of smoke, and never gets any higher. I am the smoke that rises up from a cheery hearth, and is blown away by the wind. I am the river that was happy as it fought in the rocks, because it was on the road to the sea, and finds itself at last in a lake."

"I am the rain that shivers, because it is left out in the cold," cried Sir Tim, leaping up and striking an attitude. "But if you think I will listen to anny more of these preposterous statements——" he went on angrily.

"I beg your pardon, indeed," said Theophilus, coming back to the table.

"Fill your glass," said Sir Tim.

Confessions

"I touch little," said Theophilus. "Wine would make me silent and dreary."

"Your silence will make amends for your sadness," said Sir Tim, pouring out a bumper for Considine.

"I love all who are silent," said Theophilus.

"Because they leave the talkin' to you," said Sir Tim, sitting down. "You ought to be devoted to Dom. If you listened long to that boy, you would believe he was dead."

I said, "I have a talent for listening."

"And plenty to think about, dear lad?" said Theophilus. "It is wrong to make our fears and afflictions the playthings of memory: and yet I find myself harping on the luck of this unfortunate race, wedded to calamity——"

"Come, no politics now," said Sir Tim.

"Our history is a proof that the English are a humorous nation," said Theophilus. "Grim humour, perhaps——"

"I insist upon your changin' the subject," cried Sir Tim, but Theophilus was strangely determined.

"I can say with Æschylus, this war has deprived us of pleasant things, of comfort, and singing, and the affection of women——"

"I don't know what is the matter with the

The Wood of the Brambles

fellow," Sir Tim said to me plaintively. "Is he altered like this, because he was condemned to be hanged? I am glad he was not condemned to be burnt. What with his talkin', an' the wind that would make one think the lost souls of innumerable cats were abroad on it, I feel as if somethin' was over me."

"There was a madwoman at Gorey: she ran shrieking through the town in the dark," said Theophilus dreamily. "Sometimes she danced, waving a pike because the town was abandoned. Then she crouched in misery, crooning heart-broken ballads. That wind is like her voice," he went on.

"Then her voice was mighty unpleasant," said Sir Tim.

"My heart bled as I heard her. I have an infinite pity for every man, woman, or child, that ever was born," said Theophilus.

"Then how dare you?" cried Sir Tim furiously.

"Except you, sir," said Theophilus quailing.

"Miss Carey, an' the Reverend Doctor Agatha!" cried Neligan as he opened the door.

We got up from our seats, as Agatha came in

Confessions

with the Rector, followed by his terrier Bill, a dog of a morose disposition. "I hate a cur that will never wag his tail like a Christian," Sir Tim would say; "that animal Bill strides as if he was callin' the other dogs in the street 'idolatrous Romans.' By the bye, the man that would call me a Roman, would say poor Jim the Fool was a Turk."

While Sir Tim and Theophilus were welcoming Agatha, I turned to the Rector; but he passed me so mournfully, that I knew he had planned a bitter lesson for someone. There was mud on his boots; but his black coat and his neckcloth were as dainty as ever. He faced us, as he paused on the rug: and his wig, and the silver buckle at the back of his neckcloth, gleamed in the spotted glass on the wall. Bill lay scowling beside him. Sir Tim was bowing with affectionate grace to Agatha; and as he was giving her a chair on his left, he was paying her extravagant compliments. Theophilus greeted the Rector, and sat down in the easy chair by his daughter.

"I have a painful duty," said the Rector severely. "I come to denounce——"

But Sir Tim broke in with a sudden anger and cried, "Sir, I never let anny one denounce me in the presence of ladies."

The Wood of the Brambles

"One who was dear to me," the Rector went on.

"I have done nothin' to excuse your affection," cried Sir Tim.

"For I have known him from childhood," said the Rector.

"Why, it was before you were born," cried Sir Tim.

The Rector went on, as if Sir Tim was his clerk.

"I have come to denounce Sir Dominick Davern."

"Then why couldn't you say so before?" replied Sir Tim, sitting down.

"To denounce me, sir?" I said, leaning my left hand on my chair.

"With a sorrowful heart," said the Rector.

As I stood facing him, the others were like a tribunal to hear us.

"Well there is no need, for Miss Considine knows my offence," said I.

"She knows it?" said the Rector.

"I meant to own it to everyone," said I. "It is true I shot at Carnaby Blake——"

"You shot at Carnaby?" cried Sir Tim, in astonishment.

"At Carnaby Blake?" said Theophilus, with a smile of indulgence.

Confessions

"Tried to murder a friend?" said the Rector, aghast.

"An' it was devilish spirited," said Sir Tim, approving. "An' you makin' believe to be afraid to look a fly in the face. Well, you are a pup."

"Tell us all about it, my dear," said Theophilus. "What did poor dear Carnaby say?"

"He only knew it this morning," said I, "for he fancied it was one of the rebels."

"Dear, dear!" said Sir Tim, laughing, with his hands on his ribs; "he was talkin' about it last night, an' it seemed to ruffle him greatly. Sure, I hoped it was Tony: an' it was this quiet young woman here was the cause."

Said the Rector, "It appals me to hear of this unsuspected iniquity."

"Do you mean to say you were goin' to denounce him for somethin' else?" cried Sir Tim. "Out with it, sir. Dear, dear! it is always these gentle dogs that are havin' games on the sly."

"Yes, and here is my proof," said the Rector, drawing a parchment from the breast of his coat, and putting it down on the table. "And now you know what I mean."

"Not in the least," said I.

The Wood of the Brambles

"Where on earth did you find it?" said Sir Tim, as he handled it.

"And what is it?" said I.

"Sir," said the Rector, "I am sorry you are feigning this ignorance."

"I never saw it before," said I.

Said the Rector, "It is the proof that Kilclare is the owner of the wood and the village."

"Pierce Kilclare?" said I.

"Father Pierce?" cried Agatha.

"So you betrayed him, and pushed forward to give evidence yesterday, and this morning you hunted an innocent man who was preserving the document," said the Rector.

"My word, he is a dangerous fellow," said Sir Tim, with a chuckle. "Listen, who did he hunt."

"Denis Dermody."

"Is it Dinny the Piper?" said Sir Tim.

"He was a piper, but now he is repentant, and came to me this morning to ask for my assistance and to show me this deed," said the Rector. "He said Sir Dominick Davern chased him, and shouted, telling him to come back and be killed."

"Ah! I suppose you were carried away by your feelings?" said Theophilus, smiling.

Confessions

"May I look at the deed?" said I.

"No tricks with it now, Dom," said Sir Tim, as he passed it.

"It is signed by my grandfather and Phelim Kilclare," said I.

"There is no need to play the lamb among friends," said Sir Tim. "Afther all, you were only treadin' in poor Malachi's steps."

"Like a dutiful lad," said Theophilus. "And yet I wish you had avoided the violence."

"Of course I knew of the deed," said Sir Tim.

"So did I," said Theophilus.

"And I too," said the Rector.

"Then I wish someone would tell me what it is about. It would take me a twelvemonth to decipher this hand," said I.

"My word! you are obstinate," said Sir Tim.

"And I admire you the more. I honour a man that has an eye to his interests, and guards them without scruples or wavering. I could never do it myself," said Theophilus.

"I have it!" cried Sir Tim, with a laugh. "Dom is throwing dust in my neighbour's beautiful eyes. Ah, you sly dog! Well, I can forgive you for that."

The Wood of the Brambles

I said crossly, "I tell you, I know nothing about it."

"And I know nothing either," said Agatha.

I had shunned her eyes; but I looked at her then, with an eager hope that she meant to encourage me and credit my ignorance. She had turned to Sir Tim.

"I'll tell you it all, my dear young lady," he said. "It is an honour to speak to you; an' I wish I could imitate your musical voice, an' then it would be a pleasure to hear me. Ah! you must put up with the husky tones of my age. The Daverns and Kilclares had been neighbours for centuries——"

"A hundred and seventy-one years, to be accurate," said the Rector.

"So I said. I know it all," said Sir Tim. "The Daverns used to be neighbours of mine at Lissy-lissheen and Ballydoora in Clare, but they married a girl here, an' came over a couple of hundred——"

"A hundred and seventy - one," said the Rector.

"Sir, are you tellin' this story, or am I? I must tell it my own way or not at all," cried Sir Tim. "As I was sayin', they came over to Wexford a couple of *thousand* years ago——"

Confessions

Here he paused with pursed lips, and with angry eyes on the Rector.

“The Daverns an’ Kilclares were on friendly terms — although they were neighbours,” he went on. “They were Jacobites, an’ held to the old creed: an’ they married one another with remarkable industry. That is how Pierce an’ this young fellow are cousins. Then came the Penal Laws, an’ the Daverns conformed to the Protestant Church, for they liked to keep a hold of their land.”

“So you have a right to your character, my dear lad,” said Theophilus.

“But the Unlucky Kilclares, as the people called them, were stubborn; an’ hid priests in the wood, an’ in a cave by the sea. They owned the wood an’ the village: an’ the Daverns had the moors to the west.”

“Between Enniscorthy and Enniscrone,” said the Rector.

“A Catholic would lose his estate, under the Penal Laws, if a Protestant informed,” said Sir Tim. “An’ so the Protestant friends or relations of a Catholic house would inform, an’ file a Bill of Discovery; an’ the land would be forfeited an’ given to them; an’ they would hold it in trust. Manny Protestants were

The Wood of the Brambles

nominal owners of lands, and paid the rent to the Catholics, in spite of the laws."

"A strange thing," said Theophilus, "in view of the treachery and the meanness of man."

"Terence of the Wine," said Sir Tim, "informed, to please the Kilclares. Their land was forfeited, an' given to him, according to the law, an' he paid them all the rent he collected; an' secretly sold the village and the Wood of the Brambles to Black Phelim Kilclare for sixpence; an' the deed was put by, as a proof that the Daverns were guarding the estate for their friends."

"I never heard of it, then," said I.

Sir Tim went on, without heeding me.

"Old Terence-na-fion! It makes me doleful to think of all the wine he could carry. In the eyes of the law, he was the owner of two estates, but the moors were mortgaged, an' the bailiffs were after him: an' so he was forced to pay Three Hundred a year to the Sub-sheriff of Wexford, to bribe him to forget to serve writs. God be with old Terence-na-fion! When he an' his friend Phelim had killed one another in a duel about a litter of pigs, Malachi got only the House; for the mortgages on the moors were foreclosed: an' then Michael Kilclare, who was

Confessions

always a man to borrow pain if he could, wrote an' said the deed of the sale was lost, as if he supposed Malachi would deny its existence."

"‘I want your opinion,’ says Malachi, as I entered the dinin’ room, an’ found him an’ the Abbé drinkin’ at the top of the table. ‘You are a man of the world, for you are often in Dublin: an’ I set store on your opinion,’ says Malachi. ‘So do I,’ says Maguire.

"Says Malachi, ‘I have scruples about defeatin’ the law, by payin’ rents to Kilclare. I own the wood and the village, an’ there is talk of a secret sale; but if it ever occurred, it was illegal, an’ it may have been cancelled.’ ‘If there was anny deed,’ says Maguire, ‘the witnesses an’ parties are buried.’ ‘The matter is very simple,’ said I. ‘So I say, sir,’ said Malachi. ‘So do I,’ says Maguire. ‘Yes,’ said I, ‘you are bound in honour to pay over the rent.’ ‘Stuff an’ nonsense!’ poor Malachi shouted, as if the lawn was between us. ‘When I asked your advice I never thought you’d insult me by a careless and a foolish opinion. Sir, I wonder to hear you.’ ‘So do I,’ says Maguire."

"Ah! poor dear Malachi was prone to be loud," said Theophilus, sighing. "When I implored him to be gentle, he looked as if he

The Wood of the Brambles

thought I was mad. But people in Ireland always think you are mad, if you prove your sanity by disapproving their ways."

"And this is the deed?" said I.

"But where was it hidden!" said Agatha.

"In the lumber-room at Ballymoreen," said the Rector.

"You must forgive me if I think it is doubtful," said Theophilus mildly. "Harragan went over the papers. A rough fellow he is; and used to call me Mac Consadine: he meant well, but it annoyed me exceedingly. He was searching for pedigrees, and so he would have come on the document."

"And so he did," said the Rector.

"And stole it?" cried Theophilus.

"Well, it wasn't yours," said Sir Tim, who resented these interruptions. "Then Malachi wrote, refusin' to give the rent to Kilclare, until the sale had been proved. Michael Kilclare never gave him an answer; but went off to the farm with his little son, an' abandoned Ballymoreen."

"And he worked in the fields for his living," said the Rector.

"An' yet he was prouder than dear Hannibal Ram," said Sir Tim.

Confessions

"The people bore with him, because they were sorry for his troubles : and everyone saluted him, and called him the Squire. On Sundays, he would dress in his old clothes as a gentleman," said the Rector.

"But on week days," said Sir Tim, breaking in, "he used to dress as a workman. The last time that I saw him I was strollin' with Malachi. The Squire was comin' up through the village, with a spade on his shoulder : he had a great stoop, for he was weary with diggin'. Passin' us, he gave us a lazy look, as if we were beggars goin' over his land. I felt I was a robber ; but Malachi was hummin' a tune."

"Harragan hated Kilclare for rejecting his proffered friendship, or slighting him," said the Rector.

"An' a good reason too," said Sir Tim.

"It was insolence to try to be friendly to his betters," said Considine. "Never be friends with a man who is not your equal, my lad. It only leads to misunderstanding and quarrels. It was my misfortune to mix, in the late Rising, with men who were accustomed to live in surroundings where rudeness was a trifle to pardon."

"You have learnt a deal of the story, sir," said I to the Rector.

The Wood of the Brambles

"From Harragan, and Dermody also. To do you justice," he said, "I believe you heard nothing of the story till lately. I daresay you found a clue when you were shut as a prisoner in Ballymoreen."

"I am as much to blame as Sir Dominick, for I told him the secret of the cave in the cliff," said Agatha.

"He took Kilclare in the cave?" said Sir Tim.

"I was serving Mass," she went on.

"You were there!" cried Sir Tim.

"You are old enough now, to cease from your undignified clambering," said Theophilus sternly.

"I was afraid to trust anyone with the secret," she said.

"Surprised Kilclare durin' Mass! Betrayed a secret you told him!" said Sir Tim, as if he spoke to himself.

"I was doubly untrue," said Agatha quickly. "I promised Father Pierce to go over the hill, and to warn the rebels he was taken a prisoner. The road is so crooked that he was certain I would reach them in time. When I came in sight of the rebels, I saw him and Sir Dominick by a cluster of beeches. I had thought Sir Dominick had plenty of soldiers, and would get away somehow."

Confessions

"Did you think at all?" said Theophilus.

"I don't know," said poor Agatha wistfully. "But Sir Dominick was sure to be killed, and I thought Father Pierce would be acquitted; and so——"

"An' you were perfectly right!" said Sir Tim, as she paused piteously. "Kilclare deserves to be hanged, for asking you to run on a message."

"But you promised," said the Rector.

"Have you yet to learn," cried Sir Tim, "that a lady is not bound by a promise? It was more than enough for an ugly lad like Kilclare, that she even said she would help him. Is a lady expected to keep her word when she has altered her mind?"

"Ah, my Cluster of Nuts!" said Theophilus, with sweetness, as if he was repenting his hardness, "how often have I told you a woman's privilege is to blossom in quietness? Think of your poor excellent mother. I would be the last to deny that she has faults of her own. But I am sure she was singing at her harp, the whole time that you were entangled in unpleasing adventures."

"She is not to blame," said Sir Tim; "it is this ruffianly Dominick."

The Wood of the Brambles

"I allow it was his fault," said Theophilus.

"That unhappy Kilclare is a warnin' to the good," said Sir Tim. "There is not a toad in the world would hop across the street to shake hands with him."

"I like him," said Agatha.

"I never hated him much, although he was a priest," said the Rector.

"You tried to save him," said I.

"Because it was unjust to destroy him."

"Roche was one of his friends," said Sir Tim.

"Roche was hanged in the morning," said Theophilus calmly, but he winced as he spoke. "His head was hacked off, and spiked upon the Court-house: his body was flung into the river. He would have been a troublesome curate in a monotonous life; or have broken his rough and warm heart, in an unavailing endeavour to be quiet and dutiful."

"He was a bloodthirsty scoundrel," said the Rector indignantly. Bill growled at his tone.

"Now that the young people are showin' me the way to confess," said Sir Tim doggedly, "I will own to a crime"—pausing, he went on in a tragic voice—"for I burnt Davernmore."

"You burnt the House, sir?" I cried.

"You?" cried Agatha.

Confessions

"I cannot say I am surprised," said the Rector.

"No doubt you had a reason, my dear friend," said Theophilus.

"I had no reason," said Sir Tim. "It was stolen away by the dhrink. The footmen took me up to my room: an' then I fell with a candle; an' the curtain was in a blaze in a second."

"Ah, my dearest Tim," said Theophilus, "it was only an accident. You have no need to reproach yourself; but it was unlucky for Dom."

"An' worse than that," said Sir Tim with a groan. "I let everyone believe I was innocent, as I wanted to pay for the damages; and own to my guilt when I had the money, instead of speakin' when my pockets were penniless."

"I would never have taken it," said I.

"An' since then I have moved heaven an' earth to find the money, and got nothin' but promises. Would you believe it? fellows wouldn't lend me the money, although I knew they had it, an' told them I would pay them as soon as I conveniently could. If the boy had been older I would have offered him the right satisfaction: but it seemed a pity to kill him as his life was beginnin'. Now I am sorry I didn't. No one found me out. I am never found out, except when I do nothin' at all."

The Wood of the Brambles

"Indeed? Are you detected so seldom?" said Theophilus kindly.

"So I came back here to confess," said Sir Tim, "but I found it bitter to speak last night; an' I got deeper in shame."

"Deeper?" said the Rector.

"Yes," said Sir Tim, in a choking voice, "for I lied."

"What?" said Theophilus, in astonishment.

"I said the Kilclares had no title to the village an' wood."

"It was kindly meant, sir," I said; "and it shows that I was ignorant then."

"It only shows that you were willin' to fool me," he said.

"I shall confess too," said the Rector dolefully.

"No?" cried Sir Tim, with a sudden cheerfulness.

"I committed a murder," said the Rector, in a voice that seemed to come from a tomb.

"A murder?" cried Sir Tim, beaming and chuckling.

"A murder!" said Agatha, growing pale.

"My dear sir!" said Theophilus, with deprecating indulgence.

"I murdered Sir Dominick," said the Rector.

"Good Heavens!" I cried.

Confessions

"In thought," he went on, and shut his lips with a snap.

"Oh, dear! was that all?" said Sir Tim sadly.

"When he was a child," said the Rector solemnly, with his eyes on the table, "he used to come to my house. Once he kept away for a week, so I went round to enquire. The house-keeper said the child was out of sorts; and I found him all alone in a fever. I heard Sir Malachi singing at the dining-room table. 'The poor little wretch! And do you think he will die?' he said. 'Well, that has advantages: Tony will be the head of the family. Tony is a wonderful fellow: last night he was as drunk as a lord. Still it is unpleasant to have any one dying overhead; and I'll go and sing somewhere else.' I went up again to the bedroom, thinking that if this was the home influence Dominick would have, I might live to see him drunk as a lord. And then I hoped he would die."

"That was good of you, sir," I said.

He went on quietly—"It was better to die stainless than to live like Sir Malachi. The child had got out of bed and opened the window; and stood leaning out of it, listening to Sir Malachi singing 'Garryowen,' at the end

The Wood of the Brambles

of the terrace, under the sycamore. Drawing back, and shutting the door, I kept a hold of the handle. With my eyes shut I could see the narrow bedroom distinctly. It had a bright paper with impossible lilies. The bed had carved posts, and a laced canopy, and dimity curtains. There was the tiny figure in the sun at the window, with the long hair touzled and hanging loose on the nightshirt. Then I heard him crying out 'Father.' That was his name for Sir Malachi, in the time when the old man was good to him, and now, in his sickness, he called for that forgotten affection. And I, who had never any son of my own, carried him back to the bed, and knelt beside him with tears, because I was very fond of the child."

"I remember you watched beside me for days," I said. "I owed my life to your goodness. I have forgotten nothing, though I think you have changed."

"It was long ago," said the Rector, without lifting his eyes.

"I have a book of yours here. Perhaps you had better take it," I said, holding out the little Greek Testament.

Our eyes met, and he took it.

Confessions

"Well, an' what of the murder?" said Sir Tim with impatience.

"If he had fallen, or had taken a chill in the minute I had stopped, he would have died at my hands," said the Rector.

"Well," said Sir Tim, "I would be sorry to have you nurse me in sickness. Considine, now it is your turn to confess."

"I am afraid I have no crime to remember," said Theophilus sadly. "And yet I have been friendly with Dom."

"It is all his doin', indeed," Sir Tim said, scowling. "He gave a dinner, an' asked me to fill his place as the host; an' so I was overcome by excitement. I believe he did it on purpose. He leant from a window in such a way that his friends would be tempted to throw him out on top of poor Malachi. An' then he lays a trap to annoy this dear young lady, a meanness I can never forgive."

"If you would only go to the General, and tell him why you took Father Pierce and gave evidence at the trial," said Agatha, "he would grant a reprieve."

"There is no way that I can make you believe me," I said. "How can I give you any proof of my ignorance?"

The Wood of the Brambles

"It would be more manly to own your fault," said Sir Tim. "We are your friends, an' can make allowance for everythin'."

"Your oldest friends," said the Rector.

"There is no use in repeating that you do me injustice," said I.

"None at all," said Theophilus.

"Goodbye," I said, holding out my hand to the Rector, but he stood without stirring.

"Goodbye, my dearest lad," said Theophilus, grasping my hand.

"You believe me?" I said with a thrill of absurd gratitude.

"No," he replied; "but I admire you profoundly."

Chapter VIII

The Reprieve

CARNABY BLAKE was standing at the door of the inn.

"I want to see you," he said.

"It is a good thing to be so easily satisfied," I said, as I hung my cloak on the rack.

"What do you mean?" he cried; "I said I wanted to speak to you."

"No; you didn't," said I.

"Come, let us step into the coffee-room," he said, with an unnatural quietness.

"Davern," he went on, as he was shutting the door of the coffee-room, "do you wish to insult me?"

"No, but I am willing to do so."

"You are?" he said, brightening.

"I would insult the Pope if he was plaguing me now," said I.

"Well?" said he, expectantly.

"If that is all you are eager to say, I am going up to my room," said I.

The Wood of the Brambles

"I am not in a humour for foolery," he cried.

"What has changed you so much?" said I.

"You have been making an ass of me."

"And you consider that accounts for a change?" said I peacefully.

"Look here, Davern," he said, sitting on the table, and beating his high boot with his whip; "although you have been out of Ireland so long that you are just as bad as a Londoner; yet, when it comes to dogging me, and trying to shoot me, without asking my leave, I think I have a right to complain. I suppose you will say they think nothing of such conduct in England. It is likely enough, if I can judge by the few English I ever had the misfortune to meet. But," he said, waving his whip, "we have laws in this country, that gentlemen are bound to support."

"You think we are bound to support the law?" said I staring.

"When we speak of the laws, in Connemara," he said, "we mean the Code of the Duel. But you keep away from the Code. What would poor Amby Bodkin or Toby Butler have said?"

"Amby Bodkin and Toby Butler are buried; and the country is more quiet without them," said I.

The Reprieve

"They would have buried you," he said grimly.

"It's waste of time dwelling on things that might have been," I replied; "and as I am dripping with rain——"

"There you are, with your foreign notions; as if you were the worse for a wetting," he said. "Why, in Connemara we never notice the rain: we are uneasy if the weather is fine, because it seems so unnatural. Not that it rains a drop more than it does everywhere else. Now, what do you think?"

"I was never in Connemara at all," said I.

"Didn't I know you'd say that?" he cried, despairing. "If only you'd insult me by saying Connemara is wet, it would be easy to manage you. But listen to me. The next time you make a fool of me, you will find you have been making a pair of us."

"When do you think I did it?" said I.

"Hundreds of times!" he said. "You took the priests, to annoy me. You made Roche surrender to me. When I had got leave to preside at the court-martial, on purpose to be friendly to Considine, you brought in the prisoners. I had meant to adjourn the trial, on the plea of obtaining evidence; but Considine grew so ex-

The Wood of the Brambles

cited by the fate of the other, that he made me condemn him. You tracked me this morning, just as I was about to explain things to Miss Considine. You brought the Piper out of the laurels. I didn't mind his being there, as long as I knew nothing about it. Then you made me hunt him with you."

"And why have I been taking this trouble?" said I.

"To destroy my chances of winning Miss Considine, sir; and well you know it," he said. "When I think of all you have done since yesterday morning, I tell you, I turn white at your craftiness. And yet you avoid giving me a ground for a quarrel."

"I thought the shooting was enough," said I meekly.

"According to the Code," he said sadly, "a challenge must be sent within twenty-four hours of the insult: but if you should do it again——"

"Come now, you are asking too much," said I.

"I never would have dreamt of your traps," said he, "but for the Piper: I would have thought you a dull sickly sort of a fellow, of no importance to anyone."

"I was doing all this, because you were a rival?" said I thoughtfully.

The Reprieve

"And I would never have thought you were a rival to anyone," he said. "Now Tony is a fellow an Irish girl can appreciate. Because he was friendly with you, there is a warrant against him."

"Why, what has he done?" said I.

"Nothing!" cried Blake, giving his boot a violent slash. "No more than I was doing myself! Rossiter found a pistol beneath the laurels with Tony's name on the handle. When he found Tony had ridden off in a hurry, he got a warrant at once."

"Why has Tony gone off?" said I.

"To get a reprieve," he said.

"I thought so," said I.

"For Kilclare," he went on.

"For Kilclare!" I repeated.

"To be sure," answered Blake.

"I am glad of that," I said.

"Well, I am astonished," said Blake.

"I wish poor Tony was warned," said I; "this is a bad time to be put in prison, for the trials are brief."

"I shall get him out," answered Blake.

"Rossiter will be looking for me next, I suppose," said I, carelessly. "I wish I could give Tony a hint: when do you expect he will come?"

The Wood of the Brambles

"To-night," said he. "The roads are so bad that thirty miles is a day's journey for carriages ; but of course he is galloping. So he is also your victim," he went on. "I daresay you had something to do with his going up to the Camp on Vinegar Hill, and with his rescue besides."

"His rescue?" said I.

Said Blake: "That little Colonel of Hessians says Tony was his prisoner once, and was carried off by the rebels, who threw down a big wall, and jumped over it with horrible cries. Tony can look after himself. But listen now, the long and the short of it is, that if I find myself fooled by any more of your tricks, I shall send you a challenge, without a reason at all."

"Well and good," said I, turning. "You can do as you like."

"Stop," he said, "I was nearly forgetting what I wanted to say to you. It is a message from Hunter."

"The General?" said I, at the door.

"You remember his message at Enniscorthy?" said Blake.

"More or less," I said lightly.

"He said you were to hold yourself ready

· So I do," said I.

The Reprieve

"And now he has some idea of trying you."

"When?" said I, carelessly.

"To-morrow," said Blake.

"All right," said I.

"The fact is, you have hundreds of enemies," he said.

"It can't be helped, I suppose. If you are in a crowd, you must be in somebody's way," said I.

"The prisoners are all ready to prove you were a Babe of the Wood. They say you enlisted at Ross."

"But that was only a joke," said I.

"Have you been making many jokes of the kind?" he said. "And they say you were free before you entered the town of Ross as a rebel."

"So I was," I said.

"At Enniscorthy you told me you went in as a prisoner," he said, with suspicion.

"So I was," said I, "in all but the name."

"I don't understand you; but, any way, Hunter will try you, unless you disappear," he went on.

"I have given my word."

"Wait a minute," he said. "Hunter sets you free from your promise."

"I can go away if I like?" said I.

The Wood of the Brambles

“And just as soon as you want.”

“And I can shirk a court-martial?”

“Ah, now I am glad you say that,” said Blake, with a little more kindliness; “of course you will face it?”

“A trial would be hasty and prejudiced,” said I, thoughtfully.

“I am certain a court-martial would hang you,” he said pleasantly. “But what does that matter?”

“Very little,” said I.

“As long as nobody can say you were frightened,” he went on.

“But I would be frightened,” said I. “You shot Sir Edward Crosbie on half the evidence you could bring against me.”

“Hunter is not sure of your guilt, and has learnt that your father was a friend of the Viceroy’s in America, and so, if you vanish, he will leave you alone.”

I said, “I am beginning to doubt whether the Irish air agrees with my character. I have been home for a month. If this sort of thing were to go on for a year, I should get a bad reputation.”

“It shall not go on for a year,” said Blake, with decision.

The Reprieve

“And how could I vanish?”

“There is a brig at Rosslare.”

“I know,” said I.

“It is sailing to-morrow; and he told me to give you a delicate hint that it is pleasant at sea.”

“You have done so,” said I.

“The captain is reluctant to take you. He says he will pitch you into the sea as soon as he is well on the road, because your name should be Jonas.”

“What an arbitrary fellow!” I said. “After all, I didn’t christen myself; and where is the brig going?”

“To Havre.”

“And if it goes without me?” I said.

“You will be arrested to-morrow.”

“Then I’ll think it over,” said I, as I went into the passage.

I went up to my room, heavily, as if I was tired. I determined to look careless and sit with the others instead of moping alone. So when I had put on my dark coat with the plain buttons and high collar, I went back to the coffee-room; and found it full of fellows in uniform. Blake

The Wood of the Brambles

and Sir Tim had gone to spend the evening with Hunter. During supper and after it, I joined in the talking, with a wish to be merry. The dullest jokes were delightful; and it was easy to laugh, and to cap ludicrous stories. The talk wandered, but kept aloof from the Rising, as if the men wanted to put that subject away; and yet it was in everyone's mind, for the stories were kin to it: some were about the war in America, and that led an old Major to talk of Keogh, as a brother officer campaigning in Canada. At this there was a hush, as if every one thought of Keogh's head beside Roche's and Harvey's, on the door of the Court-house, in the dark and the rain. Then somebody spoke of Lord Edward Fitzgerald in the backwoods; another had seen him in Italy; and so I took up the talk with a story of Venice, delighted to speak of anything distant, and as I was describing the chill rooms in the palace on the shady canal, the flapping of the rain on the window was, for all the world, like the secret skurry of gusts behind the shivering tapestry.

I was in despair as I spoke, and I was shunning the eyes of the listeners; and when I was silent, I clenched my teeth, and my mood blackened to a bodily pain. I thought the

The Reprieve

hours were longer than nights. Then I slipped away from the room, at the loudest of a chorus, and stopping in the passage, I covered my eyes with my hands.

“Beggin’ your Honour’s pardon——” said Brosna standing behind me.

I turned on him, as if he intruded.

“What do you want?” I said. My eyes were so dull, that I could scarcely see him, although he stood at my elbow.

“He said, “May I leave your service, your Honour?”

“You can go in the morning,” I said. “Hand me my cloak.”

The rain was like a wall in the road. I could hardly breathe, and was deaf, for my ears were full of the wind. I staggered in the clutch of the storm. I fancied the sea roared in an agony of rage, and the wind was crazy with suffering. I was out a long time, before I stopped at the Guard-room, at the Gate in the Ramparts. Soldiers were in it, and looked round as I entered.

“Has anyone come from Dublin to-night?” said I.

“No one,” said Rossiter, getting up from his chair.

The Wood of the Brambles

"May I wait here a little?" I said.

Handing me the chair, he sat down on a long bench by the wall. I took off my hat and my cloak, and drew the chair to the hearth. No one seemed to notice me further. I sat with my hands out to the blaze. Heavy drops of the rain hissed in the fire.

So I listened to the storm, till the Gate groaned on its hinges. As I opened the door, a horseman was getting out of his saddle. The light from the window and door was on his spattered and drenched cloak, and his spurs reddened from his desperate riding. As he turned and staggered, I could see it was Tony. I caught his hand as he came into the guard-room.

"You have the reprieve?" I said.

"Safe enough," he cried thickly.

"You are not hurt?" I said.

"Hurt by riding," he said. "Lord, man, I am only an ache. A drink now, and a strong one!"

He sank down on a chair, as a soldier filled a glass from a bottle. The men were all afoot, and around us, speaking among themselves, as he drank. I felt as if he had saved me.

"Fill the glass again, fellow," he said. "Do you think me a child? Lord, what a gallop!"

The Reprieve

Going it was all very well, but coming back I was hunted by everyone; and I think it was worse after dark, for I kept plunging into masses of men, and ducking under the bullets, with the storm in my face and behind me, like the shouts of a regiment."

"It was worth it, Tony," said I. "If you are too tired, you can give me the reprieve. I can go to the General."

"Is this Mr Antony Davern?" said Rossiter.

"Yes," I said, as Tony was drinking.

Rossiter touched Tony and said, "I arrest you in the name of the King."

"Arrest me?" cried Tony, standing up, but sinking back in a second.

"For firing at Colonel Blake," said the sergeant.

"My cousin is innocent," said I.

"That remains to be seen," said the sergeant.

I went on—"I did it myself."

"You are a prisoner," said the sergeant, "already: and you want to delude me into letting him go. You may be sure I shall keep him."

"If you give me a respectable bed," said Tony, "you may keep me for months."

"But he brings a reprieve," said I.

The Wood of the Brambles

Said Rossiter, "I know nothing of that."

"Look here, Tony," I said, "I shall go and speak to the General."

"You'll not see him to-night. It is much too late," said the sergeant.

Sadness and sleep were coming down upon Tony.

"And am I too late after all?" he said sleepily, as he wrinkled his forehead, and stared down at the fire. "What an unlucky fellow I am! It is always the same; and my whole life is a misery! Oh, I wish I was dead."

"Come along with me now, please," said Rossiter.

"Give me the reprieve," I said hastily, as Tony stood up.

"Here it is," he said reeling, and taking a paper from his pocket. "Go off, and tell Agatha you brought it yourself; while I am hanged for killing Carnaby Blake."

Rossiter led him out of the Guard-room.

Tony clung to him, sobbing, and saying, "Do you feel for me, sergeant? Is there a soft place in your heart?"

"Go away!" said a man, putting his head

The Reprieve

out of a window at the General's quarters, after I had knocked for a time.

"I must see the General now," I said.

"You won't, then," he answered.

"It is important," I said.

"Do you think he would see any one at this hour of the night?" he said.

"I shall make it worth your while if you call him," I said.

"You couldn't," he said; "it would be as much as my life is worth to attempt it. Is it a despatch?"

"No, it is a reprieve," I said.

"Is it wake him for that?" cried the man.
"Do you suppose I am mad? Put it under the door, and call again in the morning. He has to hang a scoundrel at seven; and so it will be easy to find him."

He slammed the window, and left my further knocking unanswered.

I went to see whether anyone was up at the Considines'. A light shone in the parlour.

"Who is it?" said Agatha, coming down to the landing, as the maid let me in.

"It is all right," said I, as I went into the hall. "Tony has come with a reprieve for Kilclare."

The Wood of the Brambles

"Oh, thank God!" she said earnestly.

She was holding a silver candlestick feebly.

"And my father's?" she said, leaning her hand on the banisters.

"Oh, there is no doubt about that," I said; "and it is sure to arrive. Indeed, Tony may have it: I never thought about asking him, for the other was urgent."

"Mother will be so glad," she went on. "It is so kind of you to bring the news to us, Dominick."

A gust blew out her candle.

"Good-night!" she said; and so I went off with a gladness that was all the more keen from the despair I forsook. As I hurried along, I was thinking it was almost a pity I could not hand the reprieve to the General, in the face of the people. Riding up in the nick of time, and delivering Kilclare at the gallows, I would have proved my goodwill; and the throng would have altered in a moment, and Agatha would have looked from the window as the people rejoiced. But I decided to return to the Inn; and to lie down for a little, and to go to the General's quarters as soon as there was any one stirring.

The waves were washing over the quays; and the water was like a tangle of twine on my

The Reprieve

heavy boots, as I was splashing through puddles. Now I thought there was joy in the shouting of the wind, and the rushing and the lilt of the waves, and their stubborn and impetuous hammering.

Chapter IX

Justice

I ROUSED a man at the Inn, and going up to my room, took off my coat and boots, and lay down on the bed for a little rest until morning. I was so happy that it was hard to lie quiet: and, once or twice, I stretched out my hand to the letter on the table beside me, to make sure it was there, as if I thought it a talisman.

So I lay, until a streak along the bottom and sides of the heavy blind at the window made it look like a banner. A blur of light was in the grate, and I rose to pull up the blind; and I listened to the storm in the dusk. The twilight was as full of the shrieking and cheering as the end of a battle.

So, as the glimmer whitened the sheets and made the curtains distinct, I dreamt with my eyes open, forgetting my cares; for it was my custom to banish unpleasant thoughts if I could, until they overcame my unwillingness. I was so

Justice

reluctant to vex a minute of brightness with inappropriate troubles, that I kept them away, until I was sad and they crowded from the corners of memory.

Now I would find my hopes, after all, upon the brink of despair, and rebuke my enemies' confidence and the shifty reliance of friends. I fancied I was on the threshold of life, and beginning a more prosperous journey. As I have often winced to remember a sudden anger of mine, so I was ashamed to reflect upon my feverish care, and it seemed as irrational as a rage that was over. The history of this month of my life would have a pleasanter close than I had foreseen; and would finish like an elaborate novel written to shorten hours when the wind cries and the rain drums on the window, and to hold the reader by disasters, and brighten him after all by rejoicings and the pealing of bells.

Looking back on it, I found it a comedy. I would tell the story to Agatha, and make her laugh at the falls I had met in an unmannerly world. Then I thought I would keep the story till later; because she was not old enough yet to love a man and laugh at him also. Now I would give the lands to Kilclare, and build my home, for my mother's fortune would be more than I

The Wood of the Brambles

needed. Theophilus would retire to his shady house in the wood. Kilclare would be at peace in the village; and would dig in his garden; and the children at play in the gutters, and the inquisitive dogs protecting the homes where there was nothing to envy, would be fond of him now. I would tell Agatha to have him often to lunch when I was out for the day. He need sit no longer alone in his house of an evening, wishing that the beggars would come and have a share in his fireside; for his wealth would supply him with any number of visitors. Now the little ruinous garden would be crowded again after dusk by the wanderers waiting for their turn to go in.

The people of Enniscrone would return to their watchful and indifferent life. Not all of them would go back to the village: for many were quiet under the red turf, or were dangling unquietly from the boughs by the road, or had been borne by the rivers to be tossed by the sea. Jim the Fool would no longer make horses shy by his laughing, as he sprawled in the gutter; his lubberly hands lay resolute in a grip of the banner. But in a little time the ranks of the people would close up, and the fallen would be only remembered in a minute of sadness.

Justice

Then I thought of my escape; for if Tony had been checked, or Cornwallis had refused a reprieve, I would have been hated by the people, and ballads would have carried the tale of my iniquity broadcast through Ireland, with the help of the dreary and unmusical chanting of ragged singers beside the inns or before the slovenly cottages. The old people would have quavered my sins to the tiny shock-headed children, when the turf was red in the dark, and its glimmer was flushing the little feet and was glancing on the horrified eyes. Of course I would have sailed in the brig; instead of adding a chance of the gallows to my load of disgrace. After all, the rest of my life need have been no worse than my travels in Sir Malachi's time; but for the loss of all my hopes and my dreams. That would have been a bitter end to the fancies I had on the sunny brow of the moor, as I saw my home in the trees, on the morning I came back from abroad. I remembered Theophilus declaiming, as I entered his house,

“We are not the first,
Who, with best meaning, have incurred the worst.”

Then I thought again of Kilclare, and of his life with his grim father, and with me at St. Omer's.

The Wood of the Brambles

I said to myself, "I wonder, was he in love with Agatha, when he used to be friends with her?"

Then I fell asleep; and dreamt Agatha said to me, with more than her usual frankness,—

"I always liked Pierce a great deal better than you; though, of course, I am in love with your cousin."

"Ah, nonsense!" I said.

"I mean it," she said.

"Then," I said, indignantly, "why did you stop, when you saw me at the cluster of beeches?"

"I don't know," she said earnestly.

"But," said I, "you know your own mind!"

"I haven't got a mind," she said, wistfully.

"This is so absurd that I am sure it is true," I said, as I awoke in dismay. Although I had sometimes doubted my affection for Agatha, when I was dull or was remembering books tainted with a cynical smartness; I had never questioned her willingness to accept me at once. But now I cried in despair, "I took it for granted she had some sort of a mind. I never thought she had much. Can she appreciate me with none? If it had been Carnaby Blake, I could understand it, of course. He has long legs, and so it is natural that women should love him. And besides, he has a red coat. But

Justice

Tony!" I cried, turning in misery; "that fellow Tony!"

"All that my most affectionate friends ever said against me is true," I groaned in my heart. "I am a contemptible ass. I wish I had never been born. But any way I am better than Tony!" and with that I fell asleep; and I dreamt I was out in a gondola on the starry lagoon with Agatha, and said to her, "You are my sister: and I am your masterful lover, and your little child that clings to you to be comforted." "Oh, what strange things you say! I wish you wouldn't, you know," she said. "Tony used to talk to me sensibly." Then I dreamt I was alone in the storm, and looking up at the heads of Theophilus and Roche and Kilclare upon the spikes of the Court-house: and lifting my hands I cried, "I know you at last, Pierce, and I single you out as my friend."

I awoke with a sudden despair, for it was light in the room. I started up from the bed. The storm hammered the streaming windows, and shook the rickety house. I was sure it was too late: and I felt my life was over in bitterness. Then I took my watch; and at first I could not

The Wood of the Brambles

distinguish the time: then I saw it was only a quarter-past six; and at that relief, I fell down on my knees beside the pillow with my face in my hands.

When I rang the bell for hot water, and told Brosna to order coffee, and have my horse at the door, I had found my happiness again, and was almost glad of my sleep, because now it would be better to give the reprieve to the officer in command at the Bridge; so after all I would prove my innocence under Agatha's eyes, and before thousands of people. I shaved quickly, and tied my hair with a new ribbon, put on fresh linen with stiff lace, and the blue coat with the big collar, and hastened down to the coffee-room.

The people of the Inn were so fond of Neligan, that they used to include me in that liking, and were deaf to my orders; as if they fancied I was willing to wait until less loveable visitors had been duly attended; but now I noticed they ran at my bidding, as if they thought I was dangerous.

As I stood sipping the coffee, I had a view of the road through a wire screen that covered the lower half of the window, and saw a great many people going down to the left against the wind and the rain. The women had their hoods, and

Justice

the men kept their jaws in the collars of their coats, and had turned the limp sides of their hats down to let the water run off. They all had their heads low, and that gave them a heavy look; though indeed they were solemn besides, and had none of the happy gossip and greetings that would have shortened the way if they were bound to a funeral. The sadder they looked, the more I was delighted to think the paper in my breast was enough to dispel their gloom; and my spirits rose to such a pitch that I felt as if the people were bound on a fool's errand, and I could not forbear smiling, as I saw them go past.

Smiling, I met the eyes of a peasant, and at the hate in his look, I thought, "They would say it was a crowning iniquity, to laugh at the people who were sad for my victim." Then going out, I found Brosna with my cloak, and as he opened the door, there was such a plunge of the storm into the little hall that I staggered.

There was a torrent of wind in the street, as I rode across to the byeway going down to the Quays. Reaching the harbour, I was struck by the storm. The waves sprang on the wall and up aloft into fountains. The sea was like a fragment of slate scored by a child's random and irresolute fingers.

The Wood of the Brambles

Turning to the left, I could see troops on the Bridge, and a wide twinkling on the opposite bank, as if an army was there. The red ranks in front of me, with fringes of steel above them, were pressed by a drab and motionless multitude.

Coming to the back of the throng, I called aloud to the nearest to let me pass, and they looked at me. A thrill went through the crowd, as if thousands were turning white faces back to me and shrinking away. A path was opened at once; and I rode into it, looking over their heads carelessly, with a chill at my heart.

The rain beat on my eyes; but I was able to see the gallows at the end of the bridge: the rope had been fastened to the peak of the arch, and by the side of the lamp. Looking up at the Considines' window, I saw Agatha standing between Sir Tim and Theophilus. Sir Tim was on her right, and the Rector was behind him, and all four were at ease, as if they were looking on at a pageant.

As I reached the soldiers, I heard a tramping above the sound of the waves and the storm, and saw the prisoner's escort. Hessians came first, and then a body of Highlanders. The noise of the tramping doubled, as if nobody breathed. Kilclare was on a horse, and his hands were tied

Justice

at his back: his lips moved; and he bent, as if he had forgotten the world. A Highlander led the horse by the reins. Then came other troops, and the officers: and I endeavoured to pass; but the soldiers would not let me, at first.

Riding up to the bridge, I held the letter out to the General. "What do you want?" he said, staring with a look of unfriendliness. "Is that a letter for me?"

"It is a reprieve!" I said quietly.

"A reprieve?" he cried; "and when did you get it?"

"Last night," said I.

"You delayed it till now?" he said angrily, as he opened the letter, and it flapped in the wind.

Kilclare was on the gallows, and looked towards the water: his lips quivered in a passion of praying. Rossiter was behind with a noose. Blake was by the gallows on horseback.

"Sir, you go too far," said the General.

"But it is a reprieve?" I said.

"For Considine."

"There is some mistake," I said desperately.

"You need only give me the time to go across to the prison."

"To the prison?" he said.

"Perhaps there were two reprieves," I cried.

The Wood of the Brambles

"I'll not give you a moment," he said angrily. "Enough of this fooling."

"For God's sake stop them!" I cried, clutching him by the sleeve.

He shook off my hand, in a rage. "I have to join the attack upon the Wood of the Brambles," he said; "I shall be late, as it is. There was enough trouble about Needham's delay. Do you think your wild talk of two reprieves and a prisoner, would make me run the risk of a struggle with that dangerous mob?"

"You must wait!" I cried, swinging my horse round; but the soldiers were so pushed by the people that the pathway was blocked. I tried in vain to get through. My heart froze, as the people knelt with a loud mutter of prayers. I drove my spurs in my horse. I saw Tony galloping down the street, with a paper up in his hand. My horse plunged, as a shriek broke from the multitude. Looking back to the left, I saw Rossiter holding something out at arm's length, as he cried:

"This is the head of a traitor!"

END OF BOOK III

Epilogue

To Lady Davern

If you glance at this book, I know you will begin at the end. Well, this is the end of the story. As the brig was standing out to the open sea, and Sir Dominick was taking his last look at the hills of Wexford, he saw the smoke above the Wood of the Brambles. If you wanted to read about that fight, when Dromeen led the soldiers, and Shamus cut his way through a regiment, as the thickets were burning, you would have to grope in the foolish histories of that dangerous time. Shamus rallied the last rebels in the Mountains of Wicklow; and held his own till his followers decided to give him over to justice: then, after hanging as many as he could, he escaped to France, where the people took him for a professor from Oxford. Theophilus and the Rector were loved by all the peasants around them. Castle Desmond has a store of traditions of Sir Tim and his fighting: and you remember Sir Anthony Davern, that

The Wood of the Brambles

severe and morose magistrate, and friend of the Law. "In spite of everyone, I think there was good in my cousin Dom," he would say, "although he was thoughtless." Sir Tony was cheerful, until his wife, Agatha, died.

THE END



*Turnbull & Spears, Printers
Edinburgh*

By the same Author.

"AT THE RISING OF THE MOON."

"FATHER MATHEW: HIS LIFE AND TIMES."

Some Press Opinions of "At the Rising of the Moon."

"For literary capital, Mr Frank Mathew has a good deal of mother-wit, with much quiet humour, and a particularly intimate knowledge of his country. Nothing Irish seems alien to him; all the stories are marked by grace and moderation of style."—*Bookman*.

"The stories are full of the love of Ireland, but the love is spread so equally over landlords and moonlighters, and constables, and priests, and Protestant Rectors that it is very safe. They have performance as well as promise in them."—*The Sketch*.

"Ireland has found her Kipling. The very heart of Ireland beats in the stories, and every figure abounds with character."—*Boston Herald*.

"Mr Mathew has done for Moher and its people what Mr Barrie has done for Thrums. All the features of Irish life are pourtrayed with keen sympathy and loving insight, and the book teems with that apparently unconscious humour which is so racy of the soil."—*Glasgow Herald*.

"Mr Frank Mathew has displayed a marvellous insight into Irish character, and a power of sympathetic vivid delineation and picturesque narrative."—*Freeman's Journal*.

"As sketches of Irish life they are very successful."—*Literary World*.

"Racy, witty, and life-like."—*The Bookseller*.

"The delicacy of touch, the purity of diction, and the quiet humour that have placed Mr Barrie in the position he occupies. There is little of the rollicking Irish humour in these stories, but much that is quaint and subtle."—*Detroit Free Press*.

"A very pleasant and artistic book."—*Scottish Leader*.



CATALOGUE of PUBLICATIONS
in BELLES LE'

1895.

List of Books

IN

BELLES LETTRES

(Including some Transfers)

Published by John Lane

The Bodley Head

VIGO STREET, LONDON, W.

N.B.—The Authors and Publisher reserve the right of reprinting any book in this list if a new edition is called for, except in cases where a stipulation has been made to the contrary, and of printing a separate edition of any of the books for America irrespective of the numbers to which the English editions are limited. The numbers mentioned do not include copies sent to the public libraries, nor those sent for review.

Most of the books are published simultaneously in England and America, and in many instances the names of the American Publishers are appended.

ADAMS (FRANCIS).

ESSAYS IN MODERNITY. Crown 8vo. 5s. net. [*Shortly.*
Chicago : Stone & Kimball.

A CHILD OF THE AGE. (See KEYNOTES SERIES.)

ALLEN (GRANT).

THE LOWER SLOPES : A Volume of Verse. With Title-page and Cover Design by J. ILLINGWORTH KAY.
600 copies. Crown 8vo. 5s. net.

Chicago : Stone & Kimball.

THE WOMAN WHO DID. (See KEYNOTES SERIES.)

THE BRITISH BARBARIANS. (See KEYNOTES SERIES.)

BAILEY (JOHN C).

AN ANTHOLOGY OF ENGLISH ELEGIES. [*In preparation.*

BEARDSLEY (AUBREY).

THE STORY OF VENUS AND TANNHÄUSER, in which is set forth an exact account of the Manner of State held by Madam Venus, Goddess and Meretrix, under the famous Hörselberg, and containing the adventures of Tannhäuser in that place, his repentance, his journeying to Rome, and return to the loving mountain. By AUBREY BEARDSLEY. With 20 full-page Illustrations, numerous ornaments, and a cover from the same hand. Sq. 16mo. 10s. 6d. net. [*In preparation.*]

BEDDOES (T. L.).

See GOSSE (EDMUND).

BEECHING (REV. II. C.).

IN A GARDEN: Poems. With Title-page designed by ROGER FRY. Crown 8vo. 5s. net.
New York: Macmillan & Co.

BENSON (ARTHUR CHRISTOPHER).

LYRICS. Fcap. 8vo, buckram. 5s. net.
New York: Macmillan & Co.

BRIDGES (ROBERT).

SUPPRESSED CHAPTERS AND OTHER BOOKISHNESS.
Crown 8vo. 3s. 6d. net.
New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

BROTHERTON (MARY).

ROSEMARY FOR REMEMBRANCE. With Title-page and Cover Design by WALTER WEST. Fcap. 8vo. 3s. 6d. net.

BUCHAN (JOHN).

MUSA PISCATRIX. [*In preparation.*]

CAMPBELL (GERALD).

THE JONESES AND THE ASTERISKS. (*See* MAYFAIR SET.)

CASE (ROBERT).

AN ANTHOLOGY OF ENGLISH EPITHALAMIES.
[*In preparation.*]

CASTLE (MRS EGERTON).

MY LITTLE LADY ANNE. (*See* PIERROT'S LIBRARY.)

CASTLE (EGERTON).

See STEVENSON (ROBERT LOUIS).

CRAIG (R. MANIFOLD).

THE SACRIFICE OF FOOLS: A Novel. Crown 8vo.
4s. 6d. net. [*In preparation.*]

CRANE (WALTER).

TOY BOOKS. Re-issue. Each with new Cover Design and end papers. 9d. net.

The group of three bound in one volume, with a decorative cloth cover, end papers, and a newly written and designed title-page and preface. 3s. 6d. net.

I. THIS LITTLE PIG.

II. THE FAIRY SHIP.

III. KING LUCKIEBOY'S PARTY.

Chicago : Stone & Kimball.

CROSSE (VICTORIA).

THE WOMAN WHO DIDN'T. (*See KEYNOTES SERIES.*)

DALMON (C. W.).

SONG FAVOURS. With a Title-page designed by J. P. DONNE. Sq. 16mo. 3s. 6d. net.

Chicago : Way & Williams.

D'ARCY (ELLA).

MONOCHROMES. (*See KEYNOTES SERIES.*)

DAVIDSON (JOHN).

PLAYS: An Unhistorical Pastoral; A Romantic Farce; Bruce, a Chronicle Play; Smith, a Tragic Farce; Scaramouch in Naxos, a Pantomime, with a Frontispiece and Cover Design by AUBREY BEARDSLEY. Printed at the Ballantyne Press. 500 copies. Small 4to. 7s. 6d. net.

Chicago : Stone & Kimball.

FLEET STREET ECLOGUES. Fcap. 8vo, buckram. 4s. 6d. net.

[*Third Edition.*]

FLEET STREET ECLOGUES. 2nd Series. Fcap. 8vo, buckram. 4s. 6d. net.

A RANDOM ITINERARY AND A BALLAD. With a Frontispiece and Title-page by LAURENCE HOUSMAN. 600 copies. Fcap. 8vo, Irish Linen. 5s. net.

Boston : Copeland & Day.

BALLADS AND SONGS. With a Title-page and Cover Design by WALTER WEST. Fourth Edition. Fcap. 8vo, buckram. 5s. net.

Boston : Copeland & Day.

DAWE (W. CARLTON).

YELLOW AND WHITE. (*See KEYNOTES SERIES.*)

DE TABLEY (LORD).

POEMS, DRAMATIC AND LYRICAL. By JOHN LEICESTER WARREN (Lord De Tabley). Illustrations and Cover Design by C. S. RICKETTS. Second Edition. Crown 8vo. 7s. 6d. net.

New York : Macmillan & Co.

POEMS, DRAMATIC AND LYRICAL. Second Series, uniform in binding with the former volume. Crown 8vo. 5s. net.

New York : Macmillan & Co.

DIX (GERTRUDE).

THE GIRL FROM THE FARM. (*See KEYNOTES SERIES.*)

DOSTOIEVSKY (F.).

See KEYNOTES SERIES, Vol. III.

ECHEGARAY (JOSÉ).

See LYNCH (HANNAH).

EGERTON (GEORGE).

KEYNOTES. (*See KEYNOTES SERIES.*)

DISCORDS. (*See KEYNOTES SERIES.*)

YOUNG OFEG'S DITTIES. A translation from the Swedish of OLA HANSSON. With Title-page and Cover Design by AUBREY BEARDSLEY. Crown 8vo. 3s. 6d. net.
Boston : Roberts Bros.

FARR (FLORENCE).

THE DANCING FAUN. (*See KEYNOTES SERIES.*)

FLEMING (GEORGE).

FOR PLAIN WOMEN ONLY. (*See MAYFAIR SET.*)

FLETCHER (J. S.).

THE WONDERFUL WAPENTAKE. By 'A SON OF THE SOIL.' With 18 full-page Illustrations by J. A. SYMINGTON. Crown 8vo. 5s. 6d. net.
Chicago : A. C. McClurg & Co.

FREDERIC (HAROLD).

MRS ALBERT GRUNDY. (*See MAYFAIR SET.*)

GALE (NORMAN).

ORCHARD SONGS. With Title-page and Cover Design by J. ILLINGWORTH KAY. Fcap 8vo, Irish Linen. 5s. net.

Also a Special Edition limited in number on hand-made paper bound in English vellum. £1, 1s. net.

New York : G. P. Putnam's Sons.

GARNETT (RICHARD).

POEMS. With Title-page by J. ILLINGWORTH KAY.
350 copies. Crown 8vo. 5s. net.
Boston : Copeland & Day.

DANTE, PETRARCH, CAMOENS, cxxiv Sonnets rendered
in English. Crown 8vo. 5s. net. [*In preparation.*]

GEARY (SIR NEVILL, BART.).

A LAWYER'S WIFE: A Novel. Crown 8vo. 4s. 6d.
net. [*In preparation.*]

GOSSE (EDMUND).

THE LETTERS OF THOMAS LOVELL BEDDOES. Now
first edited. Pott 8vo. 5s. net.
Also 25 copies large paper. 12s. 6d. net.
New York : Macmillan & Co.

GRAHAME (KENNETH).

PAGAN PAPERS: A Volume of Essays. With Title-
page by AUBREY BEARDSLEY. Fcap. 8vo. 5s. net.
Chicago : Stone & Kimball.

[*Out of print at present.*]

THE GOLDEN AGE. Crown 8vo. 3s. 6d. net.
Chicago : Stone & Kimball.

GREENE (G. A.).

ITALIAN LYRISTS OF TO-DAY. Translations in the
original metres from about thirty-five living Italian
poets, with bibliographical and biographical notes.
Crown 8vo. 5s. net.
New York : Macmillan & Co.

GREENWOOD (FREDERICK).

IMAGINATION IN DREAMS. Crown 8vo. 5s. net.
New York : Macmillan & Co.

HAKE (T. GORDON).

A SELECTION FROM HIS POEMS. Edited by Mrs
MEYNELL. With a Portrait after D. G. ROSSETTI,
and a Cover Design by GLEESON WHITE. Crown
8vo. 5s. net.
Chicago : Stone and Kimball.

HANSSON (LAURA MARHOLM).

MODERN WOMEN: Six Psychological Sketches. [Sophia
Kovalevsky, George Egerton, Eleanora Duse, Amalie
Skram, Marie Bashkirtseff, A. Edgren Leffler.] Trans-
lated from the German by HERMIONE RAMSDEN.
Crown 8vo. 3s. 6d. net. [*In preparation.*]

HANSSON (OLA). *See* EGERTON.

HARLAND (HENRY).

GREY ROSES. (*See* KEYNOTES SERIES.)

HAYES (ALFRED).

THE VALE OF ARDEN AND OTHER POEMS. With a Title-page and a Cover designed by E. H. NEW. Fcap. 8vo. 3s. 6d. net.

Also 25 copies large paper. 15s. net.

HEINEMANN (WILLIAM).

THE FIRST STEP. A Dramatic Moment. Small 4to. 3s. 6d. net.

HOPPER (NORA).

BALLADS IN PROSE. With a Title-page and Cover by WALTER WEST. Sq. 16mo. 5s. net.

Boston : Roberts Bros.

A VOLUME OF POEMS. With Title-page designed by PATTEN WILSON. Cr. 8vo. 5s. net.

[*In preparation.*]

HOUSMAN (CLEMENCE).

THE WERE WOLF. With six Full-page Illustrations, Title-page and Cover Design, by LAURENCE HOUSMAN. Sq. 16mo. 3s. 6d. net.

HOUSMAN (LAURENCE).

GREEN ARRAS: Poems. With Illustrations by the Author. Crown 8vo. 5s. net. [*In preparation.*]

IRVING (LAURENCE).

GODEFROI AND YOLANDE: A Play. With three Illustrations by AUBREY BEARDSLEY. Sm. 4to. 5s. net.

[*In preparation.*]

JAMES (W. P.).

ROMANTIC PROFESSIONS: A Volume of Essays. With Title - page designed by J. ILLINGWORTH KAY. Crown 8vo. 5s. net.

New York : Macmillan & Co.

JOHNSON (LIONEL).

THE ART OF THOMAS HARDY: Six Essays. With Etched Portrait by WM. STRANG, and Bibliography by JOHN LANE. Second Edition. Crown 8vo. 5s. 6d. net.

Also 150 copies, large paper, with proofs of the portrait. £1. 1s. net.

New York : Dodd, Mead & Co.

JOHNSON (PAULINE).

WHITE WAMPUM : Poems. With a Title-page and Cover
Design by E. H. NEW. Crown 8vo. 5s. net.
Boston : Lamson, Wolfe & Co.

JOHNSTONE (C. E.).

BALLADS OF BOY AND BEAK. With a Title-page designed
by F. H. TOWNSEND. Sq. 32mo. 2s. net.

KEYNOTES SERIES.

Each volume with specially designed Title-page by AUBREY
BEARDSLEY. Crown 8vo, cloth. 3s. 6d. net.

Vol. I. **KEYNOTES.** By GEORGE EGERTON.

[Seventh edition now ready.]

Vol. II. **THE DANCING FAUN.** By FLORENCE FARR.

Vol. III. **POOR FOLK.** Translated from the Russian of
F. Dostoievsky by LENA MILMAN. With a Preface
by GEORGE MOORE.

Vol. IV. **A CHILD OF THE AGE.** By FRANCIS ADAMS.

Vol. V. **THE GREAT GOD PAN AND THE INMOST
LIGHT.** By ARTHUR MACHEN.

[Second edition now ready.]

Vol. VI. **DISCORDS.** By GEORGE EGERTON.

[Fourth edition now ready.]

Vol. VII. **PRINCE ZALESKI.** By M. P. SHIEL.

Vol. VIII. **THE WOMAN WHO DID.** By GRANT ALLEN.
[Nineteenth edition now ready.]

Vol. IX. **WOMEN'S TRAGEDIES.** By H. D. LOWRY.

Vol. X. **GREY ROSES.** By HENRY HARLAND.

Vol. XI. **AT THE FIRST CORNER AND OTHER STORIES.**
By H. B. MARRIOTT WATSON.

Vol. XII. **MONOCHROMES.** By ELLA D'ARCY.

Vol. XIII. **AT THE RELTON ARMS.** By EVELYN SHARP.

Vol. XIV. **THE GIRL FROM THE FARM.** By GERTRUDE
DIX. *[Second edition now ready.]*

Vol. XV. **THE MIRROR OF MUSIC.** By STANLEY V.
MAKOWER.

Vol. XVI. **YELLOW AND WHITE.** By W. CARLTON
DAWE.

Vol. XVII. **THE MOUNTAIN LOVERS.** By FIONA
MACLEOD.

Vol. XVIII. **THE WOMAN WHO DIDN'T.** By VICTORIA
CROSSE. *[Second edition now ready.]*

KEYNOTES SERIES—*continued.*

Vol. XIX. THE THREE IMPOSTORS. By ARTHUR MACHEN.

Vol. XX. NOBODY'S FAULT. By NETTA SYRETT.

Vol. XXI. THE BRITISH BARBARIANS. By GRANT ALLEN.

The following are in rapid preparation.

Vol. XXII. IN HOMESPUN. By E. NESBIT.

Vol. XXIII. PLATONIC AFFECTIONS. By JOHN SMITH.

Vol. XXIV. NETS FOR THE WIND. By UNA TAYLOR.

Vol. XXV. WHERE THE ATLANTIC MEETS THE LAND.
By CALDWELL LIPSETT.

Boston : Roberts Bros.

KING (MAUDE EGERTON).

ROUND ABOUT A BRIGHTON COACH OFFICE. With 30
Illustrations by LUCY KEMP WELCH. Cr. 8vo.
5s. net.

LANDER (HARRY).

WEIGHED IN THE BALANCE: A Novel. Crown 8vo.
4s. 6d. net. *[In preparation.]*

LANG (ANDREW). See STODDART.

LEATHER (R. K.).

VERSES. 250 copies. Fcap. 8vo. 3s. net.

Transferred by the Author to the present Publisher.

LE GALLIENNE (RICHARD).

PROSE FANCIES. With Portrait of the Author by
WILSON STEER. Fourth Edition. Crown 8vo.
Purple cloth. 5s. net.

Also a limited large paper edition. 12s. 6d. net.

New York : G. P. Putnam's Sons.

THE BOOK BILLS OF NARCISSUS, An Account rendered
by RICHARD LE GALLIENNE. Third Edition. With
a Frontispiece. Crown 8vo. Purple cloth. 3s. 6d. net.

Also 50 copies on large paper. 8vo. 10s. 6d. net.

New York : G. P. Putman's Sons.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON, AN ELEGY, AND OTHER
POEMS, MAINLY PERSONAL. With Etched Title-page
by D. Y. CAMERON. Cr. 8vo. Purple cloth. 4s. 6d. net.

Also 75 copies on large paper. 8vo. 12s. 6d. net.

Boston : Copeland & Day.

ENGLISH POEMS. Fourth Edition, revised. Crown 8vo.
Purple cloth. 4s. 6d. net.

Boston : Copeland & Day.

LE GALLIENNE (RICHARD).

RETROSPECTIVE REVIEWS, A LITERARY LOG, 1891-1895.
2 vols. crown 8vo. Purple cloth. 9s. net.

[*In preparation.*]

New York : Dodd, Mead & Co.

GEORGE MEREDITH : Some Characteristics. With a Bibliography (much enlarged) by JOHN LANE, Portrait, etc. Fourth Edition. Cr. 8vo. Purple cloth. 5s. 6d. net.

THE RELIGION OF A LITERARY MAN. 5th thousand. Crown 8vo. Purple cloth. 3s. 6d. net.

Also a special rubricated edition on hand-made paper. 8vo. 10s. 6d. net.

New York : G. P. Putnam's Sons.

LIPSETT (CALDWELL).

WHERE THE ATLANTIC MEETS THE LAND. (*See KEYNOTES SERIES.*)

LOWRY (H. D.).

WOMEN'S TRAGEDIES. (*See KEYNOTES SERIES.*)

LUCAS (WINIFRED).

A VOLUME OF POEMS. Fcap. 8vo. 4s. 6d. net.

[*In preparation.*]

LYNCH (HANNAH).

THE GREAT GALEOTO AND FOLLY OR SAINTLINESS. Two Plays, from the Spanish of JOSÉ ECHEGARAY, with an Introduction. Small 4to. 5s. 6d. net.

Boston : Lamson, Wolfe & Co.

MACHEN (ARTHUR).

THE GREAT GOD PAN. (*See KEYNOTES SERIES.*)

THE THREE IMPOSTORS. (*See KEYNOTES SERIES.*)

MACLEOD (FIONA).

THE MOUNTAIN LOVERS. (*See KEYNOTES SERIES.*)

MAKOWER (STANLEY V.).

THE MIRROR OF MUSIC. (*See KEYNOTES SERIES.*)

MARZIALS (THEO.).

THE GALLERY OF PIGEONS AND OTHER POEMS. Post 8vo. 4s. 6d. net.

[*Very few remain.*]

Transferred by the Author to the present Publisher.

MATHEW (FRANK).

THE WOOD OF THE BRAMBLES : A Novel. With Title-page and Cover Design by PATTEN WILSON. Crown 8vo. 4s. 6d. net.

[*In preparation.*]

THE MAYFAIR SET.

Each volume fcap. 8vo. 3s. 6d. net.

Vol. I. **THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A BOY:** Passages selected by his Friend, G. S. STREET. With a Title-page designed by C. W. FURSE.

[Fifth Edition now ready.]

Vol. II. **THE JONESES AND THE ASTERISKS:** a Story in Monologue. By GERALD CAMPBELL. With Title-page and six Illustrations by F. H. TOWNSEND.

[Second Edition now ready.]

Vol. III. **SELECT CONVERSATIONS WITH AN UNCLE NOW EXTINCT.** By H. G. WELLS. With Title-page by F. H. TOWNSEND.

The following are in preparation.

Vol. IV. **FOR PLAIN WOMEN ONLY.** By GEORGE FLEMING.

Vol. V. **THE FEASTS OF AUTOLYCUS:** The Diary of a Greedy Woman. Edited by ELIZABETH ROBINS PENNELL.

Vol. VI. **MRS ALBERT GRUNDY:** Observations in Philistia. By HAROLD FREDERIC.

New York: The Merriam Company.

MEREDITH (GEORGE).

THE FIRST PUBLISHED PORTRAIT OF THIS AUTHOR, engraved on the wood by W. BISCOMBE GARDNER, after the painting by G. F. WATTS. Proof copies on Japanese vellum, signed by painter and engraver. £1, 1s. net.

MEYNELL (MRS.), (ALICE C. THOMPSON).

POEMS. Fcap. 8vo. 3s. 6d. net. *[Third Edition.]*

A few of the 50 large paper copies (First Edition) remain, 12s. 6d. net.

THE RHYTHM OF LIFE AND OTHER ESSAYS. Second Edition. Fcap. 8vo. 3s. 6d. net.

A few of the 50 large paper copies (First Edition) remain, 12s. 6d. net.

See also HAKE.

MILLER (JOAQUIN).

THE BUILDING OF THE CITY BEAUTIFUL. Fcap. 8vo.

With a Decorated Cover. 5s. net.

Chicago: Stone & Kimball.

MILMAN (LENA).

DOSTOIEVSKY'S POOR FOLK. (*See KEYNOTES SERIES.*)

MONKHOUSE (ALLAN).

BOOKS AND PLAYS: A Volume of Essays on Meredith, Borrow, Ibsen, and others. 400 copies. Crown 8vo. 5s. net.

Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co.

MOORE (GEORGE).

See KEYNOTES SERIES, Vol. III.

NESBIT (E.).

A POMANDER OF VERSE. With a Title-page and Cover designed by LAURENCE HOUSMAN. Crown 8vo. 5s. net.

Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co.

IN HOMESPUN. (See KEYNOTES SERIES.)

NETTLESHIP (J. T.).

ROBERT BROWNING: Essays and Thoughts. Third Edition. With a Portrait. Crown 8vo. 5s. 6d. net. New York: Chas. Scribner's Sons.

NOBLE (JAS. ASHCROFT).

THE SONNET IN ENGLAND AND OTHER ESSAYS. Title-page and Cover Design by AUSTIN YOUNG. 600 copies. Crown 8vo. 5s. net.

Also 50 copies large paper. 12s. 6d. net.

O'SHAUGHNESSY (ARTHUR).

HIS LIFE AND HIS WORK. With Selections from his Poems. By LOUISE CHANDLER MOULTON. Portrait and Cover Design. Fcap. 8vo. 5s. net.

Chicago: Stone & Kimball.

OXFORD CHARACTERS.

A series of lithographed portraits by WILL ROTHENSTEIN, with text by F. YORK POWELL and others. To be issued monthly in term. Each number will contain two portraits. Parts I. to VII. ready. 200 sets only, folio, wrapper, 5s. net per part; 25 special large paper sets containing proof impressions of the portraits signed by the artist, 10s. 6d. net per part.

PENNELL (ELIZABETH ROBINS).

THE FEASTS OF AUTOLYCUS. (*See MAYFAIR SET.*)

PETERS (WM. THEODORE).

POSIES OUT OF RINGS. Sq. 16mo. 2s. net.

[In preparation.]

PIERROT'S LIBRARY.

Each volume with Title-page, Cover Design, and Endpapers designed by AUBREY BEARDSLEY. Sq. 16mo. 2s. net.

The following are in preparation.

Vol. I. **PIERROT.** By H. DE VERE STACPOOLE.

Vol. II. **MY LITTLE LADY ANNE.** By Mrs EGERTON CASTLE.

Vol. III. **DEATH, THE KNIGHT AND THE LADY.** By H. DE VERE STACPOOLE.

Vol. IV. **SIMPLICITY.** By A. T. G. PRICE.

Philadelphia : Henry Altemus.

PLARR (VICTOR).

IN THE DORIAN MOOD : Poems. Crown 8vo. 5s. net.

[In preparation.]

PRICE (A. T. G.).

SIMPLICITY. (*See PIERROT'S LIBRARY.*)

RADFORD (DOLLIE).

SONGS AND OTHER VERSES. With Title-page designed by PATTEN WILSON. Fcap. 8vo. 4s. 6d. net.

Philadelphia : J. B. Lippincott Co.

RAMSDEN (HERMIONE).

See HANSSON.

RHYS (ERNEST).

A LONDON ROSE AND OTHER RHYMES. With Title-page designed by SELWYN IMAGE. 350 copies. Crown 8vo. 5s. net.

New York : Dodd, Mead & Co.

RICKETTS (C. S.) AND C. H. SHANNON.

HERO AND LEANDER. By CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE and GEORGE CHAPMAN. With Borders, Initials, and Illustrations designed and engraved on the wood by C. S. RICKETTS and C. H. SHANNON. Bound in English vellum and gold. 200 copies only. 35s. net.

Boston : Copeland & Day.

ROBERTSON (JOHN M.).

ESSAYS TOWARDS A CRITICAL METHOD. (New Series.)

Crown 8vo. 5s. net.

[In preparation.]

ROBINSON (C. NEWTON).

THE VIOL OF LOVE. With Ornaments and Cover Design by LAURENCE HOUSMAN. Crown 8vo. 5s. net.

Boston : Lamson, Wolfe & Co.

ST. CYRES (LORD).

THE LITTLE FLOWERS OF ST. FRANCIS: A new rendering into English of the Fioretti di San Francesco.
Crown 8vo. 5s. net. *[In preparation.]*

SHARP (EVELYN).

AT THE RELTON ARMS. (*See KEYNOTES SERIES.*)

SHIEL (M. P.).

PRINCE ZALESKI. (*See KEYNOTES SERIES.*)

SMITH (JOHN).

PLATONIC AFFECTIONS. (*See KEYNOTES SERIES.*)

STACPOOLE (H. DE VERE).

PIERROT. (*See PIERROT'S LIBRARY.*)

DEATH, THE KNIGHT AND THE LADY. (*See PIERROT'S LIBRARY.*)

STEVENSON (ROBERT LOUIS).

PRINCE OTTO. A rendering in French by EGERTON CASTLE. Crown 8vo. 5s. net. *[In preparation.]*
Also 100 copies on large paper, uniform in size with the Edinburgh Edition of the Works.

A CHILD'S GARDEN OF VERSES. With nearly 100 Illustrations by CHARLES ROBINSON. Crown 8vo. 5s. net.

STODDART (THOS. TOD).

THE DEATH WAKE. With an Introduction by ANDREW LANG. Fcap. 8vo. 5s. net.
Chicago: Way & Williams.

STREET (G. S.).

MINIATURES AND MOODS. Fcap. 8vo. 3s. net.
Transferred by the Author to the present Publisher.

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A BOY. (*See MAYFAIR SET.*)
New York: The Merriam Co.

QUALES EGO; a few remarks, in particular and at large.
Fcap. 8vo. 3s. 6d. net. *[In preparation.]*

SWETTENHAM (F. A.).

MALAY SKETCHES. With Title-page and Cover Design by PATTEN WILSON. Crown 8vo. 5s. net.
New York: Macmillan & Co.

SYRETT (NETTA).

NOBODY'S FAULT. (*See KEYNOTES SERIES.*)

TABB (JOHN B.).

POEMS. Sq. 32mo. 4s 6d. net.
Boston: Copeland & Day.

TAYLOR (UNA).

NETS FOR THE WIND. (*See KEYNOTES SERIES.*)

TENNYSON (FREDERICK).

POEMS OF THE DAY AND YEAR. With a Title-page by
PATTEN WILSON. Crown 8vo. 5s. net.
Chicago : Stone & Kimball.

THIMM (C. A.).

A COMPLETE BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE ART OF FENCE,
DUELLING, ETC. With Illustrations. [*In preparation.*]

THOMPSON (FRANCIS).

POEMS. With Frontispiece, Title-page, and Cover Design
by LAURENCE HOUSMAN. Fourth Edition. Pott
4to. 5s. net.

Boston : Copeland & Day.

SISTER SONGS: An Offering to Two Sisters. With Frontis-
piece, Title-page, and Cover Design by LAURENCE
HOUSMAN. Pott 4to. 5s. net.

Boston : Copeland & Day.

THOREAU (HENRY DAVID).

POEMS OF NATURE. Selected and edited by HENRY S.
SALT and FRANK B. SANBORN, with a Title-page
designed by PATTEN WILSON. Fcap. 8vo. 4s. 6d.
net.

Boston and New York : Houghton, Mifflin & Co.

TYNAN HINKSON (KATHARINE).

CUCKOO SONGS. With Title-page and Cover Design by
LAURENCE HOUSMAN. Fcap. 8vo. 5s. net.

Boston : Copeland & Day.

MIRACLE PLAYS: OUR LORD'S COMING AND CHILDHOOD.

With Six Illustrations, Title-page, and Cover Design
by PATTEN WILSON. Fcap. 8vo. 4s. 6d. net.

Chicago : Stone & Kimball.

WATSON (ROSAMUND MARRIOTT).

VESPERTILIA AND OTHER POEMS. With a Title-page
designed by R. ANNING BELL. Fcap. 8vo. 4s. 6d.
net.

A SUMMER NIGHT AND OTHER POEMS. New edition,
with a decorative Title-page. Fcap. 8vo. 3s. net.

Chicago : Way & Williams.

WATSON (H. B. MARRIOTT).

AT THE FIRST CORNER. (*See KEYNOTES SERIES.*)

GALLOPING DICK. With Title-page and Cover Design
by PATTEN WILSON. Crown 8vo. 4s. 6d. net.

Chicago : Stone & Kimball.

WATSON (WILLIAM).

THE FATHER OF THE FOREST, AND OTHER POEMS.
With New Photogravure Portrait of the Author.

Fcap. 8vo. 3s. 6d. net.

75 copies, large paper, 10s. 6d. net.

Chicago : Stone & Kimball.

ODES AND OTHER POEMS. Fourth Edition. Fcap. 8vo,
buckram. 4s. 6d. net.

New York : Macmillan & Co.

THE ELOPING ANGELS : A Caprice. Second Edition.
Square 16mo, buckram. 3s. 6d. net.

New York : Macmillan & Co.

EXCURSIONS IN CRITICISM : being some Prose Recrea-
tions of a Rhymers. Second Edition. Cr. 8vo. 5s. net.

New York : Macmillan & Co.

THE PRINCE'S QUEST AND OTHER POEMS. With a
Bibliographical Note added. Second Edition. Fcap.
8vo. 4s. 6d. net.

WATT (FRANCIS).

THE LAW'S LUMBER ROOM. Fcap. 8vo. 3s. 6d. net.

Chicago : A. C. McClurg & Co.

WATTS (THEODORE).

POEMS. Crown 8vo. 5s. net.

[*In preparation.*]

*There will also be an Edition de Luxe of this volume printed at
the Kelmscott Press.*

WELLS (H. G.).

SELECT CONVERSATIONS WITH AN UNCLE. (See MAY-
FAIR SET.)

WHARTON (H. T.).

SAPPHO. Memoir, Text, Selected Renderings, and a
Literal Translation by HENRY THORNTON WHARTON.
With three Illustrations in Photogravure, and a Cover
designed by AUBREY BEARDSLEY. Fcap. 8vo.
7s. 6d. net.

Chicago : A. C. McClurg & Co.

THE YELLOW BOOK

An Illustrated Quarterly

Pott 4to. 5s. net.

VOLUME I. April 1894. 272 pages. 15 Illustrations.

[*Out of print.*]

VOLUME II. July 1894. 364 pages. 23 Illustrations.

VOLUME III. October 1894. 280 pages. 15 Illustrations.

VOLUME IV. January 1895. 285 pages. 16 Illustrations.

VOLUME V. April 1895. 317 pages. 14 Illustrations.

VOLUME VI. July 1895. 335 pages. 16 Illustrations.

VOLUME VII. October 1895. 320 pages. 20 Illustrations.

Boston : Copeland & Day.

