

FICTION

George A Birmingham

Hyacinth

A PUBLIC DOMAIN BOOK

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FICTION

HYACINTH

By George A. Birmingham

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CHAPTER XXVI



CHAPTER I

In the year 1850 or thereabouts religious and charitable society in England was seized with a desire to convert Irish Roman Catholics to the Protestant faith. It is clear to everyone with any experience of missionary societies that, the more remote the field of actual work, the easier it is to keep alive the interest of subscribers. The mission to Roman Catholics, therefore, commenced in that western portion of Galway which the modern tourist knows as Connemara, and the enthusiasm was immense. Elderly ladies, often with titles, were energetic in the cause of the new reformation. Young ladies, some of them very attractive, collected money from their brothers and admirers. States-men and Bishops headed the subscription-lists, and influential committees earnestly debated plans for spending the money which poured in. Faith in the efficacy of money handled by influential committees is one of the characteristics of the English people, and in this particular case it seemed as if their faith were to be justified by results. Most encouraging reports were sent to headquarters from Connemara. It appeared that converts were flocking in, and that the schools of the missionaries were filled to overflowing. In the matter of education circumstances favoured the new reformation. The leonine John McHale, the Papal Archbishop of Tuam, pursued a policy which drove the children of his flock into the mission schools. The only other kind of education available was that which some humorous English statesman had called 'national,' and it did not seem to the Archbishop desirable that an Irish boy should be beaten for speaking his own language, or rewarded for calling himself 'a happy English child.' He refused to allow the building of national schools in his diocese, and thus left the cleverer boys to drift into the mission schools, where they learnt carefully selected texts of Scripture along with the multiplication-table. The best of them were pushed on through Dublin University, and crowned the hopes of their teachers by taking Holy Orders in the Church of England. There are still to be met with in Galway and Mayo ancient peasants and broken-down inhabitants of workhouses who speak with a certain pride of 'my brother the minister.' There are also here and there in English rectories elderly gentlemen who have almost forgotten the thatched cottages where they ate their earliest potatoes.

Among these cleverer boys was one Aeneas Conneally, who was something more than clever. He was also religious in an intense and enthusiastic manner, which puzzled his teachers while it pleased them. His ancestors had lived for generations on a seaboard farm, watered by salt rain, swept by misty storms. The famine and the fever that followed it left him fatherless and brotherless. The emigration schemes robbed him and his mother of their surviving relations. The mission school and the missionary's charity effected the half conversion of the mother and a whole-hearted acceptance of the new faith on the part of Aeneas. Unlike most of his fellows in the college classrooms, he refused to regard an English curacy as the goal of his ambition. It seemed to him that his conversion ought not to end in his parading the streets of Liverpool in a black coat and a white tie. He wanted to return to his people and tell them in their own tongue the Gospel which he had found so beautiful.

The London committee meditated on his request, and before they arrived at a conclusion his mother died, having at the last moment made a tardy submission to the Church she had denied. Her apostasy--so the missionaries called it--confirmed the resolution of her son, and the committee at length agreed to allow him to return to his native village as the first Rector of the newly-created parish of Carrowkeel. He was provided with all that seemed necessary to insure the success of his work. They built him a gray house, low and strong, for it had to withstand the gales which swept in from the Atlantic. They bought him a field where a cow could graze, and an acre of bog to cut turf from. A church was built for him, gray and strong, like his house. It was fitted with comfortable pews, a pulpit, a reading-desk, and a movable table of wood decently covered with a crimson cloth. Beyond the church stood the school he had attended as a boy, whitewashed without and draped inside with maps and illuminated texts. A salary, not princely but sufficient, was voted to Mr. Conneally, and he was given authority over a Scripture-reader and a schoolmaster. The whole group of mission buildings--the rectory, the church, and the school--stood, like types of the uncompromising spirit of Protestantism, upon the bare hillside, swept by every storm, battered by the Atlantic spray. Below them Carrowkeel, the village, cowered in such shelter as the sandhills afforded. Eastward lonely cottages, faintly smoking dots in the landscape, straggled away to the rugged bases of the mountains. The Rev. Aeneas Conneally entered upon his mission enthusiastically, and the London committee awaited results. There were scarcely any results, certainly none that could be considered satisfactory. The day for making conversions was past, and the tide had set decisively against the new reformation. A national school, started by a clear-sighted priest, in spite of his Archbishop, left the mission school almost without pupils. The Scripture-reader lost heart, and took to seeking encouragement in the public-house. He found it, and once when exalted--he said, spiritually--paraded the streets cursing the Virgin Mary. Worse followed, and the committee in London dismissed the man. A diminishing income forced on them the necessity of economy, and no successor was appointed. For a few years Mr. Conneally laboured on. Then a sharp-eyed inspector from London discovered that the schoolmaster took very little trouble about teaching, but displayed great talent in prompting his children at examinations. He, too, was dismissed, and the committee, still bent on economy, appointed a mistress in his place. She was a pretty girl, and after she had shivered through the stormy nights of two winters in the lonely school-house, Mr. Conneally married her. Afterwards the office of school-teacher was also left vacant. The

whitewashed school fell gradually into decay, and the committee effected a further saving.

After his marriage Mr. Conneally's missionary enthusiasm began to flag. His contact with womanhood humanized him. The sternness of the reformer died in him, and his neighbours, who never could comprehend his religion, came to understand the man. They learned to look upon him as a friend, to seek his sympathy and help. In time they learnt to love him.

Two years passed, and a son was born. The village people crowded upon him with congratulations, and mothers of wide experience praised the boy till Mrs. Conneally's heart swelled in her with pride. He was christened Hyacinth, after a great pioneer and leader of the mission work. The naming was Mr. Conneally's act of contrition for the forsaking of his enthusiasm, his recognition of the value of a zeal which had not flagged. Failing the attainment of greatness, the next best thing is to dedicate a new life to a patron saint who has won the reward of those who endure to the end. For two years more life in the glebe house was rapturously happy. Such bliss has in it, no doubt, an element of sin, and it is not good that it should endure. This was to be seen afterwards in calmer times, though hardly at the moment when the break came. There was a hope of a second child, a delightful time of expectation; then an accident, the blighting of the hope, and in a few days the death of Mrs. Conneally. Her husband buried her, digging the first grave in the rocky ground that lay around the little church.

For a time Mr. Conneally was stunned by his sorrow. He stopped working altogether, ceased to think, even to feel. Men avoided him with instinctive reverence at first, and afterwards with fear, as he wandered, muttering to himself, among the sandhills and along the beach. After a while the power of thought and a sense of the outward things of life returned to him. He found that an aged crone from the village had established herself in his house, and was caring for Hyacinth. He let her stay, and according to her abilities she cooked and washed for him and the boy, neither asking wages nor taking orders from him, until she died.

Hyacinth grew and thrived amazingly. From morning till evening he was in the village, among the boats beside the little pier, or in the fields, when the men worked there. Everyone petted and loved him, from Father Moran, the priest who had started the national school, down to old Shamus, the crippled singer of interminable Irish songs and teller of heroic legends of the past. It was when he heard the boy repeat a story of Finn MacCool to the old crone in the kitchen that Mr. Conneally awoke to the idea that he must educate his son. He began, naturally enough, with Irish, for it was Irish, and not English, that Hyacinth spoke fluently.

Afterwards the English alphabet followed, though not for the sake of reading books, for except the Bible and the Prayer-Book Hyacinth was taught to read no English books. He learned Latin after a fashion, not with nice attention to complexities of syntax, but as a language meant to be used, read, and even spoken now and then to Father Moran.

Meanwhile the passage of the years brought changes to Carrowkeel. The Admiralty established a coastguard station near the village, and arranged, for the greater security of the Empire, that men in blue-serge clothes should take it in turns to look at the Atlantic through a telescope. Then the unquiet spirit of the Congested Districts Board possessed the place for a while. A young engineer designed a new pier to shelter fishing-boats. He galvanized the people into unwonted activity, and, though sceptical of good results, they earned a weekly wage by building it. Boats came, great able boats, which fought the Atlantic, and the old currachs were left to blister in the sun far up on the beach. Instructors from the Isle of Man taught new ways of catching mackerel. Green patches between the cottages and the sea, once the playground of pigs and children, or the marine parade of solemn lines of geese, were spread with brown nets. On May mornings, if the take was good, long lines of carts rattled down the road carrying the fish to the railway at Clifden, and the place bore for a while the appearance of vitality. A vagrant Englishman discovered that lobsters could be had almost for the asking in Carrowkeel. The commercial instincts of his race were aroused in him.

He established a trade between the villagers and the fishmongers of Manchester. The price of lobsters rose to the unprecedented figure of four shillings a dozen, and it was supposed that even so the promoter of the scheme secured a profit.

To Aeneas Conneally, growing quietly old, the changes meant very little. The coastguards, being bound by one of the articles of the British Constitution, came to church on Sunday mornings with exemplary regularity, and each man at fixed intervals brought a baby to be christened and a woman to be churched. Otherwise they hardly affected Mr. Conneally's life. The great officials who visited Carrowkeel to survey the benignant activities of the Congested Districts Board were men whose magnificent intellectual powers raised them above any recognised form of Christianity. Neither Father Moran's ministrations nor Mr. Conneally's appealed to them.

The London committee of the mission to Roman Catholics made no inquiry about what was going on at Carrowkeel. They asked for no statistics, expected no results, but signed quarterly cheques for Mr. Conneally, presuming, one may suppose, that if he had ceased to exist they would somehow have heard of it.

By far the most important event for Hyacinth and his father was the death of their old housekeeper. In the changed state of society in Carrowkeel it was found impossible to secure the services of another. Hyacinth, at this time about fifteen years old, took to the housework without feeling that he was doing anything strange or unmanly. He was familiar with the position of 'bachelor boys' who, having grown elderly under the care of a mother, preferred afterwards

the toil of their own kitchens to the uncertain issue of marrying a girl to 'do for them.' Life under their altered circumstances was simplified. It seemed unnecessary to carry a meal from the room it was cooked in to another for the purpose of eating it, so the front rooms of the house, with their tattered furniture, were left to moulder quietly in the persistent damp. One door was felt to be sufficient for the ingress and egress of two people from a house. The kitchen door, being at the back of the house, was oftenest the sheltered one, so the front door was bolted, and the grass grew up to it. One by one, as Hyacinth's education required, the Latin and Greek books were removed from the forsaken study, and took their places among the diminishing array of plates and cups on the kitchen dresser. The spreading and removal of a tablecloth for every meal came to be regarded as foolish toil. When room was required on the table for plates, the books and papers were swept on one side. A pile of potatoes, and the pan, with bacon or a fish perhaps still frizzling in it, was set in the place left vacant.

Morning and evening Aeneas Conneally expected his son to join with him in prayer. The two knelt together on the earthen floor facing the window, while the old man meditated aloud on Divine things. There were breaks in his speech and long silences, so that sometimes it was hard to tell when his prayer had really ended. These devotions formed a part of his father's life into which Hyacinth never really entered at all. He neither rebelled nor mocked. He simply remained outside. So when his father wandered off to solitary places on the seashore, and sat gazing into the sunset or a gathering storm, Hyacinth neither followed nor questioned him. Sometimes on winter nights when the wind howled more fiercely than usual round the house, the old man would close the book they read together, and repeat aloud long passages from the Apocalypse. His voice, weak and wavering at first, would gather strength as he proceeded, and the young man listened, stirred to vague emotion over the fall of Babylon the Great.

For the most part Hyacinth's time was his own. Even the hours of study were uncertain. He read when he liked, and his father seemed content with long days of idleness followed by others of application. It was, indeed, only owing to his love of what he read that the boy learned at all. Often while he tramped from his home to the village at midday his heart was hot within him with some great thought which had sprung to him from a hastily construed chorus of Euripides. Sometimes he startled the fishermen when he went with them at night by chanting Homer's rolling hexameters through the darkness while the boat lay waiting, borne gunwale down to the black water with the drag of the net that had been shot.

There was a tacit understanding that Hyacinth, like his father, was to take Holy Orders. He matriculated in Trinity College when he was eighteen, and, as is often done by poorer students, remained at home, merely passing the required examinations, until he took his degree, and the time came for his entering the divinity school. Then it became necessary for him to reside in Dublin, and the first great change in his life took place.

The night before he left home he and his father sat together in the kitchen after they had finished their evening meal. For a long time neither of them spoke. Hyacinth held a book in his hand, but scarcely attempted to read it. His thoughts wandered from hopeful expectation of what the future was to bring him and the new life was to mean, to vague regrets, weighted with misgivings, which would take no certain shape. There crowded upon him recollections of busy autumn days when the grain harvest overtook the belated hay-making, and men toiled till late in the fields; of long nights in the springtime when he tugged at the fishing-nets, and felt the mackerel slipping and flapping past his feet in the darkness; of the longer winter nights when he joined the gatherings of the boys and girls to dance jigs and reels on the earthen floor of some kitchen. It seemed now that all this was past and over for him. Holiday time would bring him back to Carrowkeel, but would it be the same? Would he be the same?

He looked at his father, half hoping for sympathy; but the old man sat gazing--it seemed to Hyacinth stupidly--into the fire. He wondered if his father had forgotten that this was their last evening together. Then suddenly, without raising his eyes, the old man began to speak, and it appeared that he, too, was thinking of the change.

'I do not know, my son, what they will teach you in their school of divinity. I have long ago forgotten all I learned there, and I have not missed the knowledge. It does not seem to me now that what they taught me has been of any help in getting to know Him.'

He paused for a long time. Hyacinth was familiar enough with his father's ways of speech to know that the emphatic 'Him' meant the God whom he worshipped.

'There is, I am sure, only one way in which we can become His friends. *These are they which have come out of great tribulation!* You remember that, Hyacinth? That is the only way. You may be taught truths about Him, but they matter very little. You have already great thoughts, burning thoughts, but they will not of themselves bring you to Him. The other way is the only way. Shall I wish it for you, my son? Shall I give it to you for my blessing? May great tribulation come upon you in your life! *Great tribulation!* See how weak my faith is even now at the very end. I cannot give you this blessing, although I know very well that it is the only way. I know this, because I have been along this way myself, and it has led me to Him.'

Again he paused. It did not seem to Hyacinth to be possible to say anything. He was not sure in his heart that the friendship of the Man of Sorrows was so well worth having that he would be content to pay for it by accepting such a benediction from his father.

'I shall do this for you, Hyacinth: I shall pray that when the choice is given you, the great choice between what is easy and what is hard, the right decision may be made for you. I do not know in what form it will come. Perhaps it will be as it was with me. He made the choice for me, for indeed I could not have chosen for myself. He set my feet upon the narrow way, forced me along it for a while, and now at the end I see His face.'

Hyacinth had heard enough of the brief bliss of his father's married life to understand. He caught for the first time a glimpse of the meaning of the solitary life, the long prayers, and the meditations. He was profoundly moved, but it did not even then seem to him desirable to choose such a way, or to have such attainment thrust on him.

Next morning the autumn sunlight chased the recollection of his emotion from his mind. The fishermen stopped his car as he drove through the street to shake hands with him. Their wives shouted familiar blessings from the cabin doors. Father Moran came bare-headed to the gate of his presbytery garden and waved a farewell.

CHAPTER II

There is that about the material fabric, the actual stone and mortar, of Trinity College, Dublin, which makes a vivid appeal to the imagination of the common man. The cultured sentimentalist will not indeed be able to lave his soul in tepid emotion while he walks through these quadrangles, as he may among the cloisters and chapels of the Oxford colleges. The amateur of the past cannot here stand at gaze before any single building as he does before the weather-beaten front of Oriel, tracing in imagination the footsteps of Newman or Arnold. Yet to the average man, and far more to the newly emancipated schoolboy, Trinity College, Dublin, makes an appeal which can hardly be ignored. In Oxford and Cambridge town and University are mixed together; shops jostle and elbow colleges in the streets. In Dublin a man leaves the city behind him when he enters the college, passes completely out of the atmosphere of the University when he steps on to the pavement. The physical contrast is striking enough, appealing to the ear and the eye. The rattle of the traffic, the jangling of cart bells, the inarticulate babel of voices, suddenly cease when the archway of the great entrance-gate is passed.

An immense silence takes their place. There is no longer any need for watchfulness, nor risk of being hustled by the hurrying crowds. Instead of footway and street crossing there are broad walks, untrodden stretches of smooth grass. The heavy campanile is in front, and heights of gray building frown down on each side. It needs no education, not even any imagination, to appreciate the change. It is not necessary to know that great scholars inhabited the place, to recall any name or any man's career. The appeal is not to a recollected impression of the Middle Ages, or indeed of any past, remote or near. It is the spirit of scholarship itself, abstract, intangible, which creates this atmosphere. Knowledge, a severe goddess, awes while she beckons.

Hyacinth Conneally had submitted himself to such emotions time after time when, fresh from the wilds of Connemara, he made his way to the examination-hall, an outside student in a borrowed cap and gown. Now, when for the first time he entered into the actual life of the college, could look up at windows of rooms that were his own, and reckon on his privilege of fingering tomes from the shelves of the huge library, the spirit of the place awed him anew. He neither analyzed nor attempted an expression of what he felt, but his first night within the walls was restless because of the inspiration which filled him.

Yet this college does not fail to make an appeal also to the thinking mind, only it is a strange appeal, tending to sadness. The sudden silence after the tumult of the streets has come for some minds to be the symbol of a divorce between the knowledge within and the life without. And this is not the separation which must always exist between thought and action, the gulf fixed between the student and the merchant. It is a real divorce between the nation and the University, between the two kinds of life which ought, like man and woman, to complete each other through their very diversity, but here have gone hopelessly apart. Never once through all the centuries of Ireland's struggle to express herself has the University felt the throb of her life. It is true that Ireland's greatest patriots, from Swift to Davis, have been her children; but she has never understood their spirit, never looked on them as anything but strangers to her family. They have been to her stray robber wasps, to be driven from the hive; while to the others they have seemed cygnets among her duckling brood. It is very wonderful that the University alone has been able to resist the glamour of Ireland's past, and has failed to admire the persistency of her nationality. There has surely been enough in every century that has passed since the college was founded to win it over from alien thought and the ideals of the foreigner.

All this Hyacinth came to feel afterwards, and learnt in bitterness of spirit to be angry at the University's isolation from Irish life. At first quite other thoughts crowded upon his mind. He felt a rebellion against his father's estimate of what he was to learn. It seemed to him that he had come into vital touch with the greatest life of all. He was to join the ranks of those who besieged the ears of God for knowledge, and left behind them to successors yet unborn great traditions of the enigmas they had guessed. In entering upon the study of theology he seemed to become a soldier in the sacred band, the elite of the army which won and guarded truth. Already he was convinced that there could be no greater science than the Divine one, no more inspiring moment in life than this one when he took his first step towards the knowledge of God.

He crossed the quadrangle with his mind full of such thoughts, and joined a group of students round the door of one of the examination-halls. It did not shock his sense of fitness that some of his fellow-students in the great science wore shabby clothes, or that others scorned the use of a razor. Bred as he had been at home, he felt no incongruity between dirty collars and the study of divinity. It was not until he caught scraps of conversation that he experienced an awakening from his dream. One eager group surrounded a foreseeing youth who had written the dates of the first four General Councils of the Church upon his shirt-cuff.

'Read them out, like a good man,' said one.

'Hold on a minute,' said another, 'till I see if I have got them right. I ground them up specially this morning. Nicaea, 318--no, hang it! that's the number of Bishops who were present; 325 was the date, wasn't it?'

'What was the row about at Chalcedon?' asked a tall, pale youth. 'Didn't some monk or other go for Cyril of

Alexandria?'

'You'll be stuck anyhow, Tommy,' said a neat, dapper little man with a very ragged gown.

Hyacinth slipped past the group, and approached two better dressed students who stood apart from the others.

'Is this,' he asked, 'where the entrance examination to the divinity school is to be held?'

For answer he received a curt 'Yes' and a stare. Apparently his suit of brown Connemara homespun did not commend him to these aristocrats. They turned their backs on him, and resumed their conversation.

'She was walking up and down the pier listening to the band with two of the rankest outsiders you ever set eyes on-- medicals out of Paddy Dunn's. Of course I could do nothing else but break it off.'

'Oh, you were engaged to her, then? I didn't know.'

'Well, I was and I wasn't. Anyhow, I thought it better to have a clear understanding. She came up to me outside the door of Patrick's on Sunday afternoon just as if nothing had happened. "Hullo, Bob," says she; "I haven't seen you for ages." "My name," said I, "is Mr. Banks"--just like that, as cool as you please. I could see she felt it. "I've called you Bob," says she, very red in the face, "and you've called me Maimie ever since we went to Sunday-school together, and I'm not going to begin calling you Mr. Banks now, my boy-o! so don't you think it!"'

It was a relief to Hyacinth when he was tapped on the arm by a boy with a very pimply face, who thrust a paper into his hand, and distracted his attention from the final discomfiture of Maimie, which Mr. Banks was recounting in a clear, high-pitched voice, as if he wished everyone in the neighbourhood to hear it.

'I hope you'll come,' said the boy.

'Where?'

'It's all in the paper. The students' prayer-meeting, held every Wednesday morning at nine o'clock sharp. Special meeting to-morrow.'

Hyacinth was bewildered. There was something quite unfamiliar in this prompt and business-like advertisement of prayer. The student with the papers began to be doubtful of him.

'You're not High Church, are you?' he asked. 'We're not. We don't have printed offices, with verses and responds, and that sort of thing. We have extempore prayer by members of the union.'

'No; I'm not High Church,' said Hyacinth--'at least, I think not. I don't really know much about these things. I'll be very glad to go to your meeting.'

'That's right,' said the other. 'All are welcome. There will be special prayer to-morrow for the success of the British arms. I suppose you heard that old Kruger has sent an ultimatum. There will be war at once.'

There was a sudden movement among the students; gowns were pulled straight and caps adjusted.

'Here he comes,' said someone.

Dr. Henry, the divinity professor, crossed the square rapidly. He was a middle-aged man, stout, almost ponderous, in figure; but he held himself rigidly upright, and walked fast across the square. The extreme neatness of his clothes contrasted with the prevailing shabbiness of the students and the assistant lecturers who followed him. Yet he did not seem to be a man who gave to externals more than their due share of consideration. His broad forehead gave promise of great intellectual power, a promise half belied by the narrow gray eyes beneath it. These were eyes which might see keenly, and would certainly see things just as they are, though they were not likely to catch any glimpse of that greater world where objects cannot be focussed sharply. Yet in them, an odd contradiction, there lurked a possibility of humorous twinkling. The man was capable perhaps of the broad tolerance of the great humorist, certainly of very acute perception of life's minor incongruities. His thin lips were habitually pressed together, giving a suggestion of strength to the set of his mouth. A man with such a mouth can think and act, but not feel either passionately or enduringly. He will direct men because he knows his own mind, but is not likely to sway them because he will always be master of himself, and will not become enslaved to any great enthusiasm. The students trooped into the hall, and the examination began. The assistant lecturers helped in the work. Each student was called up in turn, asked a few questions, and given a portion of the Greek Testament to translate. For the most part their capacities were known beforehand. There were some who had won honours in their University course before entering the divinity school. For them the examiners were all smiles, and the business of the day was understood to be perfunctory. Others were recognised as mere pass men, whom it was necessary to spur to some exertion. A few, like Hyacinth, were unknown. These were the poorer students who had not been able to afford to reside at the University sooner than was absolutely necessary. Their knowledge, generally scanty, was received by the examiners with undisguised contempt. It fell to Hyacinth's lot to present himself to Dr. Henry. He did so tremulously.

The professor inquired his name, and looked him over coldly.

'Read for me,' he said, handing him a Greek Testament. The passage marked was St. Paul's great description of charity. It was very familiar to Hyacinth, and he read it with a serious feeling for the words. Dr. Henry, who at first had occupied himself with some figures on a sheet of paper, looked up and listened attentively.

'Where were you at school,' he asked. 'Who taught you Greek?'

'My father taught me, sir.'

'Ah! You have got a very peculiar pronunciation, and you've made an extraordinary number of mistakes in accentuation and quantity, but you've read as if St. Paul meant something. Now translate.'

'You have given me,' he said, when Hyacinth had finished, 'the Authorized Version word for word. Can you do no better than that?'

'I can do it differently,' said Hyacinth, 'not better.'

'Do you know any Greek outside of the New Testament?'

Hyacinth repeated a few lines from Homer.

'That book of the "Odyssey" is not in the college course,' said Dr. Henry. 'How did you come to read it?'

Hyacinth had no explanation to give. He had read the book, it seemed, without being forced, and without hope of getting a prize. He recited it as if he liked it. The remainder of the examination disclosed the fact that he was lamentably deficient in the rudiments of Greek grammar, and had the very vaguest ideas of the history of the Church.

Afterwards Professor Henry discussed the new class with his assistants as they crossed the square together.

'The usual lot,' said Dr. Spenser--'half a dozen scholars, perhaps one man among them with real brains. The rest are either idlers or, what is worse, duffers.'

'I hit on one man with brains,' said Dr. Henry.

'Oh! Thompson, I suppose. I saw that you took him. He did well in his degree exam.'

'No,' said Dr. Henry; 'the man I mean has more brains than Thompson. He's a man I never heard of before. His name is Conneally. He looks as if he came up from the wilds somewhere. He has hands like an agricultural labourer, and a brogue that I fancy comes from Galway. But he's a man to keep an eye on. He may do something by-and-by if he doesn't go off the lines. We must try and lick him into shape a bit.'

Hyacinth Conneally knew extremely little about the politics, foreign or domestic, of the English nation. His father neither read newspapers nor cared to discuss such rumours of the doings of Governments as happened to reach Carrowkeel. On the other hand, he knew a good deal about the history of Ireland, and the English were still for him the 'new foreigners' whom Keating describes. His intercourse with the fishermen and peasants of the Galway seaboard had intensified his vague dislike of the series of oscillations between bullying and bribery which make up the story of England's latest attempts to govern Ireland. Without in the least understanding the reasons for the war in South Africa, he felt a strong sympathy with the Boers. To him they seemed a small people doomed, if they failed to defend themselves, to something like the treatment which Ireland had received.

It was therefore with surprise, almost with horror, that he listened for the first time to the superlative Imperialism of the Protestant Unionist party when he attended the prayer-meeting to which he had been invited. The room was well filled with students, who joined heartily in the singing of 'Onward, Christian soldiers,' a hymn selected as appropriate for the occasion. An address by the chairman, a Dublin clergyman, followed. According to this gentleman the Boers were a psalm-singing but hypocritical nation addicted to slave-driving. England, on the other hand, was the pioneer of civilization, and the nursing-mother of missionary enterprise. It was therefore clear that all good Christians ought to pray for the success of the British arms. The speech bewildered rather than irritated Hyacinth. The mind gasps for a time when immersed suddenly in an entirely new view of things, and requires time to adjust itself for pleasure or revolt, just as the body does when plunged into cold water. It had never previously occurred to him that an Irishman could regard England as anything but a pirate. Anger rapidly succeeded his surprise while he listened to the prayers which followed. It was apparently open to any student present to give utterance, as occasion offered, to his desires, and a large number of young men availed themselves of the opportunity. Some spoke briefly and haltingly, some laboriously attempted to adapt the phraseology of the Prayer-Book to the sentiment of the moment, a few had the gift of rapid and even eloquent supplication. These last were the hardest to endure. They prefaced their requests with fantastic eulogies of England's righteousness, designed apparently for the edification of the audience present in the flesh, for they invariably began by assuring the Almighty that He was well aware of the facts, and generally apologized to Him for recapitulating them. Hyacinth's anger increased as he heard the fervent groans which expressed the unanimous conviction of the justice of the petitions. No one seemed to think it possible that the right could be on the other side.

When the meeting was over, the secretary, whose name, it appeared, was Mackenzie, greeted Hyacinth warmly.

'Glad to have you with us,' he said. 'I hope you'll always come. I shall be delighted to propose you as a member of the union. Subscription one shilling, to defray necessary expenses. In any case, whether you subscribe or not, we shall be glad to have you with us.'

'I shall never come again,' said Hyacinth.

Mackenzie drew back, astonished.

'Why not? Didn't you like the meeting? I thought it was capital--so informal and hearty. Didn't you think it was

hearty? But perhaps you are High Church. Are you?'

Hyacinth remembered that this identical question had been put to him the day before by the pimply-faced boy who distributed leaflets. He wondered vaguely at the importance which attached to the nickname.

'I am not sure,' he said, 'that I quite know what you mean. You see, I have only just entered the divinity school, and I hardly know anything about theology. What is a High Churchman?'

'Oh, it doesn't require any theology to know that. It's the simplest thing in the world. A High Churchman is--well, of course, a High Churchman sings Gregorian chants, you know, and puts flowers on the altar. There's more than that, of course. In fact, a High Churchman-----' He paused and then added with an air of victorious conviction: 'But anyhow if you were High Church you would be sure to know it.'

'Ah, well,' said Hyacinth, turning to leave the room, 'I don't know anything about it, so I suppose I'm not High Church.'

Mackenzie, however, was not going to allow him to escape so easily.

'Hold on a minute. If you're not High Church why won't you come to our meetings?'

'Because I can't join in your prayers when I am not at all sure that England ought to win.'

'Good Lord!' said Mackenzie. It is possible to startle even the secretary of a prayer union into mild profanity. 'You don't mean to tell me you are a Pro-Boer, and you a divinity student?'

It had not hitherto struck Hyacinth that it was impossible to combine a sufficient orthodoxy with a doubt about the invariable righteousness of England's quarrels. Afterwards he came to understand the matter better.

CHAPTER III

Mackenzie was not at heart an ill-natured man, and he would have repudiated with indignation the charge of being a mischief-maker. He felt after his conversation with Hyacinth much as most men would if they discovered an unsuspected case of small-pox among their acquaintances. His first duty was to warn the society in which he moved of the existence of a dangerous man, a violent and wicked rebel. He repeated a slightly exaggerated version of what Hyacinth had said to everyone he met. The pleasurable sense of personal importance which comes with having a story to tell grew upon him, and he spent the greater part of the day in seeking out fresh confidants to swell the chorus of his commination.

In England at the time public opinion was roused to a fever heat of patriotic enthusiasm, and the Irish Protestant Unionists were eager to outdo even the music-halls in Imperialist sentiment, the students of Trinity College being then, as ever, the 'death or glory' boys of Irish loyalty. It is easy to imagine how Hyacinth's name was whispered shudderingly in the reading-room of the library, how his sentiments were anathematized in the dining-hall at commons, how plots were hatched for the chastisement of his iniquity over the fire in the evenings, when pipes were lit and tea was brewed.

At the end of the week Hyacinth was in an exceedingly uncomfortable position. Outside the lecture-rooms nobody would speak to him. Inside he found himself the solitary occupant of the bench he sat on—a position of comparative physical comfort, for the other seats were crowded, but not otherwise desirable. A great English poet had just composed a poem, which a musician, no doubt equally eminent, had set to a noble tune. It embodied an appeal for funds for purposes not clearly specified, and hazarded the experiment of rhyming 'cook's son' with 'Duke's son,' which in less fervent times might have provoked the criticism of the captious. It became the fashion in college to chant this martial ode whenever Hyacinth was seen approaching. It was thundered out by a choir who marched in step up and down his staircase. Bars of it were softly hummed in his ear while he tried to note the important truths which the lecturers impressed upon their classes. One night five musicians relieved each other at the task of playing the tune on a concertina outside his door. They commenced briskly at eight o'clock in the evening, and the final sleepy version only died away at six the next morning.

Dr. Henry, who either did not know or chose to ignore the state of the students' feelings, advised Hyacinth to become a member of the Theological Debating Society. The election to membership, he said, was a mere form, and nobody was ever excluded. Hyacinth sent his name to the secretary, and was blackbeamed by an overwhelming majority of the members. Shortly afterwards the Lord-lieutenant paid a visit to the college, and the students seized the chance of displaying their loyalty to the Throne and Constitution. They assembled outside the library, which the representative of Queen Victoria was inspecting under the guidance of the Provost and two of the senior Fellows. It is the nature of the students of Trinity College to shout while they wait for the development of interesting events, and on this occasion even the library walls were insufficient to exclude the noise. The excellent nobleman inside found himself obliged to cast round for original remarks about the manuscript of the 'Book of Kells,' while the air was heavy with the verses which commemorate the departure of 'fifty thousand fighting men' to Table Bay. When at length he emerged on the library steps the tune changed, as was right and proper, to 'God save the Queen.' Strangely enough, Hyacinth had never before heard the national anthem. It is not played or sung often by the natives of Connemara, and although the ocean certainly forms part of the British Empire, the Atlantic waves have not yet learned to beat out this particular melody. So it happened that Hyacinth, without meaning to be offensive, omitted the ceremony of removing his hat. A neighbour, joyful at the opportunity, snatched the offending garment, and skimmed it far over the heads of the crowd. A few hard kicks awakened Hyacinth more effectually to a sense of his crime, and it was with a torn coat and many bruises that he escaped in the end to the shelter of his rooms, less inclined to be loyal than when he left them.

After a few weeks it became clear that the British armies in South Africa were not going to reap that rich and unvarying crop of victories which the valour of the soldiers and the ability of the generals deserved. The indomitable spirit of the great nation rose to the occasion, and the position of those who entertained doubts about the justice of the original quarrel became more than ever unbearable. Hyacinth took to wandering by himself through parts of the city in which he was unlikely to meet any of his fellow-students. His soul grew bitter within him. The course of petty persecution to which he was subjected hardened his original sentimental sympathy with the Boer cause into a clearly defined hatred of everything English. When he got clear of the college and the hateful sound of the 'cook's son, Duke's son' tune, he tramped along, gloating quietly over the news of the latest 'regrettable incident.'

He was very lonely and friendless, for not even the discomfiture of his enemies can make up to a young man for the want of a friend to speak to. An inexpressible longing for home came over him. There was a shop in a by-street which exposed photographs of Galway scenery in its windows for a time. Hyacinth used to go day by day to gaze at them. The modest front of the Gaelic League Hyce was another haunt of his. He used to stand Debating his eyes on the Irish titles of the books in the window, and repeating the words he read aloud to himself until the passers-by turned to look at him. Once he entered a low-browed, dingy shop merely because the owner's name was posted over the door in Gaelic

characters. It was one of those shops to be found in the back streets of most large towns which devote themselves to a composite business, displaying newspapers, apples, tobacco, and sweets for sale. The afternoon light, already growing feeble in the open air, had almost deserted the interior of the shop. At first Hyacinth saw nothing but an untidy red-haired girl reading in a corner by the Ught of a candle. Ho asked her for cigarettes. She rose, and laid her book and the candle on the counter. It was one of O'Growney's Irish primers, dirty and pencilled. Hyacinth's heart warmed to her at once. Was she not trying to learn the dear Irish which the barefooted girls far away at home shouted to each other as they dragged the seaweed up from the shore? Then from the far end of the shop he heard a man's voice speaking Irish. It was not the soft liquid tongue of the Connaught peasants, but a language more regular and formal. The man spoke it as if it were a language he had learned, comparatively slowly and with effort. Yet the sound of it seemed to Hyacinth one of the sweetest things he had ever heard. Not even the shrinking self-distrust which he had been taught by repeated snubbings and protracted ostracism could prevent him from making himself known to this stranger.

'The blessing of God upon Ireland!' he said.

There was not a moment's hesitation on the part of the stranger. The sound of the Gaelic was enough for him. He stretched out both hands to Hyacinth.

'Is it that you also are one of us--one of the Gaels?' he asked. Hyacinth seized the outstretched hands and held them tight. The feeling of offered friendship and companionship warmed him with a sudden glow. He felt that his eyes were filling with tears, and that his voice would break if he tried to speak, but he did not care at all. He poured out a long Gaelic greeting, scarcely knowing what he said. Perhaps neither the man whose hands he held nor the owner of the shop behind the counter fully understood him, but they guessed at his feelings.

'Is it that you are a stranger here and lonely? Where is your home? What name is there on you?'

'Maiseadh, I am a stranger indeed and lonely too,' said Hyacinth.

'You are a stranger no longer, then. We are all of us friends with each other. You speak our own dear tongue, and that is enough to make us friends.'

The tobacconist, it appeared, also spoke Irish of a kind. He cast occasional remarks into the conversation which followed, less, it seemed to Hyacinth, with a view of giving expression to any thought than for the sake of airing some phrases which he had somewhat inadequately learned. Indeed, it struck Hyacinth very soon that his new friend was getting rather out of his depth in his 'own dear tongue.' At last the tobacconist said with a smile:

'I'm afraid we must ask Mr. Conneally--didn't you say that Conneally was your name?--to speak the Beurla. I'm clean beaten with the Gaelic, and you can't go much further yourself, Cahal. Isn't that the truth, now?'

'And small blame to me,' said Cahal--in English, Charles--Maguire. 'After all, what am I but a learner? And it's clear that Mr. Conneally has spoken it since ever he spoke at all.'

Hyacinth smiled and nodded. Maguire went on:

'What are you doing this afternoon? What do you say to coming round with me to see Mary O'Dwyer? It's her "at home" day, and I'm just on my way there.'

'But,' said Hyacinth, 'I don't know her. I can hardly go to her house, can I?'

'Oh, I'll introduce you,' said Maguire cheerfully. 'She allows me to bring anyone I like to see her. She likes to know anyone who loves Ireland and speaks Gaelic. Perhaps we'll meet Finola too; she's often there.'

'Meet who?'

'Finola. That's what we call Miss Goold--Augusta Goold, you know. We call her Finola because she shelters the rest of us under her wings when the Moyle gets tempestuous. You remember the story?'

'Of course I do,' said Hyacinth, who had learnt the tale of Lir's daughter as other children do Jack the Giant-Killer. 'And who is Miss O'Dwyer?'

'Oh, she writes verses. Surely you know them?'

Hyacinth shook his head.

'What a pity! We all admire them immensely. She has something nearly every week in the *Croppy*. She has just brought out a volume of lyrics. Her brother worked the publishing of it in New York. He is mixed up with literary people there. You must have heard of him at all events. He's Patrick O'Dwyer, one of the few who stood by O'Neill when he fought the priests. He gave up the Parliamentary people after that. No honest man could do anything else.'

He conducted Hyacinth to one of the old squares on the north side of the city. When the tide of fashion set southwards, spreading terraces and villas from Leeson Street to Killiney, it left behind some of the finest houses in Dublin. Nowadays for a comparatively low rent it is possible to live in a splendid house if you do not aspire to the glory of a smart address. Miss O'Dwyer's house, for instance, boasted a spacious hall and lofty sitting-rooms, with impressive ceilings and handsome fireplaces; yet she paid for it little more than half the rent which a cramped villa in Clyde Road would have cost her. Even so, it was somewhat of a mystery to her friends how Miss O'Dwyer managed to live there. A solicitor who had his offices on the ground-floor probably paid the rent of the whole house; but the profits

of verse-making are small, and a poetess, like meaner women, requires food, clothes, and fire. Indeed, Miss O'Dwyer, no longer 'M. O'D.,' whose verses adorned the *Croppy*, but 'Miranda,' served an English paper as Irish correspondent. It was a pity that a pen certainly capable of better things should have been employed in describing the newest costume of the Lord Lieutenant's wife at Punchestown, or the confection of pale-blue tulle which, draped round Mrs. Chesney, adorned a Castle ball. Miss O'Dwyer herself was heartily ashamed of the work, but it was, or appeared to her to be, necessary to live, and even with the aid of occasional remittances from Patrick in New York, she could scarcely have afforded her friends a cup of tea without the guineas earned by torturing the English language in a weekly chronicle of Irish society's clothes. Even with the help of such earnings, poverty was for ever tapping her on the shoulder, and no one except Mary herself and her one maid-servant knew how carefully fire and light had to be economized in the splendid rooms where an extinct aristocracy had held revels a century before.

Hyacinth and his friend advanced past the solicitor's doors, and up the broad staircase as far as the drawing-room. For a time they got no further than the threshold. The opening of the door was greeted with a long-drawn and emphatic 'Hush!' from the company within. Maguire laid his hand on Hyacinth's arm, and the two stood still looking into the room. What was left of the feeble autumn twilight was almost excluded by half-drawn curtains. No lamp was lit, and the fire cast only fitful rays here and there through the room. It was with difficulty that Hyacinth discerned figures in a semicircle, and a slim woman in a white dress standing apart from the others near the fire. Then he heard a voice, a singularly sweet voice, as it seemed to him, reciting with steady emphasis on the syllables which marked the rhythm of the poem:

*'Out there in the West, where the heavy gray clouds are
insistent,
Where the sky stoops to gather the earth into mournful
embraces,
Where the country lies saturate, sodden, round saturate
hamlets--*

*'Out there in the sunset where rages and surges Atlantic,
And the salt is commingled with rain over desolate beaches,
Thy heart, O beloved, is still beating--fitfully, feebly.*

*'Is beating--ah! not as it beat in the squadrons of Sarafield,
Exultantly, joyously, gladly, expectant of battle,
With throbs like the notes of the drums when men gather for
fighting.*

*'Beats still; but, ah! not as it beat in the latest Fitzgerald,
Nobly devote to his race's most noble tradition;
Or in Emmet or Davis, or, last on their list, in O'Brien.*

*'Beats fitfully, feebly. O desolate mother! O Erin!
When shall the pulse of thy life, which but flutters in
Connaught,
Throb through thy meadows and boglands, and mountains and
cities?'*

A subdued murmur of applause greeted the close of the recitation, and praise more sincere than that with which politeness generally greets the drawing-room performances of minor poets. Hyacinth joined in neither. It seemed to him that the verses were too beautiful to speak about, so sacred that praise was a kind of sacrilege. Perhaps some excuse may be found for his emotion in the fact that for weeks he had heard no poetry except the ode about 'wiping something off a slate.' The violence of the contrast benumbed his critical faculty. So a man who was obliged to gaze for a long time at the new churches erected in Belfast might afterwards catch himself in the act of admiring the houses which the Congested Districts Board builds in Connaught.

'I am afraid I must have bored you.' It was Miss O'Dwyer who greeted him. 'I didn't see you and Mr. Maguire come in until I had commenced my poor little poem. I ought to have given you some tea before I inflicted it on you.'

'Oh,' said Hyacinth, 'it was beautiful. Is it really your own? Did you write it?'

Miss O'Dwyer flushed. The vehement sincerity of his tone embarrassed her, though she was accustomed to praise.

'You are very kind,' she said. 'All my friends here are far too kind to me. But come now, I must give you some tea.'

The tea was nearly stone cold and weak with frequent waterings. The saucer and spoon, possibly even the cup, had been used by someone else before. Mr. Maguire secured for himself the last remaining morsel of cake, leaving Hyacinth the choice between a gingerbread biscuit and a torn slice of bread and butter. None of these things appeared to embarrass Miss O'Dwyer. They did not matter in the least to Hyacinth.

'Do you know the West well?' he asked.

'Indeed, I do not. I've always longed to go and spend a whole long summer there, but I've never had the chance.'

'Then how did you know it was like that? I mean, how did you catch the spirit of it in your poem?'

'Did I?' she said. 'I am so glad. But I don't deserve any credit for it. I wrote those verses after I had been looking at one of Jim Tynan's pictures. You know them, of course? No? Oh, but you must go and see them at once if you love the West. And you do, don't you?'

'It is my home,' said Hyacinth.

When he had finished his tea she introduced him to some of the people who were in the room. Afterwards he came to know them, but the memories which Miss O'Dwyer's verses called up in him made him absent and preoccupied. He scarcely heard the names she spoke. Soon the party broke up, and Hyacinth turned to look for Maguire.

'I'm afraid Mr. Maguire has gone,' said Miss O'Dwyer. 'He has a lecture to attend this afternoon. You must come here again, Mr. Conneally. Come next Wednesday--every Wednesday, if you like. We can have a talk about the West. I shall want you to tell me all sorts of things. Perhaps Finola will be here next week. She very often comes. I shall look forward to introducing you to her. You are sure to admire her immensely. We all do.'

'Yes, I've heard of her,' said Hyacinth. 'Mr. Maguire told me who she was.'

'Oh, but he couldn't have told you half. She is magnificent. All the rest of us are only little children compared to her. Now be sure you come and meet her.'

CHAPTER IV

Ever since Pitt and Castlereagh perpetrated their Act of Union two political parties have struggled together in Ireland. Both of them have been steadily prominent, so prominent that they have sometimes attracted the attention of the English public, and drawn to their contest a little quite unintelligent interest. The simplest and most discernible line of division between them is a religious one. The Protestant party has hitherto been guided and led by the gentry. It has been steadily loyal to England and to the English Government. It has not been greatly concerned about Ireland or Ireland's welfare, but has been consistently anxious to preserve its own privileges, powers, and property. It has not come well out of the struggle of the nineteenth century. Its Church has been disestablished, its privileges and powers abolished, and the last remnants of its property are being filched from it. It is a curious piece of irony that this party should have hastened its own defeat by the very policy adopted to secure victory. No doubt the Irish aristocracy would have suffered less if they had been seditious instead of loyal. The Roman Catholic party has been led by ecclesiastics, and has always included the bulk of the people. Its leaders have not cared for the welfare of Ireland any more than the Protestant party, but they have always pretended that they did, being in this respect much wiser than their opponents. They have pulled the strings of a whole series of political movements, and made puppets dance on and off the stage as they chose. Also they have understood how to deal with England. Unlike the Protestant party, they have never been loyal, because they knew from the first that England gives most to those who bully or worry her. They have kept one object steadily in view, an object quite as selfish in reality as that of the aristocracy--the aggrandisement of their Church. For this they have been prepared at any time to sacrifice the interests of Ireland, and are content at the present moment to watch the country bleeding to death with entire complacency. The leaders of this party enter upon the twentieth century in sight of their promised land. They possess all the power and nearly all the wealth of Ireland. If the Bishops can secure the continuance of English government for the next half-century Ireland will have become the Church's property. Her money will go to propagating the faith. Her children will supply the English-speaking world with a superfluity of priests and nuns.

Outside both parties there have always been a few men united by no ties of policy or religion, unless, as perhaps we may, we call patriotism a kind of religion. Other lands have been loved sincerely, devotedly, passionately, as mothers, wives, and mistresses are loved. Ireland alone has been loved religiously, as men are taught to love God or the saints. Her lovers have called themselves Catholic or Protestant: such distinctions have not mattered to these men. They have scarcely ever been able to form themselves into a party, never into a strong or a wise party. They have been violent, desperate, frequently ridiculous, but always sincere and unselfish. Their great weakness has lain in the fact that they have had no consistent aim. Some of their leaders have looked for a return to Ireland's Constitution, and built upon the watchword of the volunteers, 'The King, the Lords, and the Commons of Ireland.' Some have dreamed of a complete independence, of an Irish republic shaping its own world policy. Some have wholly distrusted politics, and given their strength to the intellectual, spiritual, or material regeneration of the people. Among these men have been found the sanest practical reformers and the wildest revolutionary dreamers. On the outskirts of their company have hung all sorts of people. Parliamentary politicians have leaned towards them, and been driven straightway out of public life. Criminals have claimed fellowship with them, and brought discredit upon honourable men. Poets and men of letters have drawn their inspiration from their strivings, and in return have decked their patriotism with imperishable splendour. In the future, no doubt, the struggle will lie between this party and the hitherto victorious hierarchy, with England for ally, and the fight seems a wholly unequal one. It was into an advanced and vehement group of patriots that Mary O'Dwyer introduced Hyacinth. He became a regular reader of the *Croppy*, and made the acquaintance of most of the contributors to its pages. He found them clever, enthusiastic, and agreeable men and women, but, as he was forced to admit to himself, occasionally reckless. One evening a discussion took place in Mary O'Dwyer's room which startled and shocked him. Excitement ran high over the events of the war. The sympathies of the 'Independent Irishmen,' as they called themselves, fiercely assertive even in their name, were of course entirely with the Boers, and they received every report of an English reverse with unmixed satisfaction.

When Hyacinth entered the room he found four people there. Mary O'Dwyer herself was making tea at a little table near the fire. Augusta Gould--the famous Finola--was stretched in a deep chair smoking a cigarette. She was a remarkable woman both physically and intellectually. It was her delight to emphasize her splendid figure by draping it in brilliant reds and yellows. To anyone who cared to speculate on such a subject it seemed a mystery why her clothes remained on her when she walked. The laws of gravity seemed to demand that they should loosen with her movements, become detached, and finally drop down. Nothing of the sort had ever happened, so it must be presumed that she had secret and unconventional ways of fastening them. Similarly it was not easy to see why her hair stayed upon her head. It was arranged upon no recognised system, and suggested that she had perfected the art, known generally only to heroines of romances, of twisting her tresses with a single movement into a loose knot. That she affected white frills of immense complexity was frequently evident, owing to the difficulty she experienced in confining her long legs to feminine attitudes. Her complexion put it in the power of her enemies to accuse her of familiarity with cosmetics--a

slander, for she had been observed to turn green during an attack of sea-sickness. She had great brilliant eyes, which were capable of expressing intensity of enthusiasm or hatred, but no one had ever seen them soften with any emotion like love. Her attitude towards social conventions was symbolized by her clothes. In the old days, when the houses of 'society' had still been open to her, she was accustomed to challenge criticism by fondling a pet monkey at tea-parties. Since she had lost caste by taking up the cause of 'Independent Ireland' the ape had been discarded, and the same result achieved by occasional bickerings with the police. She was an able public speaker, and could convince her audiences for a time of the reasonableness of opinions which next morning appeared to be the outcome of delirium. She wrote, not, like Mary O'Dwyer, verse in which any sentiment may be excused, but incisive and vigorous prose. Occasionally even the Castle officials got glimmerings of the meaning of one of her articles, and suppressed the whole issue of the *Croppy* in which it appeared.

Near her sat a much less remarkable person--Thomas Grealy, historian and archaeologist. He had been engaged for many years on a history of Ireland, but no volume of it had as yet appeared. His friends suspected that he had got permanently stuck somewhere about the period of the introduction of Christianity into the island. His essays, published in the *Croppy*, dwelt with passionate regret on the departed glories of Tara. He held strong views about the historical reality of the Tuath-de-Danaan, and got irritated at the most casual mention of Dr. Petrie's theory of the round towers. He had proved that King Arthur was an Irishman, with whose reputation Malory and Tennyson had taken unwarrantable liberties. The name of Dante brought a smile of contempt to his lips, for he knew that the 'Purgatorio' was stolen shamelessly from the works of a monk of Cong. He nourished a secret passion for Finola. He never ventured to declare it, but his imagination endowed every heroine, from Queen Maev down to the foster daughter of the Leinster farmer who married King Cormac, with Miss Goold's figure, eyes and hair. It was perhaps the burning of this passion which rendered him so cadaverous that his clothes--in other respects also they looked as if they had been bought in far-off happier days--hung round him like the covering of a broken-ribbed umbrella.

The fourth person present was Timothy Halloran, who hovered about Mary O'Dwyer's tea-table. He was what the country people call a 'spoilt priest.' Destined by simple and pious parents to take Holy Orders, he got as far as the inside of Maynooth College. While there he had kicked a fellow-student down the whole length of a long corridor for telling tales to the authorities. A committee of ecclesiastics considered the case, and having come to the conclusion that he lacked vocation for the priesthood, sent him home. Timothy was accustomed to say that his violence might have been passed over, but that his failure to appreciate the devotion to duty which inspired the tale-bearer marked him decisively as unfit for ordination. He never regretted his expulsion, although he complained bitterly that he had been nearly choked before they cast him out. He meant, it is to be supposed, that the effort to instil a proper reverence for dogma had almost destroyed his capacity for thought, not that the fingers of the reverend professors had actually closed around his windpipe. His subsequent experiences had included a period of teaching in an English Board School, a brief, but not wholly unsatisfactory, career as a political organizer in New York, and a return to Ireland, where he earned a precarious living as a journalist.

All four greeted Hyacinth warmly as he entered the room.

'We were just discussing,' said Mary O'Dwyer, 'the failure of our attempt to organize a field hospital and a staff of nurses for the Boers. It is a shame to have to admit that the English garrison in Ireland can raise thousands of pounds for their war funds, and the Irish can't be got to subscribe a few hundreds.'

'The wealth of the country,' said Grealy, 'is in the hands of a minority--the so-called Loyalists.'

'Nonsense,' said Finola sharply. 'If you ever gave a thought to anything more recent than the High-King's Court at Tara you would know that the landlords are not the wealthy part of the community any longer. There's many a provincial publican calling himself a Nationalist who could buy up the nearest landlord and every Protestant in the parish along with him. I'm a Protestant myself, born and bred among the class you speak of, and I know.'

'You're quite right, Miss Goold,' said Tim. 'The people could have given the money if they liked. I attribute the failure of the fund to the apathy or treachery of the priests, call it which you like. There isn't a Protestant church in the country where the parsons don't preach "Give give, give" to their people Sunday after Sunday. And what's the result? Why, they have raised thousands of pounds.'

'After the poem you published in last week's *Croppy*,' said Hyacinth to Mary O'Dwyer, 'I made sure the subscriptions would have come in. Your appeal was one of the most beautiful things I ever read. It would have touched the heart of a stone.'

'Poetry is all well enough,' said Tim. 'I admire your verses, Mary, as much as anyone, but we want a collection at every church door after Mass. That's what we ought to have, but it's exactly what we won't get, because the priests are West Britons at heart. They would pray for the Queen and the army to-morrow, like Cardinal Vaughan, if they weren't afraid.'

'I believe,' said Finola, 'that we went the wrong way about the thing altogether. We asked for a hospital, and we appealed to the people's pity for the wounded Boers. Nobody in Ireland cares a pin about the Boers. Why on earth should we? From all I can hear they are a narrow-minded, intolerant set of hypocrites. I'd just as soon read the stuff

some fool of an English newspaper man wrote about "our brother the Boer" as listen to the maudlin sentiment our people talk. We don't want to help the Boers. We want to hurt the English.'

'And you think----' said Grealy.

'I think,' went on Finola, 'that we ought to have asked for volunteers to go out and fight, instead of nurses to cocker up the men who are fools enough to get themselves shot. We'd have got them.'

'You would not,' said Tim. 'The clergy would have been dead against you. They would have nipped the whole project in the bud without so much as making a noise in doing it.'

'That's true,' said Grealy. 'Remember, Miss Goold, it was the priests who cursed Tara, and the monks who broke the power of the Irish Kings. I haven't worked the thing out yet, but I mean to show----'

Finola interrupted the poor man ruthlessly:

'Let's try it, anyway. Let's preach a crusade.'

'Not the least bit of good,' said Tim. 'Every blackguard in the country is enlisted already in the Connaught Bangers or the Dublin Fusiliers, or some confounded Militia regiment. There's nobody left but the nice, respectable, goody-goody boys who wouldn't leave their mothers or miss going to confession if you went down on your knees to them.'

'Well, then, the Irish troops ought to shoot their officers, and walk over to the Boer camp,' said Finola savagely.

Hyacinth half smiled at what seemed to him a monstrous jest. Then, when he perceived that she was actually in earnest, the smile froze into a kind of grin. His hands trembled with the violence of his indignation.

'It would be devilish treachery,' he blurted out. 'The name of Irishman will never be disgraced by such an act.'

Augusta Goold flung her cigarette into the grate, and rose from her chair. She stood over Hyacinth, her hands clenched and her bosom heaving rapidly. Her eyes blazed down into his until their scorn cowed him.

'There is no treachery possible for an Irishman,' she said, 'except the one of fighting for England. Any deed against England--yes, *any* deed--is glorious, and not shameful.'

Hyacinth was utterly quelled. He ventured upon no reply. Indeed, not only did her violence render argument undesirable--and it seemed for the moment that he would find himself in actual grips with a furious Amazon--but her words carried with them a certain conviction. It actually seemed to him while she spoke as if a good defence might be made for Irish soldiers who murdered their officers and deserted to an enemy in the field. It was not until hours afterwards, when the vivid impression of Finola's face had faded from his recollection, when he had begun to forget the flash of her eyes, the poise of her figure, and the glow of her draperies, that his moral sense was able to reassert itself. Then he knew that she had spoken wickedly. It might be right for an Irishman to fight against England when he could. It might be justifiable to seize the opportunity of England's embarrassment to make a bid for freedom by striking a blow at the Empire. So far his conscience went willingly, but that treachery and murder could ever be anything but horrible he refused altogether to believe.

Another conversation in which he took part about this time helped Hyacinth still further to understand the position of his new friends. Tim Halloran and he were smoking and chatting together over the fire when Maguire joined them.

'What's the matter with you?' asked Halloran. 'You look as if you'd been at your mother's funeral.'

'You're not so far out in your guess,' said Maguire grimly. 'I spent the morning at my sister's wedding. Would you like a bit of the cake?' He produced from his pocket a paper containing crushed fragments of white sugar and a shapeless mass of citron and currants. 'With the compliments of the Reverend Mother,' he said. 'Try a bit.'

'What on earth do you mean?' said Hyacinth.

'Oh, I assure you the Sisters of Pity do these things in style,' said Maguire. 'It's a pretty fancy, that of the wedding-cake, isn't it? But you're a Protestant, Conneally; you don't understand this delicate playfulness. I was present to-day at the reception of my only sister into the Institute of the Catholic Sisters of Pity, founded by Honoria Kavanagh. I've lost Birdie Maguire, that's all, the little girl that used to climb on to my knee and kiss me, and instead of her there's a Sister Monica Mary, who will no doubt pray for my soul when she's let.'

'What was the figure in her case?' asked Tim in a perfectly matter-of-fact tone.

'Six hundred pounds,' said Maguire. 'It must have put the old man to the pin of his collar to pay it. The only time he ever talked to me about his affairs he told me he had got four hundred pounds put by for Birdie's fortune, and that I was to have my medical course and whatever the old shop would fetch when he was gone. They must have put the screw on pretty tight to make him spring the extra two hundred. I dare say I shall suffer for it in the end. He must have borrowed the money.'

Hyacinth felt intensely curious about this young nun. Like most Protestants he had grown up to regard monasticism in all its forms as something remote, partly horrible, wholly unintelligible.

'Why did she do it?' he asked. 'What sort of a girl was she? Do you mind telling me?'

'Not in the least,' said Maguire. 'Only I'm not sure that I know. Three years ago--that is, when I left home--she was the

last sort of girl you could imagine going into a convent. She was pretty, fond of nice clothes and admiration, as keen as every girl ought to be on a dance. I never supposed she had a thought of religion in her head--I mean, beyond the usual confessions and attendances at Mass.'

'I suppose,' said Hyacinth, 'your people wanted it.'

'I don't think so,' said Maguire. 'Perhaps my mother did. I don't know.'

'You see, Conneally,' said Tim Halloran, 'it is a sort of hall-mark of respectability among people like Maguire's to have a girl in a good convent. A little lower down in the social scale, in the class I come from, the boys are made priests. A doctor is a more expensive article to manufacture, so Maguire's father selected that line of life for him. Not that they could have made a priest of you, Maguire, in any case. You'd have disgraced Maynooth, as I did.'

'I don't understand,' said Hyacinth. 'I thought a vocation for the life was necessary.'

'Oh, so it is,' said Tim Halloran, 'but, you see, there's the period of the novitiate. Given a girl at an impressionable age, the proper convent atmosphere, and a prize of six hundred pounds for the Order, and it will go hard with the Reverend Mother if she can't work the girl up to a vocation. It takes a man a lifetime to make six hundred pounds in a country shop, but there's many a one who does it by hard work and self-denial; then down come the nuns and sweep it away, and it's wasted. It ought to be invested in a local factory or in waterworks, or gas-works, or fifty other things that would benefit the town it's made in. It ought to be fructifying and bearing interest; instead of which off it goes to Munich for stained glass, or to Italy for a marble altar. Is it any wonder Ireland is crying out with poverty?'

'Yes,' said Maguire, 'and that's not the worst of it. I'd be content to let them take the damned money and deck their churches with it, but the girls--there are hundreds of them caught every year for nuns, and swept out of life. It isn't the Irish convents alone that get them. American nuns come over and Australian nuns, and they go round and round the country picking up girls here and there, and carry them off. There, I don't want to talk too much about it. The money is nothing, but the girls and boys----'

'It seems strange to me,' said Hyacinth, 'that when you think that way you should go on belonging to your Church.'

'Desert the Church!' said Maguire. 'We'll never do that. How could we live without religion? And what other religion is there? I grant you that your priests wouldn't rob us, but--but think of the cold of it. You can't realize it, Conneally, but think what it would mean to a Catholic--a religion without saints, without absolution, without sacrifice. Besides, what we complain of is not Catholicism. It's a parasitic growth destroying the true faith, defiling the Church.'

'Yes,' said Tim Halloran, 'and even from my point of view how should we be the better of a change? Your Church is ruled by old women who think the name of Englishman the most glorious in the world. You preach loyalty, and I believe you pray for the Queen in your services. A nice fool I would feel praying that the Queen should have victory over her enemies.'

For a long time afterwards this conversation dwelt in Hyacinth's mind. Tim Halloran he knew to be practically a freethinker, but Maguire regularly heard Mass on Sundays, and often went to confession. It was a puzzle how he could do so, feeling as he did about the religious Orders. So insistent did the problem become to his mind that he found himself continually leading the conversation round to it from one side or another. Mary O'Dwyer told him that she also had a sister in a nunnery.

'She teaches girls to make lace, and wonderful work they do. She is perfectly happy. I think her face is the sweetest and most beautiful thing I have ever seen. There is not a line on it of care or of fretfulness. It seems to me as if her whole life might be described as a quiet smile. I always feel better by the mere recollection of her face for a long time after I have visited her. Oh, I know it wouldn't do for me. I couldn't stand it for a week. I should go mad with the quiet restraint of it all. But my sister is happy. I can't forget that. I suppose she has a vocation.'

'Vocation,' said Hyacinth thoughtfully. 'Yes, I can understand how that would make all the difference. But how many of them have the vocation?'

'Don't you think vocation might be learnt? I mean mightn't one grow into it, if one wished to very much, and if the life was constantly before one's eyes, beautiful and calm?'

It was almost the same thought which Timothy Halloran had suggested. Mary O'Dwyer spoke of growing into vocation, Tim of the working of it up. Was there any difference except a verbal one?

On another occasion he spoke to Dr. Henry about the position of the Church of Ireland in the country.

'We have proved,' said the professor, 'that the Roman claims have no support in Scripture, history, or reason. Our books remain unanswered, because they are unanswerable. We can do no more.'

'We might offer the Irish people a Church which they could join,' said Hyacinth.

'We do. We offer them the Church of St. Patrick, the ancient, historic Church of Ireland. We offer them the two Sacraments of the Gospel, administered by priests duly ordained at the hands of an Episcopate which goes back in an unbroken line to the Apostles. We present them the three great creeds for their assent. We use a liturgy that is at once ancient and pure. The Church of Ireland has all this, is beyond dispute a branch of the great Catholic Church of Christ.'

'It may be all you say,' said Hyacinth, 'but it is not national. In sentiment and sympathy it is English and not Irish.'

'I know what you mean,' said Dr. Henry. 'I think I understand how you feel, but I cannot consent to the conclusion you want to draw. There is no real meaning in the cry for nationality. It is a sentiment, a fashion, and will pass. Even if it were genuine and enduring, I hold it to be better for Ireland to be an integral part of a great Empire than a contemptible and helpless item among the nations of the world, a prey to the intrigues of ambitious foreign statesmen.'

Hyacinth sighed and turned to go, but Dr. Henry laid a hand upon his shoulder and detained him.

'Conneally,' he said kindly, 'let me give you a word of advice. Don't mix yourself up with your new friends too much. You will ruin your own prospects in life if you do. There is nothing more fatal to a man among the people with whom you and I are to live and work than the suspicion of being tainted with Nationalist ideas. You can't be both a rebel and a clergyman. You see,' he added with a smile, 'I take enough interest in you to know who your friends are, and what you are thinking about.'

CHAPTER V

Augusta Goold's scheme for enrolling Irish volunteers to help the Boers was duly set forth in the next issue of the *Croppy*. It included two appeals--one for money and one for men. The details were worked out with the frank contempt for possibility which characterizes some of the famous suggestions of Dean Swift. She had the same faculty that he had for bringing absurdities within the range of the commonplace; but there was this difference between them--Miss Goold quite believed in her own plans, while the great Dean no doubt grinned over the proof-sheets of his 'Modest Proposal.'

It happened, most unfortunately, that the appeal synchronized with another, also for funds, which was issued by Mr. O'Rourke, the leader of the Parliamentary party. Since the death of John O'Neill the purse of the party had been getting lean. The old tactics which used to draw plaudits and dollars from the United States, as well as a tribute from every parish in Ireland, had lately been unsuccessful. There were still violent scenes in the House of Commons, but they no longer produced anything except contemptuous smiles. Members of Parliament still succeeded occasionally in getting the Chief Secretary to imprison them, but the glory of martyrdom was harder to win than in the old days. Latterly things had come to such a pass that even the reduced stipends offered to the members fell into arrear. The attendance at Westminster dropped away. The Government could afford to smile at Mr. O'Rourke's efforts to make himself disagreeable, and the Opposition were frankly contemptuous of a people who could not profit them by more than a dozen votes in a critical division. It became impossible to wring even a modest Land Bill from the Prime Minister, and Mr. Chesney, now much at ease in the Secretary's office in the Castle, scarcely felt it necessary to be civil to deputations which wanted railways. It was clear that something must be done, or Mr. O'Rourke's business would disappear. He decided to appeal for funds *orbi et urbi*. The world--in this case North America--was to be visited, exhorted, and, it was hoped, taxed by some of his most eloquent lieutenants. Even Canada, with its leaven of Orangemen, was to be honoured with the speeches of an orator of second-rate powers. The city--Dublin, of course--was the chosen scene of the leader's personal exertions. Since his revolt against John O'Neill, O'Rourke had been a little shy of Dublin audiences, but the pressing nature of the present crisis almost forced him to pay his court to the capital. He found some comfort in the recollection that during the five years that had elapsed since O'Neill's death he had missed no public opportunity of shedding tears beside his tomb. He remembered, too, that he had put his name down for a large subscription towards the erection of a statue to the dead leader, a work of art which the existing generation seemed unlikely to have the pleasure of seeing.

Thus it happened that on the very day of the publication of Miss Goold's scheme Mr. O'Rourke announced his intention of addressing an appeal for funds to a public meeting in the Rotunda. Miss Goold was disconcerted and irritated. She was well aware that Mr. O'Rourke's appeal would give the respectable Nationalists an excellent excuse for ignoring hers, and unfortunately the respectable people are just the ones who have most money. She was confident that she could rely on the extreme section of the Nationalists, and on that element in the city population which loves and makes a row, but she could not count on the moneyed classes. They were, so far as their words went, very enthusiastic for the Boer cause; but when it came to writing cheques, it was likely that the counter-attractions of the Parliamentary fund would prove too strong.

Since it seemed that Mr. O'Rourke would certainly spoil her collection, the obvious thing to do was to try to spoil his. If he afforded people an excuse for not paying the travelling expenses of her volunteers to Lorenzo Marques, she would, if possible, suggest a way of escape from paying for his men's journeys to London. After all, no one really wanted to subscribe to either fund, and it might be supposed that the public would very gladly keep their purses shut altogether.

For an Irishman it is quite possible to be genuinely enthusiastic and at the same time able to see the humorous side of his own enthusiasm. This is a reason why an Irishman is never a bore unless, to gain his private ends, he wants to be. Even an Irish advocate of total abstinence, or an Irish antivaccinationist, if such a thing exists, is not a bore, because he will always trot out his conscientious objections with a half-humorous, half-deprecating smile. This same capacity for avoiding the slavery of serious fanaticism enables an Irishman to cease quite joyfully from the pursuit of his own particular fad in order to corner an obnoxious opponent. Thus Augusta Goold and her friends were genuinely desirous of striking a blow at England, and really believed that their volunteers might do it; but this did not prevent them from finding infinite relish in the prospect of watching Mr. O'Rourke squirming on the horns of a dilemma. They took counsel together, and the result of their deliberations was peculiar. They proposed to invite Mr. O'Rourke to join his appeal to theirs, to pool the money which came in, and to divide it evenly between the volunteers and the members of Parliament. It was Tim Halloran who hit upon the brilliant idea. Augusta Goold chuckled over it as she grasped its consequences. Mr. O'Rourke, Tim argued, would be unwilling to accept the proposal because he wanted all the money he could get, more than was at all likely to be collected. He would be equally unwilling to reject it, because he could then be represented as indifferent to the heroic struggle of the Boers. In the existing state of Irish and American opinion a suspicion of such indifference would be quite sufficient to wreck his chances of getting any money at all.

Of course, the obvious way of making such a proposal would have been by letter to Mr. O'Rourke. Afterwards the

correspondence--he must make a reply of some sort--could be sent to the press, and sufficient publicity would be given to the matter. This was what Tim Halloran wanted to do, but such a course did not commend itself to Augusta Goold. It lacked dramatic possibilities, and there was always the chance that the leading papers might refuse to take any notice of the matter, or relegate the letters to a back page and small print. Besides, a mere newspaper controversy would not make a strong appeal to the section of the Dublin populace on whose support she chiefly relied. A much more attractive plan suggested itself. Augusta Goold, with a few friends to act as aides-de-camp, would present herself to Mr. O'Rourke at his Rotunda meeting, and put the proposal to him then and there in the presence of the audience.

In the meantime the few days before the meeting were occupied in scattering suggestive seed over the hoardings and blank walls of the city. One morning people were startled by the sight of an immense placard which asked in violent red letters, 'What is Ireland going to do?' Public opinion was divided about the ultimate purpose of the poster. The majority expected the announcement of a new play or novel; a few held that a pill or a cocoa would be recommended. Next morning the question became more explicit, and the hypothesis of the play and the pill were excluded. 'What,' the new poster ran, 'is Ireland going to do for the Boers?' The public were not intensely anxious to find an answer to the conundrum thrust thus forcibly on their attention, but they became curious to know who the advertisers were who hungered for the information. Men blessed by Providence with sagacious-looking faces made the most of their opportunity, and informed their friends that the thing was a new dodge of O'Rourke's to get money. Their reputation suffered when the next placard appeared. The advertisers had apparently changed their minds, for what they now wanted to know was, 'What are the Irish M.P.'s going to do for the Boers?' Clearly Mr. O'Rourke could have nothing to gain by insisting on an answer to such a question. The public were puzzled but pleased. The bill-stickers of the city foresaw the possibility of realizing a competence, for the next morning the satisfied inquirers published the result of their investigations. 'The Em Pees (it was thus that they now referred to the honourable members of Parliament) 'are supporting the infamies of England.' It was at this point that the eye of a Castle official was caught by one of the placards as he made his way to the Kildare Street Club for luncheon. He discussed the matter with a colleague, and it occurred to them that since they were paid for governing Ireland, they ought to give the public some value for their money, and seize the opportunity of doing something. They sent a series of telegrams to Mr. Chesney's London house, which were forwarded by his private secretary to the Riviera. The replies which followed kept the Castle officials in a state of pleasurable excitement until quite late in the evening. At about eight o'clock large numbers of Metropolitan police sallied out of their barracks and tore down the last batch of placards. Next morning fresh ones were posted up, each of which bore the single word, 'Why?' The bill-stickers were highly pleased, and many of them were arrested for drunkenness. Mr. O'Rourke was much less pleased, for he began to guess what the answer was likely to be, and how it would affect his chances of securing a satisfactory collection. The officials were perplexed. They suspected the 'Why?' of containing within its three letters some hideous sedition, but it was not possible to deal vigorously with what might, after all, be only the cunning novelty of some advertising manufacturer. More telegrams harried Mr. Chesney, but before any definite course of action had been decided on the morning of the Rotunda meeting arrived, and with it an answer to the multifarious 'Whys': 'Because O'Rourke wants all the money to spend in the London restaurants.' There was a great deal of laughter, and many people, quite uninterested in politics, determined to go to the meeting in hopes of more amusement.

When Mr. O'Rourke took the chair the hall was crowded to its utmost capacity. Under ordinary circumstances this would have augured well for the success of his appeal, for it showed that the public were at all events not apathetic. On this particular occasion, however, Mr. O'Rourke would have been better pleased with a smaller audience. The placards had shown him that something unpleasant was likely to occur, though they afforded no hint of the form which the unpleasantness would take. When he rose to his feet he was greeted with the usual volley of cheers, and although some rude remarks about the Boers were made in the corners of the hall, they did not amount to anything like an organized attempt at interruption. He began his speech cautiously, feeling the pulse of his audience, and plying them with the well-worn platitudes of the Nationalist platform. When these evoked the usual enthusiasm he waxed bolder, and shot out some almost original epigrams directed against the Government, working up to a really new gibe about officials who sat like spiders spinning murderous webs in Dublin Castle. The audience were delighted with this, but their joy reached its height when someone shouted: 'You might speak better of the men who tore down the placard on Wednesday.' Mr. O'Rourke ignored the suggestion, and passed on to sharpen his wit upon the landlords. He described them as 'ill-omened tax-gatherers who suck the life-blood of the country, and refuse to disgorge a penny of it for any useful purpose.' Mr. O'Rourke was not a man who shrank from a mixed metaphor, or paused to consider such trifles as the unpleasantness which would ensue if anyone who had been sucking blood were to repent and disgorge it. 'Where,' he went on to ask, 'do they spend their immense revenues? Is it in Ireland?' Here he made one of those dramatic pauses for which his oratory was famous. The audience waited breathlessly for the denunciation which was to follow. They were treated, unexpectedly, to a well-conceived anticlimax. A voice spoke softly, but quite clearly, from the back of the hall:

'Bedad, and I shouldn't wonder if it was in the London restaurants.'

A roar of laughter followed. The orator might no doubt have made an effective reply, but every time he opened his

mouth minor wits, rending like wolves the carcass of the original joke, yelled 'turtle-soup' at him, or 'champagne and oysters.' He got angry, and consequently flurried. He tried to quell the tumult by thundering out the denunciation which he had prepared. But the delight which the audience took in shrieking the items of their imaginary bill of fare was too much for him. He forgot what he had meant to say, floundered, attempted to pull himself together, and brought out the stale jest about providing each landlord with a single ticket to Holyhead.

'And that same,' said his original tormentor, 'would be cheaper than giving you a return ticket to London.'

The audience was immensely tickled. So far the entertainment, if not precisely novel, was better than anything they had hoped for, and everyone had an agreeable conviction that there was still something in the way of a sensation in store. Perhaps it was eagerness for the expected climax which induced them to keep tolerably quiet during the remainder of Mr. O'Rourke's speech. He set forth at some length the glorious achievements of his party in the past, and explained the opportunities of future usefulness which lay to be grasped if only the necessary funds were provided. He sat down to make way, as he assured the audience, for certain tried and trusty soldiers of the cause who were waiting to propose important resolutions. So far as these warriors were concerned, he might as well have remained standing. Their resolutions are to this day unproposed and uncommended--a secret joy, no doubt, to those who framed them, but not endorsed by any popular approval.

Hyacinth Conneally was not admitted to the secret councils of Augusta Goold and her friends. He knew no more than the general public what kind of a coup was meditated, but he gathered from Miss O'Dwyer's nervous excitement and Tim Halloran's air of immense and mysterious importance that something quite out of the common was likely to occur. By arriving an hour and a half before the opening of the meeting he secured a seat near the platform. He enjoyed the discomfiture of O'Rourke, whom he had learnt from the pages of the *Croppy* to despise as a mere windbag, and to hate as the betrayer of O'Neill. A sudden thrill of excitement went through him when O'Rourke sat down. The whole audience turned their faces from the platform towards the door at the far end of the hall, and Hyacinth, without knowing exactly what he expected, turned too. There was a swaying visible among the crowd near the door, and almost immediately it became clear that someone was trying to force a way through the densely-packed people. Curses were to be heard, and even cries from those who were being trodden on. At last a way was made. Augusta Goold, followed by Grealy, Halloran, and Mary O'Dwyer, came slowly up the hall towards the platform. Those of the audience whose limbs had not been crushed or their feet mangled in preparation for her progress cheered her wildly. Indeed, she made a regal appeal to them. Even amidst a crowd of men her height made her conspicuous, and she had arrayed herself for the occasion in a magnificent violet robe. It flowed from her shoulders in spacious folds, and swept behind her, splendidly contemptuous of the part it played as scavenger amid the accumulated filth of the floor. Her bare arms shone out of the wide sleeves which hung around them. Her neck rose strong and stately over the silver clasp of a cloak which she had thrown back from her shoulders. She wore a hat which seemed to hold her hair captive from falling loose around her. One great tress alone escaped from it, and by some cunning manipulation was made to stand straight out, as if blown by the wind from its fastenings. In comparison her suite looked commonplace and mean. Poor Miss O'Dwyer was arrayed--'gowned,' she would have said herself in reporting the scene--in vesture not wanting in splendour, but which beside Miss Goold's could not catch the eye. Thomas Grealy, awkward and stooped, peered through his glasses at the crowd. Tim Halloran walked jauntily, but his eyes glanced nervously from side to side. He was certainly ill at ease, possibly frightened, at the position in which he found himself.

A hurried consultation took place among the gentlemen on the platform, which ended in Mr. O'Rourke stepping forward with a smile and an outstretched hand to welcome Augusta Goold as she ascended the steps. The expression of his face belied the smile which he had impressed upon his lips. His eyes had the same look of furtive malice as a dog's which wants to bite but fears the stick. Augusta Goold waved aside the proffered hand, and stepped unaided on to the platform. Mr. O'Rourke placed a chair for her, but she ignored it and stood, with her followers behind her, facing the audience. O'Rourke and two of his tried and trusty members of Parliament approached her. They stood between her and the audience, and talked to her for some time, apparently very earnestly. Augusta Goold looked past them, over them, sometimes it seemed through them, while they spoke, but made them no answer whatever. At last Mr. O'Rourke shrugged his shoulders, and withdrew to his chair with a sulky scowl.

'I wish,' said Augusta Goold, 'to ask a simple question of your chairman.'

Mr. O'Rourke rose.

'This meeting,' he said, 'is convened for the purpose of raising funds for the carrying on of the national business in the House of Commons. If Miss Goold's question relates to the business in hand, I shall be most happy to answer it. If not, I am afraid I cannot allow it to be asked here. At another time and in another place I shall be prepared to listen to what Miss Goold has to say, and in the meantime if she will take her seat on the platform she will be heartily welcome.'

'My question,' said Augusta Goold, 'is intimately connected with the business of the meeting. It is simply this: Are you, Mr. O'Rourke, prepared to give any portion of the money entrusted to you by the Irish people to assist the Boers in their struggle for freedom?'

It was manifestly absurd to ask such a question at all. Mr. O'Rourke had no intention of collecting money for the

Boers, who seemed to have plenty of their own, and he could not without breach of trust have applied funds subscribed to feed and clothe members of Parliament to arming volunteers. Nevertheless, it was an awkward question to answer in the presence of an audience excited by Augusta Goold's beauty and splendid audacity. A really strong man, like, for instance, O'Rourke's predecessor, John O'Neill, might have faced the situation, and won, if not the immediate cheers, at least the respect of the Irish people. But Mr. O'Rourke was not a strong man, and besides he was out of temper and had lost his nerve. He took perhaps the worst course open to him: he made a speech. He appealed to his past record as a Nationalist, and to his publicly reiterated expressions of sympathy with the Boer cause. He asked the audience to trust him to do what was right, but he neither said Yes nor No to the question he was asked.

Augusta Goold stood calm and impassive while he spoke. A sneer gathered on her lips and indrawn nostrils as he made his appeal for the people's confidence. When he had finished she said, very slowly, and with that extreme distinctness of articulation which women speakers seem to learn so much more easily than men:

'Are you prepared to give any portion of the money entrusted to you by the Irish people to assist the Boers in their struggle for freedom?'

Mr. O'Rourke was goaded into attempting another speech, but the audience was in no mood to listen to him. He was interrupted again and again with shouts of 'Yes or no!' 'Answer the question!' The bantering tone with which they had plied him earlier in the evening with suggestions for a menu had changed now into angry insistence. He passed his hand over his forehead with a gesture of despair, and sat down. At once the tumult ceased, and the people waited breathless for Augusta Goold to speak again.

'Are you prepared'--she seemed to have learnt her question off by heart--'to give any portion of the money entrusted to you by the Irish people to assist the Boers in their struggle for freedom?'

Mr. Shea, a red-headed member of Parliament from Co. Limerick, being himself one of those most deeply interested in the contents of the party's purse, sprang to his feet. It was clear that he was in a condition of almost dangerous excitement, for he stammered, as he shouted to the chairman:

'Sir, is this--this--this woman to be allowed to interrupt the meeting? I demand her immediate removal.'

Augusta Goold smiled at him. It was really a very gracious, almost a tender, smile. One might imagine the divine Theodora in her earlier days smiling with just such an expression on a plebeian lover whose passion she regarded as creditable to him but hopeless.

'I assure you, Mr. Shea, that I shall not interrupt the business for more than a minute. Mr. O'Rourke has only got to say one word--either Yes or No. Are you prepared to give any portion of the funds entrusted to you by the Irish people to assist the Boers in their struggle for freedom?'

Mr. Shea was not at all mollified either by the smile or the politeness of her tone.

'We shall not permit the meeting to be interrupted any more,' he shouted. 'Either you will withdraw at once, or we shall have you removed by force.'

She smiled at him again--a pitying smile, as if she regretted the petulance of his manner, and turned to the chairman.

'Are you prepared to give----'

Then Mr. Shea's feelings became too strong for his self-control. He sprang forward, apparently with the intention of laying violent hands upon Augusta Goold. Hyacinth Conneally started up to protect her, and the same impulse moved a large part of the audience. There was a rush for the platform, and a fierce, threatening yell. Mr. Shea hung back, frightened. Augusta Goold held up her hand, and immediately the rush stopped and the people were silent. She went on with her question, taking it up at the exact word which Mr. Shea had interrupted, in the same level and exquisitely irritating tone.

'--Any of the money entrusted to you by the Irish people to assist the Boers in their struggle for freedom?'

Mr. O'Rourke had sat scowling silently since the failure of his last attempt to explain himself. This final disjointed repetition of the galling question roused him to the necessity of doing something. He was a pitiful sight as he rose and confronted Augusta Goold. There were blotches of purple red and spaces of pallor on his face; his hands twisted together; a sweat had broken out from his neck, and made his collar limp. His words were a stammering mixture of bluster and appeal.

'You mustn't--mustn't--mustn't interrupt the meeting,' So far he tried to assert himself, then, with a glance at the contemptuous face of the woman before him, he relapsed into the tone of a schoolboy who begs off the last strokes of a caning. 'Is this nice conduct? Is it ladylike to come here and attack us like this? Miss Goold, I'm ashamed of you.'

'I am glad to hear,' said Augusta Goold, departing for the first time from her question, 'that there is anything left in the world that Mr. O'Rourke is ashamed of. I didn't think there was.'

It was Mr. Shea and not his leader who resented this last insult. His lips drew apart, leaving his teeth bare in a ghastly grin. He clenched his fists, and stood for a moment trembling from head to foot. Then he leaped forward towards Augusta Goold. The man who stood next Hyacinth lurched suddenly forward, wrenched his right hand free of

the crowd round him, and flung it back behind his head. Hyacinth saw that he held a large stone in it.

'You are a cowardly blackguard, Shea,' he yelled--'a damned, cowardly blackguard! Would you strike a woman?'

Shea turned on the instant, saw the hand stretched back to fling the stone. He seized the chair behind him--the very chair which, while an appearance of politeness was still possible, Mr. O'Rourke had offered to Augusta Goold--and flung it with all his force at the man with the stone. One of the legs grazed Hyacinth's cheek, scraping the skin off. The corner of the seat struck the man beside him full across the forehead just above his eyes. The blood poured out, blinding, and then, as he gasped, choking him. He reeled and huddled together helplessly. He could not fall, for the pressure of the crowd round him held him up. Hyacinth felt his hands groping wildly as if for support, and reached out his own to grasp him. But the man wanted no help for himself. As soon as he felt another hand touch his he pressed the stone into it.

'I can't see,' he whispered hoarsely. 'Take it, you, and kill him, kill him, kill him! smash his skull!'

Hyacinth took the stone. The feel of the man's blood warm on it and the fierce yelling and stamping of the crowd filled him with a mad lust of hate against Shea, who stood as if suddenly paralyzed within a few feet of him. He wrenched his hand free, and with a mighty effort flung the stone. He saw it strike Shea fair on the forehead. In spite of the tumult around him, he fancied he heard the dull thud of its impact. He saw Shea fling up his hands and pitch forward. He saw Augusta Goold gather her skirts in her hand, and sweep them swiftly aside lest the man should fall on them. Then the crowd pressing towards the platform swept him off his feet, and he was tossed helplessly forward. A giddy sickness seized him. The pressure slackened for an instant, and he fell. Someone's boot struck him on the head. He felt without any keen regret that he was likely to be trampled to death. Then he lost consciousness.

CHAPTER VI

Next morning the Dublin daily papers laid themselves out to make the most of the sensational fight at the Rotunda. Even the habitually cautious *Irish Times* felt that the occasion justified the expression of an opinion, and that there would be no serious risk of alienating the sympathies of subscribers and advertisers by condemning the bloodshed. It published an exceedingly dignified and stodgy leading article, drawing the largest and finest words from the dictionary, and weaving them with extraordinary art into sentences which would have been creditable to anyone bent upon imitating the style of Dr. Samuel Johnson. The British Empire and the whole of civilized Europe were called upon to witness the unspeakably deplorable consequences which invariably followed the habitual neglect of the cultivation of the elementary decencies of public life. The paper disclaimed any sympathy with either of the belligerent parties, and pointed out with sorrowful solemnity that if the principles sedulously inculcated upon its readers in its own columns were persistently flouted and contemned by those who claimed the position of national representatives, little else except a repetition at frequent intervals of the painful and humiliating scenes of the night before could possibly be anticipated by reasonable observers of the general trend of democratic institutions. The *Daily Express* openly exulted over the rioters. Its leading article--the staff may have danced in a ring round the office table while composing it--declared that now at length the Irish had proved to the world that they were all, without a solitary exception, irredeemably vicious corner-boys. Miss Augusta Goold was warmly praised for having demonstrated once for all that 'patriotism' ought to be written 'Pat riotism.' Deep regret was expressed that those who attended the meeting had not been armed with revolvers instead of stones, and that the platform had not been defended with Maxim guns instead of comparatively innocuous wooden chairs. Had modern weapons of precision been used the *Daily Express* would have been able to congratulate mankind on getting rid of quite a considerable number of Irishmen.

The *Freeman's Journal* and the *Daily Independent* were awkwardly situated. Their sympathies were entirely with Mr. O'Rourke, and they were exceedingly angry with Miss Goold for interfering with the collection of funds for the Parliamentary party. At the same time, they felt a difficulty in denouncing her, not for want of suitable language--the Irish Nationalist press has a superb command of words which a self-respecting dictionary would hesitate to recognise--but because they felt that push of the horns of the dilemma on which O'Rourke had been impaled, and they were obliged to sand their denunciations between layers of stoutest pro-Boer sentiment.

All four papers contained reports of the proceedings which were practically identical up to a certain point. It was about the commencement of the actual bloodshed that they differed. The *Irish Times* reporter believed that Mr. Shea had begun the fray by striking Augusta Goold behind the ear with his clenched fist. The *Daily Express* man claimed to have overheard Mr. O'Rourke urging his friends to brain a member of the audience with a chair. The *Freeman's Journal* held that Augusta Goold's supporters had come into the hall supplied with huge stones, which, at a given signal, they had flung at the inoffensive members of Parliament who occupied the platform, adding, as a corroborative detail, that the lady who accompanied Augusta Goold had twice kicked the prostrate Mr. Shea in the stomach. The *Daily Independent* advanced the ingenious theory that the contest had been precipitated by a malevolent student of Trinity College, who had flung an apple of discord--on this occasion a jagged paving-stone of unusual size--into the midst of a group of ladies and gentlemen who were peacefully discussing a slight difference of opinion among themselves. Beyond this point none of the papers gave any account of the proceedings, all four reporters having recognised that, not being retained as war correspondents, they were not called upon to risk their lives on the battlefield. The accounts all closed with the information that the wounded had been carried to Jervis Street Hospital, and were under treatment suitable to their injuries. Hyacinth had suffered a slight concussion of the brain and a flesh wound. Other sufferers were in the same ward, Mr. Shea himself occupying a bed, so that Hyacinth had the satisfaction of seeing him stretched out, a melancholy figure, with a bandage concealing most of his red hair. After the surgeon had finished his rounds for the morning a police official visited the sufferers, and made a careful note of their names and addresses. He inquired in a perfunctory manner whether any of them wished to swear an information. No one, except Mr. Shea, was sufficiently satisfied with his own share of the meeting to wish for more fame than was unavoidable. As no further use was ever made of Mr. Shea's narrative, it may be presumed that the authorities regarded it as wanting in accuracy. No blame, however, ought to be attached to the author for any petty deviation from the truth of which he may have been guilty. No man's mind is perfectly clear on the morning after he has been struck on the head with a stone, and perhaps afterwards kicked twice in the stomach by a lady journalist. Besides, all members of Parliament are, in virtue of their office, 'honourable gentlemen.'

An excited and sympathetic nurse provided Hyacinth with copies of the four morning papers, which he read with interest and a good deal of amusement. Only the account in the *Daily Independent* caused him any uneasiness. No doubt, as he fully recognised, the suggestion about the Trinity student was nothing but a wild guess on the part of the reporter. It was highly unlikely that anyone would seriously consider a theory so intrinsically improbable. Still, if the faintest suspicion of the part he had played reached the ears of the college authorities, he felt that his career as a divinity student was likely to be an extremely brief one. His chief fear was that a prolonged absence from college would

give rise to inquiry, and that his bandages would excite suspicion when he reappeared. Fortunately, the house surgeon decided that he was sufficiently recovered to be allowed to leave the hospital early in the afternoon. The boot which had put an end to his share in the riot had raised its bruise under his hair, so he was able to remove the bandages from his head as soon as he got into the street. There still remained a long strip of plaster meant to keep a dressing of iodoform in its place over the cut on his cheek which Mr. Shea's chair-leg had inflicted. This he could not get off, and thinking it wiser to make his entry into college after nightfall, he sought a refuge in Mary O'Dwyer's rooms.

He found the poetess laid on a sofa and clad in a blue dressing-gown. She stretched a hand of welcome to Hyacinth, and then, before he had time to take it, began to laugh immoderately. The laughing fit ended in sobs, and then tears flowed from her eyes, which she mopped convulsively with an already damp pocket-handkerchief. Before she had recovered sufficient self-possession to speak, she signed to Hyacinth to fetch a bottle of smelling-salts from the chimney-piece. He hastened to obey, and found himself kneeling beside the sofa, holding the bottle to her nose. After a while she recovered sufficiently to tell him that she had not slept at all during the night, and felt extremely unwell and quite unstrung in consequence. Another fit of immoderate and tearful laughter followed, and Hyacinth, embarrassed and alarmed, fetched a tumbler of soda-water from the syphon on the sideboard. The lady refused to swallow any, and, just as he had made up his mind to risk an external application, recovered again. During the lucid interval which followed she informed him that his own conduct had been superb and heroic. What seemed to be an effort to celebrate his achievements in extemporary verse brought on another fit. Hyacinth determined to risk an appearance in the college square in broad daylight rather than continue his ministrations. While he was searching for his hat Miss O'Dwyer became suddenly quite calm, and began to explain to him how immensely the cause of Ireland's independence had benefited by the demonstration in the Rotunda. Hyacinth listened anxiously, waiting for the next explosion, and experienced very great relief when the door opened and Augusta Goold walked in.

Unlike Mary O'Dwyer, she was entirely mistress of herself. Her cheeks were not a shade paler than usual, nor her hand at all less cool and firm. She stretched herself, after her usual fashion, in the largest available chair and lit a cigarette.

'You look excited, my dear Mary,' she said--'a little overexcited, perhaps. Have you had tea? No? Perhaps you will be so kind as to ring the bell, Mr. Conneally.'

Mary O'Dwyer repeated the information she had given Hyacinth about her sleepless night, and complimented Augusta Goold on her nerve.

'As for poor little me,' she went on, 'I'm like a--like a--you remember the kind of thing, don't you?--like a--I'm not sure if I know the name of the thing myself.'

She relapsed into a weak giggle, and Hyacinth stooped for the bottle of smelling-salts, which had rolled under the sofa. Augusta Goold was much less sympathetic. She fixed her with a strong stare of amazement and disgust. Apparently this treatment was the right one, for the giggling stopped almost immediately.

'I see you have got some sticking-plaster on your face, Mr. Conneally,' she said, when Mary O'Dwyer had quieted down.

'Yes,' said Hyacinth, 'and a good-sized bump behind my ear.'

'I suppose this business will be very awkward for you in college. Will they turn you out?'

'I'm sure they will if they find out that I threw that stone at Shea.'

'You made a very good shot,' said Augusta, smiling at the recollection. 'But how on earth did you come to have a stone that size in the hall with you?'

Hyacinth told the story of the man who had been felled by the chair and his murderous bequest.

'That's the proper spirit,' said Augusta. 'I admire that man, and he couldn't have passed his stone on to better hands than yours. Shea went down as if he had been shot. I was afraid of my life he would clutch at my skirts as he fell or squirm up against me after he was down. But he lay quite still. By the way, Mary, I suppose your dress was ruined?'

Mary O'Dwyer was quite subdued.

'It was torn,' she said meekly enough.

'Have you another one?'

'Of course I have. I've three others, besides some old ones.'

'Well, then, you'd better go and put on one of them. An old one will do. It's disgusting to see a woman slopping about in a dressing-gown at this time of day. I'll have tea ready when you come back.'

Miss O'Dwyer obeyed sulkily. She wished very much that Augusta Goold had stopped at home. It would have been a great deal pleasanter to have gone on practising hysterics with Hyacinth as a sympathetic spectator. When the door was shut Augusta Goold turned to Hyacinth again.

'That's the worst of women'--apparently she did not consider herself as one of the sex--they are all right at the time (nothing could have been better than Mary's behaviour at the meeting), but they collapse afterwards in such idiotic

ways. But I want to talk to you about yourself. I owe you a good turn for what you did last night. Only for you, I think Shea would have dared to touch me, and then very likely I should have killed him, and there might have been trouble afterwards.' She spoke quite calmly, but Hyacinth had very little doubt that she meant exactly what she said. 'Greatly of course, was useless. One might have expected him to give utterance to an ancient tribal war-cry, but he didn't even do that. Tim Halloran got frightened when the row began. I noticed him dodging about behind Mary and me, and I mean to let him know what I think about him. It's you I have to thank, and I won't forget it. If you get into trouble over this business in college, come to me, and I will see you straight. In fact, if you like to give up the divinity student business at once, I dare say I can put you in the way of earning an honest livelihood.'

Hyacinth was gratified at the way Augusta Goold spoke to him. Since the evening on which he had given his opinion about the morality of desertion and murder he had been conscious of a coolness in her manner. Now he had apparently reinstated himself in her good graces. Praise, even for an act he was secretly ashamed of, and gratitude, though he by no means recognised that he deserved it, were pleasant to him. He promised to remember the offer of help, but declined for the present to commit his future to the keeping of so bloodthirsty a patroness.

Curiously enough, Hyacinth's reception in college was a great deal more cordial after the Rotunda meeting than it had ever been before. For a while the battle which had been fought at their doors superseded the remoter South African warfare as a topic of conversation among the students. Their sympathies were with Augusta Goold. Even members of the divinity classes suffered themselves to be lured from their habitual worship of respectability so far as to express admiration for the dramatic picturesqueness of the part she played. It is true that the lady herself was called by names universally resented by women, and that the broadest slanders were circulated about her character. Still, a halo of glory hung round her. It was felt that she had done a surprisingly courageous thing when she faced Mr. O'Rourke on his own platform. Also, she had behaved with a certain dignity, neither throwing chairs nor stones at her opponents. Then, she was an undeniably beautiful woman, a fact which made its inevitable appeal to the young men. The mere expression of sympathy with this flamboyant and scandal-smearing heroine brought with it a delightful flavour of gay and worldly vice. It was pretty well known that Hyacinth was a friend of Miss Goold's, and it was rumoured that he had earned his piece of sticking-plaster in her defence. No one knew exactly what he had done or how much he had suffered, but a great many men were anxious to know. Very much to his own surprise, he received a number of visitors in his rooms. Men who had been the foremost of his tormentors came, ostensibly to inquire for his health, in reality to glean details of the fight at the Rotunda. Certain medical students of the kind which glory in any kind of row openly congratulated him on his luck in being present on such an occasion. Men who claimed to be fast, and tried to impress their acquaintances with the belief that they indulged habitually in wild scenes of revelry, courted Hyacinth, and boasted afterwards of their second-hand acquaintance with Miss Goold. It became the fashion to be seen arm-in-arm with him in the quadrangle, and to inquire from him in public for 'Finola.'

This new popularity by no means pleased Hyacinth. He was not at all proud of his share in the Rotunda meeting, and lived in daily dread of being recognised as the assailant of Mr. Shea. He knew, too, that he was making no way with the better class of students. The men whose faces he liked were more than ever shy of making his acquaintance. The sub-lecturers and minor professors in the divinity school were coldly contemptuous in their manner, and it seemed to him that even Dr. Henry was less friendly. He became desperately anxious to get out of a position which he found more intolerable than the original isolation. He applied himself with extreme diligence to his studies, even affecting an interest, unnatural for the most pious, in the expositions given by learned doctors of the Thirty-nine Articles. At lectures on Church history he made notes about the vagaries of heretics so assiduously that the professor began to hope that there existed one student at least who took an interest in the Christological controversies of the sixth century. He never ventured back again to the Wednesday prayer-meeting, but he performed many attendances beyond the required minimum at the college chapel. Morning after morning he dragged himself from his bed and hurried across the dusky quadrangle to take his part in the mutilated matins with which the college authorities see fit to usher in the day. He even went to hear the sermons delivered on Friday afternoons, homilies so painful that the preachers themselves recognise an extraordinary merit in enduring them, and allow that submission of the ears to one of them is to be reckoned as equal to two ordinary acts of devotion.

It is to be hoped that Hyacinth derived some remote benefit from the discipline to which he subjected himself, for the immediate results were not satisfactory. He seemed no nearer winning the respect of the more serious students, and Dr. Henry's manner showed no signs of softening into friendliness. His surfeit of theology bred in him a dislike of the subject. The solemn platitudes which were posed as expositions of the creeds affected his mind much as the expurgated life histories of maiden aunts do the newly-emancipated school-girl. The relentless closing in of argument upon a single previously settled doctrine woke in him a desire to break through at some point and breathe again in the open. He began to fear that he was becoming hopelessly irreligious. His morning devotions in the foggy atmosphere of the chapel did not touch the capacity for enthusiasm within him. The vague splendour of his father's meditations had left him outside, indeed, but sure that within there lay a great reality. But now religion had come to seem an altogether narrower thing, a fenced off, well-ordered garden in which useful vegetables might be cultivated, but very little inspiring to the soul.

The unwelcome attention of the students whose friendship he did not desire, and his increasing dislike for the work he was expected to do, led him to spend more and more of his time with Augusta Goold and her friends. He found in their society that note of enthusiasm which he missed in the religion of the college. He responded warmly to their passionate devotion to the dream of an independent Irish Republic. He felt less conscious of his want of religion in their company. With the exception of Augusta Goold herself, the members of the coterie were professedly Roman Catholics; but this made little or no difference in their intercourse with him. What he found in their ideals was a substitute for religion, a space where his enthusiasm might extend itself. He became, as he realized his own position clearly, very doubtful whether he ought to continue his college course. It did not seem likely that he would in the end be able to take Holy Orders, and to remain in the divinity school without that intention was clearly foolish. On the other hand, he shrank from inflicting what he knew would be a painful disappointment on his father. It happened that before the term ended his connection with the divinity school was cut in a way that saved him from the responsibility of forming a decision.

He was a regular attendant at the lectures of Dr. Spenser, who had never from the first disguised his dislike and contempt for Hyacinth. This gentleman was one day explaining to his class the difference between evidence which leads to a high degree of probability and a demonstration which produces absolute certainty. The subject was a dry one, and quite unsuited to Dr. Spenser, whose heart was set on maintaining a reputation for caustic wit. He cast about for an illustration which would at once make clear the distinction and enliven his lecture. His eye lit upon Hyacinth, upon whose cheek there still burned a long red scar. Dr. Spenser's face brightened.

'For instance, gentlemen,' he said, 'if I should reason from the fact that our friend Mr. Conneally affects the society of certain charming ladies of doubtful reputation, like Miss Goold, to the conclusion that Mr. Conneally is himself a Nationalist, I should only have arrived at a probable conclusion. The degree of probability might be very high; still, I should have no right to regard my conclusion as absolutely certain.'

The class tittered delightedly. Dr. Spenser proceeded without heeding a deep flush on Hyacinth's face, which might have warned a wiser man that an explosion was coming.

'If I should then proceed to reason thus: All Nationalists are rebels and potential murderers--Mr. Conneally is a Nationalist; therefore Mr. Conneally is a rebel and potential murderer--I should, assuming the truth of my minor premise, have arrived at a certainty.'

The syllogism was greeted with loud applause. Hyacinth started to his feet. For a time he could only gasp for breath to utter a reply, and Dr. Spenser, secure in the conviction of his own intellectual and social superiority to the son of a parson from Connemara, determined to pursue his prey.

'Does Mr. Conneally,' he asked with a simper, 'propose to impugn the accuracy of my induction or the logic of my deduction?'

The simper and the number of beautiful long words which Dr. Spenser had succeeded in collecting together into one sentence provoked a sustained clapping of hands and stamping of feet from the class. Hyacinth rapidly regained his self-possession, and was surprised at his own coolness when he replied:

'I should say, sir, that a man who makes an induction holding up a lady to ridicule is probably a cad, and that the cad who makes a deduction confusing patriotism with murder is certainly a fool.'

A report of Hyacinth's speech was handed to Dr. Henry, with a suggestion that expulsion from the divinity school was the only suitable punishment. Hyacinth did not look forward with any pleasure to the interview to which he was summoned. He was agreeably surprised when he entered the professor's room. Dr. Henry offered him a chair.

'I hear,' he said--his tone was severe, but a barely perceptible gleam of humorous appreciation flashed across his eyes as he spoke--'that you have been exceedingly insolent to Dr. Spenser.'

'I don't know, sir, whether you heard the whole story, but if you did you will surely recognise that Dr. Spenser was gratuitously insulting to me.'

'Quite so,' said Dr. Henry. 'I recognise that, but the question is, What am I to do with you now? What would you do if you were in my place? I should like to know your views of the best way out of the situation.'

Hyacinth was silent.

'You see,' Dr. Henry went on, 'we can't have our divinity lecturers called fools and cads before their classes. I should be afraid myself to deliver a lecture in your presence if I thought I was liable to that kind of interruption.'

'I think, sir,' said Hyacinth, 'that the best thing will be for me to leave the divinity school.'

'I think so, too. But leaving our divinity school need not mean that you give up the idea of taking Holy Orders. I have a very high opinion of your abilities, Conneally--so high that I should not like the Church to lose your services. At the same time, you are not at present the kind of man whom I could possibly recommend to any Irish Bishop. Your Nationalist principles are an absolute bar to your working in the Church of Ireland.'

'I wonder, sir, how you can call our Church the Church of Ireland, and in the same breath say that there is no room for

a Nationalist in her. Don't the two things contradict each other.'

Dr. Henry's eyes twinkled again. There spread over his mouth a smile of tolerant amusement.

'My dear boy, I'm not going to let you trap me into a discussion of that question. Theoretically, I have no doubt you would make out an excellent case. National Church, National spirit, National politics--Irish Church, Irish nation, Irish ideas. They all go excellently together, don't they? And yet the facts are as I state them. A Nationalist clergyman in the Church of Ireland would be just as impossible as an English Nonconformist in the Court of Louis Quatorze. After all, in this life one has got to steer one's course among facts, and they're sharp things which knock holes in the man who disregards them. Now, what I propose to you is this: Put off your ordination for three years or so. Take up schoolmastering. I will undertake to get you a post in an English school. Your politics won't matter over there, because no one will in the least understand what you mean. Work hard, think hard, read hard. Mix with the bigger world across the Channel. See England and realize what England is and what her Empire means. Don't be angry with me for saying that, long before the three years are over, you'll have come to see that what you call patriotism is nothing else than parochialism of a particularly narrow and uninstructed kind. Then come back here to me, and I'll arrange for your ordination. You'll do the best of good work when you've grown up a bit, and I'll see you a Bishop before I die.'

'I shall always be grateful to you,' said Hyacinth. 'I shall never forget your kindness, and the way you've treated me; but I can't do what you ask.'

'Oh, I'm not going to take no for an answer,' said Dr. Henry. 'Go home to the West and think it over. Talk to your father about your future. Write to me if you like about your plans, and remember my offer is open six months or a year hence. You'll be the same man then that you are now--I mean, in character. I'm not afraid of your turning out badly. You may think wrong-headedly, but I'm sure you'll not act disgracefully.'

CHAPTER VII

The December afternoon was growing dark when the weary car-horse surmounted the last hill on the road from Clifden and broke into a shambling trot down the long straight stretch into Carrowkeel. Soon, as the distance dwindled, the lights which twinkled here and there in the village became distinguishable. This--Hyacinth recognised it--was the great hanging lamp in the window of Rafferty's shop. That, a softer glow, came from the forge of Killeen, the smith. That, and that, fainter and more uncertain lights, were from fires seen through the open upper section of cottage doors. He could almost tell whose the cabins were where they shone. The scene inside rose to the imagination. A man with ragged clothes and a half-empty pipe is squeezed into the stone nook beside the blazing turf. The kettle, hanging from its hook, swings steaming beside him. The woman of the house, barefooted, sluttish, in torn crimson petticoat and gray bodice pinned across her breast, moves the red cinders from the lid of the pot-oven and peers at the browning cake within. Babies toddle or crawl over the greasy floor. The car rattled into the village street. Men whom he knew stopped it to speak to him. Children playing the last of their games in the fading light paused to stare at him. Father Moran, returning to his presbytery, waved his hand and shouted a greeting. He passed the last house of the village, and could see the fishing-boats, dim and naked-looking, riding at their anchors in the bay. Out beyond them, grim and terrible in the twilight, lay the hulk where the ice for fish-packing was stored. The thick stump of her one remaining mast made a blacker bar against the black sky. The pier was deserted, but he could see the bulky stacks of fish-boxes piled on it, and hear the water lapping against it. Along its utmost edge lay a belt of gray white, where the waves broke as they surged round it. He passed the pier, and there lay before him the long hill that led home. The church and the ruined school stood out clearly on the skyline. Below them, less clearly seen, was the rectory, and Hyacinth noted that the lamp in the kitchen was lit. Then the door was opened, and he saw, plain against the light, a man's figure, his father's. No doubt the old man was watching and listening. Perhaps the sound of the wheels reached him through the evening air, for in a few minutes he came out and walked down the drive. Hyacinth saw him fumble with the fastening of the rickety gate, and at last open it slowly and with difficulty. The car reached a gap in the loose stone wall, a familiar gap, for across it lay a short cut up a steeper part of the hill, which the road went round. Hyacinth jumped down and ran up the path. In another minute the greeting of father and son was accomplished, and the two were walking hand-in-hand towards the house. Hyacinth noticed that his father trembled, and that his feet stumbled uncertainly among the loose stones and stiff weeds.

When they entered the lighted room he saw that his father seemed older--many years older--than when he had said good-bye to him two months before. His skin was very transparent, his lips were tremulous, his eyes, after the first long look at his son, shifted feebly to the fire, the table, and the floor.

'My dear son,' he said, 'I thank God that I have got you safe home again. Indeed, it is good to see you again, Hyacinth, for it has been very lonely while you were away. I have not been able to do very much lately or to go out to the seashore, as I used to. Perhaps it is only that I have not cared to. But I have tried hard to get everything ready for your coming.'

He looked round the room with evident pride as he spoke. Hyacinth followed his gaze, and it was with a sense of deep shame that he found himself noticing the squalor of his home. The table was stained, and the books which littered half of it were thick with dust and grease-spotted. The earthen floor was damp and pitted here and there, so that the chairs stood perilously among its inequalities. The fine white powder of turf ashes lay thick upon the dresser. The whitewash above the fireplace was blackened by the track of the smoke that had blown out of the chimney and climbed up to the still blacker rafters of the roof. Hyacinth remembered how he, and not his father, had been accustomed to clean the room and wash the cups and plates. He wondered how such matters had been managed in his absence, and a great sense of compassion filled his eyes with tears as he thought of the painful struggle which the details of life must have brought upon his father. He noted the evident preparations for his coming. There were two eggs lying in a saucer ready to be boiled, a fresh loaf--and this was not the day they got their bread--and a small tin of cocoa beside his cup. The hearth was piled with glowing turf, and the iron tripod with a saucepan on it stood surrounded with red coals. Some sense of what Hyacinth was feeling passed into his father's mind.

'Isn't it all right, my son? I tried to make it very nice for you. I wanted to get Maggie Cassidy up from the village for the day, but her baby had the chin-cough, and she couldn't come.'

He took Hyacinth's hand and held it while he spoke.

'Perhaps it looks poor to you,' he went on, 'after your college rooms and the houses your friends live in; but it's your own home, son, isn't it?'

Hyacinth made a gulp at the emotion which had brought him near to tears.

'It's splendid, father--simply splendid. And now I'm going to boil those two eggs and make the cocoa, and we'll have a feast. Hallo! you've got some jam--jam and butter and eggs, and this is the month of December, when there's hardly a hen laying or a cow milking in the whole parish!'

He held up the jam-pot as he spoke. It was wrapped in dingy red paper, and had a mouldy damp stain on one side. Hyacinth recognised the mark, and remembered that he had seen the identical pot on the upper shelf of Rafferty's shop for years. Its label bore an inscription only vaguely prophetic of the contents--'Irish Household Jam.'

'That's right, father, you are supporting home manufacture. I declare I wouldn't have tasted it if it had come from England. You see, I'm a greater patriot than ever.'

Old Mr. Conneally smiled in a feeble, wavering way. He seemed scarcely to understand what was being said to him, but he found a quiet pleasure in the sound of his son's voice. He settled himself in a chair by the fireside and watched contentedly while Hyacinth put the eggs into the saucepan, hung the kettle on its hook, and cut slices of bread. Then the meal was eaten, Hyacinth after his long drive finding a relish even in the household jam. He plied his father with questions, and heard what the old man knew of the gossip of the village--how Thady Durkan had broken his arm, and talked of giving up the fishing; how the police from Letter-frack had found, or said they found, a whisky-still behind the old castle; how a Gaelic League organizer had come round persuading the people to sing and dance at the Galway Feis.

After supper Hyacinth nerved himself to tell the story of his term in college, and his determination to leave the divinity school. More than once he made an effort to begin, but the old man, who brightened a little during their meal, relapsed again into dreaminess, and did not seem to be listening to him. They pulled their chairs near to the fire, and Mr. Conneally sat holding his son's hand fast. Sometimes he stroked or patted it gently, but otherwise he seemed scarcely to recognise that he was not alone. His eyes were fixed on the fire, but they stared strangely, as if they saw something afar off, something not in the room at all. There was no response in them when Hyacinth spoke, and no intelligence. From time to time his lips moved slightly as if they were forming words, but he said nothing. After awhile Hyacinth gave up the attempt to tell his story, and sat silent for so long that in the end he was startled when his father spoke.

'Hyacinth, my son, I have somewhat to say unto you.' Before Hyacinth could reply to him he continued: 'And the young man answered and said unto him, "Say on." And the old man lifted up his voice and said unto his son, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."'

He spoke as if he were reading out of a book some narrative from the Bible. Hyacinth realized suddenly that the communication which was to be made to him had been rehearsed by his father alone, again and again, that statement, question and reply, would follow each other in due sequence from the same lips. He felt that his father was still rehearsing, and had forgotten the real presence of his son. He grasped the hand that held him and shook it, saying sharply:

'Father, father, I am here. Don't you know me?'

'Yes, yes, my son. Surely I know you. There is something I want to tell you. I have wanted to tell it to you for many days. I am glad that you are here now to listen to it.'

He paused, and Hyacinth feared that he would relapse again into dreamy insensibility; but he did not.

'I think,' he said, 'that I should like to pray before I speak to you.'

He knelt down as Hyacinth had seen him kneel a thousand times before, facing the eastward-looking window, now a black, uncurtained square in the whitewashed wall. What he said was almost unintelligible. There was no petition nor even any sequence of ideas which could be traced. He poured forth a series of ejaculations expressive of intense and rapturous delight, very strange to listen to in such a place and from an old man's lips. Then the language he spoke changed from English into Gaelic, and there came a kind of hymn of adoration. His sentences followed each other in metrical balance like the Latin of the old liturgies, and suited themselves naturally to a subdued melody, half chant, half cry, like the mourning of the keeners round a grave. At last, rising from his knees, he spoke, and his voice became wholly unemotional, devoid of fervour or excitement. He told his story as a man might relate some quite commonplace incident of daily life.

'One evening I was sitting here by the fire, just as I always sit. I remember that the lamp was not lit, and that the fire was low, so that there was not much light in the room. It came into my mind that it was just out of such gloom that the Lord called "Samuel, Samuel," and I wished that I was like Samuel, so innocent that I could hear the voice of the Lord. I do not remember what I thought of after that. Perhaps for a time I did not think at all. Then I felt that there were arms about my neck; but not like your arms, Hyacinth, when you were a child and clung to me. These were arms which held me lovingly, strongly, protectingly, like--do you remember, Hyacinth?--"His right hand is under my head; His left hand doth embrace me." I sat quite still, and did not move or speak or even breathe, lest He should go away from me. Then, after a long time--I knew afterwards that the time was long, though then it seemed only a minute for the joy that I had in it--He told me--I do not mean that I heard a voice or any words; I did not hear, I *felt* Him tell me--the things that are to be. The last great fight, the Armageddon, draweth very near. All that is good is on one side in the fight, and the Captain over all. What is bad is on the other side--all kinds of tyranny and greed and lust. I did not hear these words, but I felt the things, only without any fear, for round me were the everlasting arms. And the battlefield is Ireland, our dear Ireland which we love. All these centuries since the great saints died He has kept Ireland to be His battlefield. I understood then how our people have been saved from riches and from power and from the opportunities of lust, that our soil out

of all the world might be fit for the feet of the great Captain, for the marching of His horsemen and His chariots. Not even when I knew all this did I desire to share in the conflict. I am old and feeble, but that is not the reason why there was no desire on me, for strength is in His power to give to whom He wills. I did not desire it, because I was quite happy, being safe with Him.'

For a long time after he ceased speaking there was silence, for Hyacinth had no comment to offer. At last the old man spoke again.

'That is all. I have no other word of revelation. But I have wondered since how men are to be disentangled from their parties and their churches and their nations, and gathered simply into good and bad. Will all men who are good just know the Captain when they see Him and range themselves with Him? But why should we think about such things as these? Doubtless He can order them. But you, Hyacinth--will you be sure to know the good side from the bad, the Captain from the enemy?'

For a long time after he had gone to bed Hyacinth lay awake haunted by his father's prophecy of an Armageddon. There was that in his nature which responded eagerly to such a call to battle. In the presence of enthusiasm like his father's or like Augusta Goold's, Hyacinth caught fire. His mind flamed with the idea of an Independent Ireland resplendent with her ancient glories. He embraced no less eagerly the thought of his father's battle and his own part in it. Groping for points of contact between the two enthusiasms, he caught at the conception of the Roman Church as the Antichrist and her power in Ireland as the point round which the fight must rage. Then with a sudden flash he saw, not Rome, but the British Empire, as the embodiment of the power of darkness. He had learned to think of it as a force, greedy, materialistic, tyrannous, grossly hypocritical. What more was required to satisfy the conception of evil that he sought for? He remembered all that he had ever heard from Augusta Goold and her friends about the shameless trickery of English statesmen, about the insatiable greed of the merchants, about the degraded sensuality of the workers. He recalled the blatant boastfulness with which English demagogues claimed to be the sole possessors of enlightened consciences, and the tales of native races exploited, gin-poisoned, and annihilated by pioneers of civilization advancing with Bibles in their hands.

But with all his capacity for enthusiasm there was a strain of weakness in Hyacinth. More than once after the glories of an Independent Ireland had been preached to him he had found himself growing suddenly cold and dejected, smitten by an east wind of common-sense. At the time when he first recognised the loftiness of his father's religion he had revolted against being called upon to adopt so fantastic a creed. So now, when his mind grew weary with the endeavour to set an Armageddon in array, he began to wish for a life of peaceful monotony, a place to be quiet in, where no high calls or imperious demands would come to threaten him. He ceased to toss to and fro, and gradually sank into a half-conscious sleep. It seemed to him at the time that he was still awake, held back from slumber by the great stillness of the country, that silence which disturbs ears long accustomed to the continuous roar of towns. Suddenly he started into perfect wakefulness, and felt that he was in possession of all his faculties. The room where he lay was quite dark, but he strained his eyes to see something in it. He listened intently, although no sound whatever met his ears. A great overmastering fear laid hold on him. He tried to reason with himself, insisting that there was nothing, and could be nothing, to be afraid of. Still the fear remained. His lips grew stiff and painfully hot, and when he tried to moisten them his tongue was dry and moved across them raspily. He struggled with the terror that paralyzed him, and by a great effort raised his hand to his forehead. It was damp and cold, and the hair above it was damp. He had no way of knowing how much of the night had passed, or even how long he lay rigid, unable to breathe without a kind of pain; but suddenly as it had come the terror left him, left him without any effort on his part or any reason that he recognised. Then the window of his room shook, and he heard outside the low moan of the rising wind. Some heavy drops of rain struck audibly on the roof, and the first gust of the storm carried to his ears the sound of waves beating on the rocks. His senses strained no more. His eyes closed, and he sank quietly into a long dreamless sleep.

It was late when he woke, so late that the winter sky was fully lit. The wind, whose first gusts had lulled him to sleep, had risen to a gale, and the rain, mixed with salt spray, beat fiercely against his window and on the roof. He listened, expecting to hear his father moving in the room below, but within the house there was no sound. He rose, vaguely anxious, and without waiting to dress went into the kitchen. Everything lay untouched, just as he had left it the night before. The lamp and the remnants of the meal were on the table. The two chairs stood side by side before the hearth, where the fire which he had covered up smouldered feebly. He turned and went to his father's room. He could not have explained how it was, but when he opened the door he was not surprised to see the old man lying quite still, dead, upon the bed. His face was turned upwards, and on it was that strange look of emotionless peace which rests very often on the faces of the dead. It seemed to Hyacinth quite natural that the soul as it departed into unknown beatitude should have printed this for the last expression on the earthly habitation which it left behind. He neither wondered nor, at first, sorrowed very much to see his father dead. His sight was undimmed and his hands steady when he closed the eyes and composed the limbs of the body on the bed. Afterwards it seemed strange to him that he should have dressed quietly, arranged the furniture in the kitchen, and blown the fire into a blaze before he went down into the village to tell his news and seek for help.

They buried Aeneas Conneally beside his wife in the wind-swept churchyard. The fishermen carried his coffin into

the church and out again to the grave. Father Moran himself stood by bareheaded while the clergyman from Clifden read the prayers and sprinkled the coffin-lid with the clay which symbolized the return of earth to earth and dust to dust. In the presence of death, and, with the recollection of the simple goodness of the man who was gone, priest and people alike forgot for an hour the endless strife between his creed and theirs.

CHAPTER VIII

In Connaught the upper middle classes, clergy, doctors, lawyers, police officers, bank officials, and so forth, are all strangers in the land. Each of them looks forward to a promotion which will enable him to move to some more congenial part of Ireland. A Dublin suburb is the ideal residence; failing that, the next best thing is a country town within easy reach of the metropolis. Most of them sooner or later achieve a promotion, but some of them are so unfortunate as to die in their exile. In either case their furniture and effects are auctioned. No one ever removes his goods from Connaught, because the cost of getting things to any other part of Ireland is exorbitant, and also because tables and chairs fetch very high prices at auctions. Thus it happens that a certain historic interest attaches to the furniture of most middle-class houses west of the Shannon. The dispensary doctor dines off a table which once graced the parlour of a parish priest. The inspector of police boasts of the price he paid for his easy-chair, recently upholstered, at the auction of a departing bank manager, the same mahogany frame having once supported the portly person of an old-time Protestant Archdeacon. It is to be supposed that the furniture originally imported--no one knows how--into Connaught must have been of superlative quality. Articles whose pedigree, so to speak, can be traced for nearly a hundred years are still in daily use, unimpaired by changes of scene and ownership.

An auction of any importance is a public holiday. Clergy, doctors, lawyers, and police officers gather to the scene, not unlike those beasts of prey of whom we read that they readily devour the remains of a fallen member of their own pack. The natives also collect together--publicans and shopkeepers in search of bargains in china, glass, and house-linen; farmers bent on purchasing such outdoor property as wheelbarrows, scythes, or harness.

When Hyacinth, to use the local expression, 'called an auction' shortly after his father's death, he was favoured with quite the usual crowd of would-be buyers. Almost everyone with either money or credit within a radius of twenty miles came into Carrowkeel for the occasion. The presiding auctioneer had done his duty beforehand by advertising old Mr. Conneally's mouldy furniture as 'magnificently upholstered suites,' and his battered editions of the classics as 'a valuable library of handsomely bound books.' It is not likely that anyone was really deceived by these announcements, or expected to find in the little rectory anything sumptuous or splendid. The people assembled mainly because they were exceedingly curious to see the inside of a house whose doors had never been open to them during the lifetime of the owner. It was always possible, besides, that though the 'magnificently upholstered suites' existed only in the auctioneer's imagination, treasures of silver spoons or candlesticks plated upon copper might be discovered among the effects of a man who lived as queer a life as Mr. Conneally. When men and women put themselves to a great deal of inconvenience to attend an auction, they do not like to return empty-handed. A day is more obviously wasted if one goes home with nothing to show than if one brings a table or a bedstead purchased at twice its proper value. Thus the bidding at Hyacinth's auction was brisk, and the prices such as gave sincere satisfaction to the auctioneer. Everything was sold except 'the valuable library.' It was in vain that the auctioneer made personal appeals to Father Moran and the Rector of Clifden, as presumably the two most learned gentlemen present. Neither of them wanted the venerable classics. In fact, neither of them could have read a line of the crooked Greek type or construed a page of the Latin authors. Even the Irish books, in spite of the Gaelic revival, found no purchasers. When all was over, Hyacinth wheeled them away in barrowfuls, wondering greatly what he was to do with them.

Indeed, the disposal of his library was not the chief of his perplexities. He wondered also what he was to do with himself. When the auctioneer sent in his cheque, and the London Committee of the Mission had paid over certain arrears of salary, Hyacinth found himself the possessor of nearly two hundred pounds. It seemed to him quite a large fortune, amply sufficient to start life with, if only some suitable way of employing brains, energy, and money would suggest itself. In order to consider the important topic at his leisure, he hired the only lodging in Carrowkeel--the apartment (it was both bed and sitting room) over Mr. Rafferty's public-house. The furniture had suffered during the tenancy of a series of Congested Districts Board officials. An engineer, who went to sleep in the evenings over the fire, had burnt a round hole in the hearthrug. An instructor in fish-curing, a hilarious young man, had cracked the mirror over the mantelpiece, and broken many ornaments, including the fellow of the large china dog which now mourned its mate on the sideboard. Other gentlemen had been responsible for dislocating the legs of two chairs and a disorganization of the handle, which made it impossible to shut the door from the inside. The chief glory of the apartment, however, still remained--a handsomely-framed document, signed by Earl Spencer, then Lord Lieutenant, ordering the arrest of the present Mr. Rafferty's father as a person dangerous to the Commonwealth.

The first thing which brought Hyacinth's meditations to a definite point was a letter he received from Dr. Henry.

'I do not know,' the professor wrote, 'and of course I do not wish to inquire, how you are situated financially; but if, as I suppose is likely, you are obliged in the near future to earn your living, I may perhaps be of some help to you. You have taken your B.A. degree, and are so far qualified either to accept a post as a schoolmaster in an English preparatory school or to seek ordination from some Bishop. As you are probably aware, none of our Irish Bishops will accept a man who has not completed his divinity course. Several English Bishops, however, especially in the northern province, are willing to ordain men who have nothing more than a University degree, always supposing that they pass

the required examination. I shall be quite willing to give you a letter of recommendation to one of these Bishops, and I have no doubt that a curacy could be found for you in one of the northern manufacturing towns, where you would have an ample sphere for useful work.'

The letter went on to urge the advisability of Hyacinth's suppressing, disguising, or modifying his political opinions, which, stated nakedly, were likely to beget a certain prejudice in the well-balanced episcopal mind, and in any case would be quite out of place among the operatives of Yorkshire or Lancashire.

Hyacinth recognised and appreciated Dr. Henry's kindness. He even tried to bring himself to consider the offer seriously and carefully, but it was no use. He could not conceive himself as likely to be either useful or happy amid the hustling commercialism of the Manchester streets or the staid proprieties of an Anglican vicarage.

After he had spent about a week in his new lodging, Father Moran called on him. The priest sat beside the fire for more than an hour chatting in a desultory manner. He drank tea and smoked, and it was not until he rose to go that the real object of his visit appeared.

'I don't know what you're thinking of doing, Mr. Conneally, and maybe I've no right to ask.'

'I wouldn't have the least objection to telling you,' said Hyacinth, 'if I knew myself; but I haven't my mind made up.'

The priest put down his hat again, and settled himself with his back to the fire and his hands in his pockets. Hyacinth sat down, and during the pause which followed contemplated the wonderful number and variety of the stains on the black waistcoat in front of him.

'Then you've given up the idea of finishing your divinity course?' said the priest. 'I'm not blaming you in the least. There's men that studying suits, and there's men that it doesn't. I never was much of a one for books myself.'

He sighed heavily, perhaps at the recollection of his own struggles with the mysteries of theology in his Maynooth student days. Then he walked over and closed the door, returned, drew a chair close to Hyacinth, and spoke in the tone of a man who imparts an important secret.

'Did you hear that Thady Durkan's giving up the fishing? Since he broke his arm he declares he'll never step aboard the boat again. You know the *St. Bridget*. She's not one of the biggest boats, but she's a very lucky one. She made over five hundred pounds last year, besides the share the Board took. She was built at Baltimore, and the Board spent over two hundred pounds on her, nets and gear and all. There's only one year more of instalments to pay off the price of her, and Thady has the rest of the men bought out. There's nobody owns a stick or a net or a sail of her except himself, barring, of course, what's due to the Board.'

Hyacinth was sufficiently acquainted with the system on which the Congested Districts Board provides the Connaught fishermen with boats and nets to understand Father Moran's rather involved statement of Durkan's financial position. He did not yet grasp why all this information should have been conveyed to him in such a solemn and mysterious tone.

'You might have the *St. Bridget*,' said the priest, 'for one hundred and fifty pounds down.'

He paused to let the full glory of the situation lay hold upon Hyacinth. Perhaps he expected an outburst of delight and surprise, but none came.

'Mind you,' he said, 'there's others looking for her. The men that worked with Thady are thinking of making him an offer, and I dare say the Board would be glad enough to have the boat owned among them; but I can put in a word myself both with Thady and the inspector. Faith, the times is changed since I was a young man. I can remember when a priest was no more thought of than a barefooted gossure out of a bog, and now there isn't a spalpeen of a Government inspector but lifts his hat to me in the street. Oh, a note from me will go a good way with the Board, and you'll not miss the chance for want of my good word--I promise you that.'

'Thank you,' said Hyacinth.

'Mind you, there's a good thing to be made out of her. But sure you know that as well as I do myself, and maybe better. What do you say now?'

'I'll think it over,' said Hyacinth, 'and whatever comes of it I'll be greatly obliged to you.'

'Well, don't be delaying too long. And look you here--his voice sank almost to a whisper--'don't be talking about what I've said to you. People are queer, and if Father Joyce down in Clifden came to hear that I was working for a Protestant he'd be sure to go talking to the Archbishop, and I'd never get to the end of the fuss that would be made.'

'Indeed, it's very good of you, especially considering who I am--I mean, my father being a convert, and----'

'Say no more,' said the priest--'say no more. Your father was a good man, Catholic or Protestant. I'm not one of these bitter kind of priests, Mr. Con-neally. I can be a good Catholic without hating my neighbours. I don't hold with all this bullyragging in newspapers about "sourfaces" and "saved." Maybe that's the reason that I'm stuck down here at the other end of nowhere all my life, and never got promotion or praise. But what do I care as long as they let me alone to do my work for the people? I'm not afraid to say it to you, Mr. Conneally, for you won't want to get me into trouble, but it's my belief that there's many of our priests would rather have grand churches than contented people. They're fonder

of Rome than they are of Ireland.'

'Really, Father Moran,' said Hyacinth, smiling, 'if you go on like this, I shall expect to hear of your turning Protestant.'

'God forbid, Mr. Conneally! I wish you well. I wish you to be here among us, and to be prosperous; but the dearest wish of my heart for you is that I might see you back in the Catholic Church, believing the creed of your forefathers.'

The priest's suggestion attracted Hyacinth a great deal more than Dr. Henry's. He liked the sea and the fishing, and he loved the simple people among whom he had been brought up. His experiences in Dublin had not encouraged him to be ambitious. Life in the great world--it was thus that he thought of the bickerings of the Dublin Nationalists and the schoolboy enthusiasms of college students--was not a very simple thing. There was a complexity and a confusion in affairs which made it difficult to hold to any cause devotedly. It seemed to him, looking back, that Miss Goold's ideals--and she had ideals, as he knew--were somehow vulgarized in their contact with the actual. He had seen something of the joy she found in her conflict with O'Rourke, and it did not seem to him to be pure or ennobling. At one time he was on the verge of deciding to do what the priest wished. Walking day by day along the shore or through the fields, he came to think that life might very well be spent without ambitious or extended hopes in quiet toil and unexciting pleasures. What held him back was the recollection, which never ceased to haunt him, of his father's prophecy. The thought of the great fight, declared to be imminent, stirred in him an emotion so strong that the peace and monotony he half desired became impossible. He never made it clear to himself that he either believed or disbelieved the prediction. He certainly did not expect to see an actual gathering of armed men, or that Ireland was to be the scene of a battle like those in South Africa. But there was in him a conviction that Ireland was awakening out of a long sleep, was stretching her limbs in preparation for activity. He felt the quiver of a national strenuousness which was already shaking loose the knots of the old binding-ropes of prejudice and cowardice. It seemed to him that bone was coming to dry bone, and that sooner or later--very soon, it was likely--one would breathe on these, and they would live. That contest should come out of such a renaissance was inevitable. But what contest? Against whom was the new Ireland to fight, and who was truly on her side? Here was the puzzle, insoluble but insistent. It would not let him rest, recurring to his mind with each fresh recollection of his father's prophecy.

It was while he was wearying himself with this perplexity that he got a letter from Augusta Goold. It was characteristic of her that she had written no word of sympathy when she heard of his father's death, and now, when a letter did come, it contained no allusion to Hyacinth's affairs. She told him with evident delight that she had enlisted no less than ten recruits for the Boer army. She had collected sufficient money to equip them and pay their travelling expenses. It was arranged that they were to proceed to Paris, and there join a body of volunteers organized by a French officer, a certain Pierre de Villeneuve, about whom Miss Goold was enthusiastic. She was in communication with an Irishman who seemed likely to be a suitable captain for her little band, and she wanted Hyacinth back in Dublin to help her.

'You know,' she wrote, 'the people I have round me here. Poor old Grealy is quite impracticable, though he means well. He talks about nothing but the Fianna and Finn McCool, and can't see that my fellows must have riding lessons, and must be got somehow to understand the mechanism of a rifle. Tim Halloran has been in a sulk ever since I told him what I thought of his conduct at the Rotunda. He never comes near me, and Mary O'Dwyer told me the other day that he called my volunteers a "pack of blackguards." I dare say it's perfectly true, but they're a finer kind of blackguard than the sodden loafers the English recruit for their miserable army.'

She went on to describe the series of Boer victories which had come one after another just at Christmas-time. She was confident that the cause of freedom and nationality would ultimately triumph, and she foresaw the intervention of some Continental Power. A great blow would be struck at the already tottering British Empire, and then--the freedom of Ireland.

Hyacinth felt strangely excited as he read her news. The letter seemed the first clear note of the trumpet summoning him to his father's Armageddon. Politics and squabbling at home might be inglorious and degrading, but the actual war which was being waged in South Africa, the struggle of a people for existence and liberty, could be nothing but noble. He saw quite clearly what his own next step was to be, and there was no temptation to hesitate about it. He would place his money at Miss Goold's disposal, and go himself with her ten volunteers to join the brigade of the heroic de Villeneuve.

CHAPTER IX

The prospect of joining Augusta Goold's band of volunteers and going to South Africa to fight afforded Hyacinth great satisfaction. For two days he lived in an atmosphere of day-dreams and delightful anticipations. He had no knowledge whatever of the actual conditions of modern warfare. He understood vaguely that he would be called upon to endure great hardships. He liked to think of these, picturing himself bravely cheerful through long periods of hunger, heat, or cold. He had visions of night watches, of sudden alarms, of heart-stirring skirmishes, of scouting work, and stealthy approaches to the enemy's lines. He thought out the details of critical interviews with commanding officers in which he with some chosen comrade volunteered for incredibly dangerous enterprises. He conceived of himself as wounded, though not fatally, and carried to the rear out of some bullet-swept firing-line. He was just twenty-three years of age. Adventure had its fascination, and the world was still a place full of splendid possibilities.

At the end of his two days of dreaming he returned, flushed with his great purposes, to the realities of life. He went to Father Moran to tell him that he would not buy Durkan's boat. He laughed to himself at the thought of doing such a thing. Was he to spend his life fishing mackerel round the rocky islands of Connemara, when he might be fighting like one of the ancient heroes, giving his strength, perhaps his life, for a great cause? The priest met him at the presbytery door.

'Come in, Mr. Conneally--come in and sit down. I was expecting you these two days. What were you doing at all, walking away there along the rocks by yourself? The people were beginning to say that you were getting to be like your poor father, and that nobody'd ever get any good out of you. But I knew you'd come back to me here. I hope now it's to tell me that you'll buy the boat you've come.'

They entered the house, and the priest opened the door of the little sitting-room. Hyacinth knew it well. There was the dark mahogany table with the marks burnt into it where hot dishes were set down, the shabby arm-chair, the worn cocoanut-matting on the floor, the dozen or so books in the hanging shelf, the tawdry sacred pictures round the wall. He had known it all, and it all seemed unchanged since he was a child.

'Sit you down--sit you down,' said the priest. 'And now about the boat.'

'I'm not going in for her,' said Hyacinth. 'I'm as thankful to you for suggesting it as if I did buy her. I hope you'll understand that, but I'm not going to buy her.'

He found it difficult to speak of his new plan to Father Moran.

'Do you tell me that, now? I'm sorry for it. And why wouldn't you buy her? What's there to hinder you?'

Hyacinth hesitated.

'Well, now,' said the priest, 'I can guess. I thought the auction turned out well for you, but I never heard for certain, and maybe you haven't got the money for the boat. Whisht now, my son, and let me speak. I'm thinking the thing might be managed.'

'But, Father Moran-----'

'Ah now, will you be quiet when I bid you? I haven't the money myself. Never a penny have I been able to save all my life, with the calls there are on me in a parish like this. Sure, you know yourself how it is. There's one will have a cow that has died on him, and another will be wanting a lock of potatoes for seed in the springtime; and if it isn't that, it'll be something else. And who would the creatures go to in their trouble but the old priest that christened and married the most of them? But, indeed, thanks be to God, things is improving. The fishing brings in a lot of money to the men, and there's a better breed of cattle in the country now, and the pigs fetch a good price since we had the railway to Clifden, and maybe the last few years I might have saved a little, but I didn't. Indeed, I don't know where it is the money goes at all, but someway it's never at rest in my breeches pockets till it's up and off somewhere. God forgive us! it's more careful we ought to be.'

'But, Father Moran, I don't----'

'Arrah then, will you cease your talking for one minute, and let me get a word in edgeways for your own good? What was I saying? Oh, I was just after telling you I hadn't got the money to help you. But maybe I might manage to get it. The man in the bank in Clifden knows me. I borrowed a few pounds off him two years ago when the Cassidys' house and three more beside it got blown away in the big wind. Father Joyce put his name on the back of the bill along with my own, and trouble enough I had to get him to do it, for he said I ought to put an appeal in the newspapers, and I'd get the money given to me. But I never was one to go begging round the country. I said I'd rather borrow the money and pay it back like a decent man. And so I did, every penny of it. And I think the bank will trust me now, with just your name and mine, more especially as it's to buy a boat we want the money. What do you say to that, now?' He looked at Hyacinth triumphantly.

'Father Moran, you're too good to me--you're too good altogether. What did ever I do to deserve such kindness from you? But you're all wrong. I've got plenty of money.'

'And why in the name of all that's holy didn't you tell me so at once, and not keep me standing here twisting my brains into hard knots with thinking out ways of getting what you don't want? If you've got the money you'll buy the boat. What better could you do with it?'

'But I don't want to buy the boat. I don't want to live here always. I'm going away out into the world. I want to see things and do things.'

'Out into the world! Will you listen to the boy? Is it America you're thinking of? Ah, now, there's enough gone out and left us lonely here. Isn't the best of all the boys and girls going to work for the strangers in the strange land? and why would you be going after them?'

'I'm not going to America. I'm going to South Africa. I'm going to join some young Irishmen to fight for the Boers and for freedom.'

'You're going out to fight--to fight for the Boers! What is it that's in your head at all, Hyacinth Con-neally? Tell me now.'

Again Hyacinth hesitated. Was it possible to give utterance to the thoughts and hopes which filled his mind? Could he tell anyone about the furious fancies of the last few days, or of that weird vision of his father's which lay at the back of what he felt and dreamed? Could he even speak of the enthusiasm which moved him to devote himself to the cause of freedom and a threatened nationality? In the presence of a man of the world the very effort to express himself would have acted as some corrosive acid, and stained with patches of absurdity the whole fabric of his dreams. He looked at Father Moran, and saw the priest's eyes lit with sympathy. He knew that he had a listener who would not scoff, who might, perhaps, even understand. He began to speak, slowly and haltingly at first, then more rapidly. At last he poured out with breathless, incoherent speed the strange story of the Armageddon vision, the hopes that were in him, the fierce enthusiasm, the passionate love for Ireland which burnt in his soul. He was not conscious of the gaping inconsequences of his train of emotion. He did not recognise how ridiculous it was to connect the Boer War with the Apocalyptic battle of the saints, or the utter impossibility of getting either one or the other into any sort of relation with the existing condition of Ireland.

A casual observer might have supposed that Hyacinth had made a mistake in telling his story to Father Moran. A smile, threatening actual laughter, hovered visibly round the priest's mouth. His eyes had a shrewd, searching expression, difficult to interpret. Still, he listened to the rhapsody without interrupting it, till Hyacinth stopped abruptly, smitten with sudden self-consciousness, terrified of imminent ridicule. Nor were the priest's first words reassuring.

'I wouldn't say now, Hyacinth Conneally, but there might be the makings of a fine man in you yet.'

'I might have known,' said Hyacinth angrily, 'that you'd laugh at me. I was a fool to tell you at all. But I'm in earnest about what I'm going to do. Whatever you may think about the rest, there's no laughing at that.'

'Well, you're just wrong then, for I wasn't laughing nor meaning to laugh at all. God forbid that I should laugh at you, and I meant it when I said that there was the makings of a fine man in you. Laugh at you! It's little you know me. Listen now, till I tell you something; but don't you be repeating it. This must be between you and me, and go no further. I was very much of your way of thinking myself once.'

Hyacinth gazed at him in astonishment. The thought of Father Moran, elderly, rotund, kindly; of Father Moran with sugar-stick in his pocket for the school-children and a quaint jest on his lips for their mothers; of Father Moran in his ruffled silk hat and shabby black coat and baggy trousers--of this Father Moran mounted and armed, facing the British infantry in South Africa, was wholly grotesque. He laughed aloud.

'It's yourself that has the bad manners to be laughing now,' said the priest. 'But small blame to you if it was out to the Boers I was thinking of going. The gray goose out there on the road might laugh--and she's the solemnest mortal I know--at the notion of me charging along with maybe a pike in my hand, and the few gray hairs that's left on the sides of my head blowing about in the breeze I'd make as I went prancing to and fro. But that's not what I meant when I said that once upon a time I was something of your way of thinking. And sure enough I was, but it's a long time ago now.'

He sighed, and for a minute or two he said no more. Hyacinth began to wonder what he meant, and whether the promised confidence would be forthcoming at all. Then the priest went on:

'When I was a young man--and it's hard for you to think it, but I was a fine young man; never a better lad at the hurling than I was, me that's a doddering old soggarth now--when I was a boy, as I'm telling you, there was a deal of going to and fro in the country and meetings at night, and drillings too, and plenty of talk of a rising--no less. Little good came of it that ever I saw, but I'm not blaming the men that was in it. They were good men, Hyacinth Conneally--men that would have given the souls out of their bodies for the sake of Ireland. They would, sure, for they loved Ireland well. But I had my own share in the doings. Of course, it was before ever there was a word of my being a priest. That came after. Thanks be to God for His mercies!--the old man crossed himself reverently--'He kept me from harm and the sin that might have been laid on me. But in those days there were great thoughts in me, just as there are in you to-day. Faith! I'm of opinion that my thoughts were greater than yours, for I was all for fighting here in Ireland, for the Poor Old Woman herself, and it's out to some foreign war you'd be going to fight for people that's not friends of yours by so

much as one heart's drop. Still, the feeling in you is the same as the feeling that was in me, not a doubt of it. But, indeed, so far as I'm concerned, it's over and gone. I haven't spoken to a mortal soul about such things these thirty years, and I wouldn't be doing it now only just to show you that I'm the last man in Ireland that would laugh at you for what you've told me.'

'I'm glad I told you what's in my heart,' said Hyacinth; 'I'd like to think I had your blessing with me when I go.'

'Well, you won't get it,' said Father Moran, 'so I tell you straight. I'll give you no blessing when you're going away out of the country, just when there's need of every man in it. I tell you this--and you'll remember that I know what I'm talking about--it's not men that 'll fight who will help Ireland to-day, but men that will work.'

'Work!' said Hyacinth--'work! What work is there for a man like me to do in Ireland?'

'Don't I offer you the chance of buying Thady Durkan's boat? Isn't there work enough for any man in her?'

'But that's not the sort of work I ought to be doing. What good would it be to anyone but myself? What good would it be to Ireland if I caught boatloads of mackerel?'

'Don't be making light of the mackerel, now. He's a good fish if you get him fresh, and split him down and fry him with a lump of butter in the pan. There's worse fish than the mackerel, as you'll discover if you go to South Africa, and find yourself living on a bit of some ancient tough beast of an ostrich, or whatever it may happen to be that they eat out there.'

In his exalted mood Hyacinth felt insulted at the praise of the mackerel and the laughter in the priest's eyes when he suggested a dinner off ostrich. He held out his hand, and said good-bye.

'Wait, now--wait,' said the priest; 'don't be in such a tearing hurry. I'll talk as serious as you like, and not hurt your feelings, if you'll stay for a minute or two. Listen, now. Isn't the language dying on the people's lips? They're talking the English, more and more of them every day; and don't you know as well as I do that when they lose their Irish they'll lose half the good that's in them? What sort will the next generation of our people be, with their own language gone from them, and their Irish ways forgotten, and all the old tales and songs and tunes perished away like the froth of the waves that the storm blew up across the fields the night your father died? I'll tell you what they'll be--just sham Englishmen. And the Lord knows the real thing is not the best kind of man in the world, but the copy of an Englishman! sure, that's the poorest creature to be found anywhere on the face of God's good earth. And that's what we'll be, when the Irish is gone from us. Wouldn't there be work enough for you to do, now, if you were to buy Thady Durkan's boat, and stay here and help to keep the people to the old tongue and the old ways?'

Hyacinth shook his head. His mood was altogether too heroic to allow him to think highly of what the priest said to him. He loved the Irish language as his native speech--loved it, too, as a symbol, and something more, perhaps--as an expression of the nationality of Ireland. But it did not seem to him to be a very essential thing, and to spend his life talking it and persuading other people to talk it was an obscure kind of patriotism which made no strong appeal to him--which, indeed, could not stand compared to the glory of drawing the sword.

'You've listened to what I've told you, Father Moran, and you say that you understand what I feel, but I don't think you really do, or else you wouldn't fancy that I could be satisfied to stay here. What is it you ask of me? To spend my time fishing and talking Irish and dancing jigs. Ah! it's well enough I'd like to do it. Don't think that such a life wouldn't be pleasant to me. It would be too pleasant. That's what's the matter with it. It's a temptation, and not a duty, that you're setting before me.'

'Maybe it is now--maybe it is. And if it's that way you think of it, you're right enough to say no to me. But for all that I understand you well enough. Who's this now coming up to the house to see me?' He went over to the window and looked out. 'Isn't it a queer life a priest lives in a place like this, with never a minute of quiet peace from morning to night but somebody will be coming interrupting and destroying it? First it's you, Hyacinth Conneally--not that I grudge the time to you when you're going off so soon--and now it's Michael Kavanagh. Indeed, he's a decent man too, like yourself. Come in, Michael--come in. Don't be standing there pulling at the old door-bell. You know as well as myself it's broken these two years. It's heartbroken the thing is ever since that congested engineer put up the electric bell for me, and little use that was, seeing that Biddy O'Halloran--that's my housekeeper, Mr. Conneally; you remember her--poured a jug of hot water into its inside the way it wouldn't annoy her with ringing so loud. And why the noise of it vexed her I couldn't say, for she's as deaf as a post every time I speak to her. Ah, you're there, Michael, are you? Now, what do you want?'

A young farmer, black-haired, tall and straight, stood in the doorway with his hat in his hand. He had brought a paper for Father Moran's signature. It related to a bull which the Congested Districts Board proposed to lend to the parish, and of which Kavanagh had been chosen to be custodian. A long conversation followed, conducted in Irish. The newly-erected habitation for the animal was discussed; then the best method of bringing him home from Clifden Station; then the kind of beast he was likely to turn out to be, and the suitability of particular breeds of cattle to the coarse, brine-soaked land of Carrowkeel. Kavanagh related a fearful tale of a lot of 'foreign 'fowls which had been planted in the neighbourhood by the Board. They were particularly nice to look at, and settings of their eggs were

eagerly booked long beforehand. Then one by one they sickened and died. Some people thought they died out of spite, being angered at the way they had been treated in the train. Kavanagh himself did not think so badly of them. He was of opinion that their spirits were desolated in them with the way the rain came through the roof of their house, and that their feet got sore with walking on the unaccustomed sea-sand. However their death was to be explained, he hoped that the bull would turn out to be hardier. Father Moran, on his part, hoped that the roof of the bull's house would turn out to be sounder. In the end the paper was signed, and Kavanagh departed.

'Now, there,' said the priest, 'is a fine young man. Only for him, I don't know how I'd get on in the parish at all. He's got a head on his shoulders, and a notion of improving himself and his neighbours, and it would do you good to see him dance a jig. But why need I tell you that when you've seen him yourself? He is to be the secretary of the Gaelic League when we get a branch of it started in Carrowkeel. And a good secretary he'll make, for his heart will be in the work. I dare say, now, you've heard of the League when you were up in Dublin. Well, you'll hear more of it. By the time you're back here again---- Now, don't be saying that you'll not come back. I'll give you a year to get sick of fighting for the Boers, and then there'll be a hunger on you for the old place that will bring you back to it in spite of yourself.'

'Good-bye, Father Moran. Whatever happens to me, I'll not forget Carrowkeel nor you either. You've been good to me, and if I don't take your advice and stay where I am, it's not through want of gratitude.'

The priest wrung his hand.

'You'll come back. It may be after I'm dead and gone, but back you'll come. Here or somewhere else in the old country you'll spend your days working for Ireland, because you'll have learnt that working is better than fighting.'

CHAPTER X

When Hyacinth got back to Dublin about the middle of February, the streets were gay with amateur warriors. The fever for volunteering, which laid hold on the middle classes after the series of regrettable incidents of the winter, raged violently among the Irish Loyalists. Nowhere were the recruiting officers more fervently besieged than in Dublin. Youthful squireens who boasted of being admirable snipe shots, and possessed a knowledge of all that pertained to horses, struggled with prim youths out of banks for the privilege of serving as troopers. The sons of plump graziers in the West made up parties with footmen out of their landlords' mansions, and arrived in Dublin hopeful of enlistment. Light-hearted undergraduates of Trinity, drapers' assistants of dubious character, and the crowd of nondescripts whose time is spent in preparing for examinations which they fail to pass, leaped at the opportunity of winning glory and perhaps wealth in South Africa. Those who were fortunate enough to be selected were sent to the Curragh to be broken in to their new profession. They were clothed, to their own intense delight, in that peculiar shade of yellow which is supposed to be a help to the soldier in his efforts not to be shot. Their legs were screwed into putties and breeches incredibly tight round the knees, which expanded rapidly higher up, and hung round their hips in voluminous folds. Their jackets were covered with a multiplicity of quaint little pockets, sewed on in unexpected places, and each provided with a flap which buttoned over it. The name of the artist who designed this costume has perished, nor does there remain any written record of the use which these tightly-secured pocket-covers were supposed to serve. Augusta Goold suggested that perhaps they were meant to prevent the troopers' money from falling out in the event of any commanding officer ordering his men to receive the enemy standing on their heads.' In the light of the intelligence displayed by the English Generals up to the present,' she said, 'the War Office is quite right to be prepared for such a thing happening.'

It seemed possible to procure almost any amount of leave from the Curragh, and the yeomen delighted to spend it in promenading the fashionable streets of the metropolis. The tea-shops reaped a rich harvest from the regal way in which they treated their female relatives and friends. Indeed, their presence must have seriously disorganized the occupations by which young women earn their living. It was difficult to imagine that the sick in the hospitals could have been properly looked after, or the letters of solicitors typewritten, so great was the number of damsels who attached themselves to these attractive heroes. The philosophic observer found another curious subject for speculation in the fact that this parade of military splendour took place in a city whose population sympathized intensely with the Boer cause, and was accustomed to receive the news of a British defeat with delight. The Dublin artisan viewed the yeomen much as the French in Paris must have looked upon the allied troops who entered their city after Waterloo. The very name by which they were called had an anti-national sound, and suggested the performance of other amateur horse-soldiers in Wexford a century earlier.

The little band whose writings filled the pages of the *Croppy* were more than anyone else enraged at the flaunting of Imperialism in their streets. They had rejoiced quite openly after Christmas, and called attention every week in prose and poetry to the moribund condition of the British Empire, even boasting as if they themselves had borne a part in its humiliation. They were still in a position to assert that the Boers were victorious, and that the volunteers were likely to do no more than exhaust the prison accommodation at Pretoria. They could and did compose biting jests, but their very bitterness witnessed to a deep disappointment. It was not possible to deny that the despised English garrison in Ireland was displaying a wholly unlooked-for spirit. No one could have expected that West Britons and 'Seonini' would have wanted to fight. Very likely, when the time came, they would run away; but in the meanwhile here they were, swaggering through the streets of Dublin, outward and visible signs of a force in the country hostile to the hopes of the *Croppy*, a force that some day Republican Ireland would have to reckon with.

Augusta Goold herself was more tolerant and more philosophic than her friends. She looked at the yeomen with a certain admiration. Their exuberant youthfulness, their strutting, and their obvious belief in themselves, made a strong appeal to her imagination.

'Look at that young man,' she said to Hyacinth, pointing out a volunteer who passed them in the street. 'I happen to know who he is. In fact, I knew his people very well indeed at one time, and spent a fortnight with them once when that young man was a toddler, and sometimes sat on my knee--at least, he may have sat on my knee. There were a good many children, and at this distance of time I can't be certain which of them it was that used to worry me most during the hour before dinner. The father is a landlord in the North, and comes of a fine old family. He's a strong Protestant, and English, of course, in all his sympathies. Well, a hundred years or so ago that boy's great-grandfather was swaggering about these same streets in a uniform, just as his descendant is doing now. He helped to drag a cannon into the Phoenix Park one day with a large placard tied over its muzzle--"Our rights or----" Who do you think he was threatening? Just the same England that this boy is so keen to fight for to-day!'

'Ah,' said Hyacinth, 'you are thinking of the volunteer movement of 1780.'

'Afterwards,' she went on, 'he was one of the incorruptibles. You'll see his name on Jonah Barrington's red list. He stood out to the last against the Union, wouldn't be bribed, and fought two duels with Castlereagh's braves. The

curious thing is that the present man is quite proud of that ancestor in a queer, inconsistent sort of way. Says the only mark of distinction his family can boast of is that they didn't get a Union peerage. Strange, isn't it?"

'It is strange,' said Hyacinth. 'The Irish gentry of 1782 were men to be proud of; yet look at their descendants to-day.'

'It is very sad. Do you know, I sometimes think that Ireland will never get her freedom till those men take it for her. Almost every struggle that Ireland ever made was captained by her aristocracy. Think of the Geraldines and the O'Neills. Think of Sarsfield and the Wild Geese. Think of the men who wrenched a measure of independence from England in 1782. Think of Lord Edward and Smith O'Brien. No, we may talk and write and agitate, but we'll *do* nothing till we get the old families with us.'

Hyacinth laughed. It seemed to him that Miss Goold was deliberately talking nonsense, rejoicing in a paradox.

'We are likely to wait, if we wait for them. Look at those.' He waved his hand towards a group of yeomen who were chatting at the street corner. 'They are going to stamp out a nation in South Africa. Is it likely that they will create one here?'

'It is not likely'--she sighed as she spoke--'yet stranger things than that have happened. Have you ever considered what the present English policy in Ireland really is? Do you understand that they are trying to keep us quiet by bribing the priests? They think that the Protestants are powerless, or that they will be loyal no matter what happens. But think: These Protestants have been accustomed for generations to regard themselves as a superior race. They conceive themselves to have a natural right to govern. Now they are being snubbed and insulted. There isn't an English official from their Lord Lieutenant down but thinks he is quite safe in ignoring the Protestants, and is only anxious to make himself agreeable to the priests. That's the beginning. Very soon they'll be bullied as well as snubbed. They will stand a good deal of it, because, like most strong people, they are very stupid and slow at understanding; but do you suppose they will always stand it?'

'They're English, and not Irish,' said Hyacinth. 'I suppose they like what their own people do.'

'It's a lie. They are not English, though they say it themselves. In the end they will find out that they are Irish. Some day a last insult, a particularly barefaced robbery, or an intolerable oppression, will awake them. Then they'll turn on the people that betrayed them. They will discover that Ireland--their Ireland--isn't meant to be a cabbage-garden for Manchester, nor yet a *creche* for sucking priests. Ah! it will be good to be alive when they find themselves. We shall be within reach of the freedom of Ireland then.'

Hyacinth was amazed at her vehement admiration for the class she was accustomed to anathematize. He turned her words over and over in his mind. They recalled, as so many different things seemed to do, his father's vision of an Armageddon. Amid the confusion of Irish politics this thought of a Protestant and aristocratic revolt was strangely attractive; only it seemed to be wholly impossible. He bewildered himself in the effort to arrange the pieces of the game into some reasonable order. What was to be thought of a priesthood who, contrary to all the traditions of their Church, had nursed a revolution against the rights of property? or of a people, amazingly quick of apprehension, idealistic of temperament, who time after time submitted themselves blindfold to the tyranny of a single leader, worshipped a man, and asked no questions about his policy? How was he to place an aristocracy who refused to lead, and persisted in whining about their wrongs to the inattentive shopkeepers of English towns, gentlemen not wanting in honour and spirit courting a contemptuous bourgeoisie with ridiculous flatteries? In what reasonable scheme of things was it possible to place Protestants, blatant in their boasts about liberty, who hugged subjection to a power which deliberately fostered the growth of an ecclesiastical tyranny? Where amid this crazy dance of self-contradictory fanatics and fools was a sane man to find a place on which to stand? How, above all, was Ireland, a nation, to evolve itself?

He turned with relief from these perplexities to the work that lay before him. However a man might worry and bemoan himself over the confused issues of politics, it was at all events a straightforward and simple matter to fight, and Hyacinth was going to the front as the eleventh Irish volunteer.

To do Miss Goold justice, she had been extremely unwilling to enrol him, and had refused to take a penny of his money. Her conscience, such as it was after years of patriotic endeavour, rebelled against committing a young man whom she really liked to the companionship of the men she had enlisted and the care of their commander, Captain Albert Quinn.

This gentleman, whom she daily expected in Dublin, belonged to County Mayo. He represented himself as a member of an ancient but impoverished family, boasted of his military experience, and professed to be profoundly skilled in all matters relating to horses. Miss Goold's inquiries elicited the fact that he held an undefined position under his brother, a respectable manufacturer of woollen goods. His military experience had been gathered during the few months he held a commission in the militia battalion of the Connaught Rangers, an honourable position which he had resigned because his brother officers persistently misunderstood his methods of winning money at cards. No one, however, was found to deny that he really did possess a wonderful knowledge of horses. The worst that Miss Goold's correspondents could suggest with regard to this third qualification was that he knew too much. None of these drawbacks to the Captain--he had assumed the title when he accepted the command of the volunteers--weighed with Miss Goold. Indeed, she

admitted to Mary O'Dwyer, in a moment of frankness, that if her men weren't more or less blackguards she couldn't expect them to go out to South Africa. She did not speak equally plainly to Hyacinth. She recollected that he had displayed a very inconvenient kind of morality when she first knew him, and she believed him quite capable of breaking away from her influence altogether if he discovered the kind of men she was willing to work with.

She did her best to persuade him to give up the idea of joining the force, by pointing out to him that he was quite unfitted for the work that would have to be done.

'You know nothing about horses,' she said. 'I don't suppose you've ever been on the back of one.'

Hyacinth admitted that this was true. The inhabitants of Carrowkeel rarely ride their shaggy ponies, and when they do it is sitting sideways just above the creatures' tails, with two creels for turf or seaweed in the place where the saddle ought to be.

'And I don't suppose you know much about shooting?'

Hyacinth was depressed, for he had never pulled a trigger in his life. In the West of Ireland a man is not allowed to possess a gun unless a resident magistrate will certify to his loyalty and harmless-ness. Therefore, the inhabitants of villages like Carrowkeel are debarred from shooting either snipe or seals, and the British Empire stands secure.

The difficulty about his horsemanship Hyacinth endeavoured to get over. He arranged with a car-driver of his acquaintance to teach him to groom and harness his horses. The man possessed two quadrupeds, which he described as 'the yellow pony' and 'the little mare.' Hyacinth began with the yellow pony, the oldest and staidest of the two. The little mare, who had a temper of her own, gave him more trouble. She disliked his way of putting the crupper under her tail, and one day, to her owner's great delight, 'rose the divil on them' when her new groom got the shaft of the car stuck through her collar.

The want of experience in shooting was more difficult to get over. Grealy owned an antiquated army rifle, which he lent to Hyacinth. It was, of course, entirely different from the Mauser, and it was impossible to get an opportunity for firing it off. However, there was some comfort to be found in handling the thing, and taking long and careful aim at a distant church spire through a window.

In the face of such enthusiasm, Miss Goold could not refuse her recruit. She talked to him freely about her plans, and was eloquent about the spirit and abilities of M. de Villeneuve, who was to take charge of her soldiers after they joined him in Paris. On the subject of Captain Quinn she was much more reticent, and she refused altogether to introduce Hyacinth to his ten fellow troopers.

'There's not the least necessity,' she said, 'for you to meet them until the time for starting comes. In fact, I may say it is safer for none of you to know each other.'

Hyacinth experienced a thrill of agreeable excitement. He felt that he was engaged in a real conspiracy.

'For fear of informers?' he asked.

'Yes. One never can be quite sure of anyone. Of course, they can every one of them give information against me. You can yourself, if you like. But no one can betray anyone else, and as long as the men are safe, it doesn't matter what happens to me.'

It was one of Miss Goold's weaknesses that she imagined herself to be an object of hatred and dread to the Government, and nothing irritated her more than a suspicion that she was not being taken seriously.

The first glimpse that Hyacinth got of the character of the men among whom he was to serve came to him through Tim Halloran. Tim was still sore from the scolding he had been given for his conduct at the Rotunda meeting, and missed no opportunity of scoffing--not, of course, publicly, but among his friends--at Miss Goold and her volunteers. Hyacinth avoided him as much as possible, but one evening he walked up against him on the narrow footway at the corner of George's Street. Halloran was delighted, and seized him by the arm.

'You're the very man I wanted to see,' he said. 'Have you heard about Doherty?'

Hyacinth knew no one called Doherty. He said so, and tried to escape, but Halloran held him fast.

'Not know Doherty! How's that? I thought you were in all dear Finola's secrets. Faith! I heard you were going out to fight for the Boers yourself. I didn't believe it, of course. You wouldn't be such a fool. But I thought you'd know that Doherty is one of the ten precious recruits, or, rather, *was* one of them.' He laughed loudly. 'He'll fight on the other side now, if he fights at all.'

'What do you mean?' asked Hyacinth uneasily.

He was not at all sure what view the authorities in Dublin Castle might take of recruiting for the Boer service, and Miss Goold's hints about informers recurred to his mind alarmingly. Perhaps this Doherty was an informer.

'Well,' said Halloran, 'I was in one of the police-courts this morning doing my work for the *Evening Star*. You know I report the police news for that rag, don't you? Well, I do. My column is called "The Doom of the Disorderly." Rather a good title that for a column of the kind! There didn't appear to be anything particular on, just a few ordinary drunks, until this fellow Doherty was brought in. I thought I recognised him, and when I heard his name I was certain of my

man. He hadn't done anything very bad--assaulted a tram-conductor, or some such trifle--and would have got off with a fine. However, a military man turned up and claimed him as a deserter. His real name, it appears, is Johnston. He deserted six weeks ago from the Dublin Fusiliers.'

'How on earth did he impose on Miss Goold?' asked Hyacinth.

Halloran looked at him curiously.

'Oh, I shouldn't say he exactly imposed upon Finola. She's not precisely a fool, you know, and she has pretty accurate information about most of the people she deals with.'

'But surely-----'

Halloran shrugged his shoulders.

'My dear fellow, I don't want to shatter your ideal, but the beautiful Finola wants to work a revolution, and you can't do that sort of thing without soiling your hands. However, whether he imposed on her or not, there's no doubt about it that he was a deserter. Why, it appeared that the fool was tattooed all over the arms and chest, and the military people had a list of the designs. They had a perfectly plain case, and, indeed, Doherty made no defence.'

'What will they do with him?' said Hyacinth, still uneasy about the possibility of Doherty's volunteering information.

'I don't know,' said Halloran. 'I should think the best punishment would be to send him out to Ladysmith. I dare say the Boers would pass him in if the circumstances were explained to them. By the way, it would be rather funny if he met the other nine out there on a kopje, wouldn't it? He might take them prisoners, or they might capture him. Either way the situation would have its comic possibilities.'

CHAPTER XI

Miss Goold lived that part of her life which was not spent at political meetings or in the office of the *Croppy* in a villa at Killiney. A house agent would have described it as a most desirable residence, standing in its own grounds, overlooking the sea. Its windows opened upon one of the best of the many beautiful views of Dublin Bay. Its half-acre of pleasure ground--attended to by a jobbing gardener once a week--was trim and flowery. Its brown gate shone with frequently renewed paint, and the drive up to the door was neatly raked. Inside Miss Goold's wants were ministered to by an eminently respectable man-servant, his wife who cooked, and a maid. The married couple were fixtures, and had been with Miss Goold since she started housekeeping. The maids varied. They never quarrelled with their mistress, but they found it impossible to live with their fellow-servants. Mr. and Mrs. Ginty were North of Ireland Protestants of the severest type. Ginty himself was a strong Orangeman, and his wife professed and enforced a strict code of morals. It did not in the least vex Miss Goold to know that her servants' quarters were decorated with portraits of the reigning family in gilt frames, or that King William III. pranced on a white charger above the kitchen range. Nor had she any objection to her butler invoking a nightly malediction on the Pope over his tumbler of whisky-and-water. Unfortunately, her maids--the first three were Roman Catholics--found that their religious convictions were outraged, and left, after stormy scenes. The red-haired Protestant from the North who followed them was indifferent to the eternal destiny of Leo XIII., but declined to be dictated to by Mrs. Ginty about the conduct of her love affairs. Miss Goold, to whom the quarrel was referred, pleaded the damsel's cause, and suggested privately that not even a policeman--she had a low opinion of the force--could be swept away from the path of respectability by a passion for so ugly a girl. Mrs. Ginty pointed out in reply that red hair and freckles were no safeguard when a flirtation is carried on after dark. There seemed no answer to this, and the maid returned indignantly to Ballymena. She was succeeded by an anaemic and wholly incompetent niece of Mrs. Ginty's, who lived in such terror of her aunt that peace settled upon the household. Miss Goold suspected that this girl did little or no work--was, in fact, wholly unfit for her position; but so long as she herself was made comfortable, it did not seem to matter who tidied away her clothes or dusted her bedroom.

Miss Goold, in fact, had so far mastered the philosophy of life as to understand that the only real use of money is to purchase comfort and freedom from minor worries. She had deliberately cut herself adrift from the social set to which she belonged by birth and education, and so had little temptation to spend her substance either in giving parties or enjoying them. The ladies who flutter round the Lord Lieutenant's hospitable court would as soon have thought of calling on a music-hall danseuse as on Miss Goold. Their husbands, brothers, and sons took liberties with her reputation in the smoking-rooms of the Kildare Street Club, and professed to be in possession of private information about her life which placed her outside the charity of even their tolerant morality. The little circle of revolutionary politicians who gathered round the *Croppy* were not the sort of people who gave dinner-parties; and there is, in spite of the Gospel precept, a certain awkwardness nowadays in continually asking people to dinner who cannot afford a retributive invitation. Occasionally, however, Miss Goold did entertain a few of her friends, and it was generally admitted among them that she not only provided food and drink of great excellence, but arranged the appointments of her feasts luxuriously.

On the very day after his interview with Tim Halloran Hyacinth received an invitation to dinner at the Killiney villa. Captain Quinn, the note informed him, had arrived in Dublin, and was anxious to make the acquaintance of his future comrade-in-arms. It seemed to Hyacinth, thinking over the story of Doherty, unlikely that the whole corps would be asked to meet their Captain round a dinner-table, but he hoped that some of them would be there. Their presence would reconcile him to the awkwardness of not possessing a dress-suit. Grealy, who had occasionally dined at the villa, warned him that a white shirt-front and black trousers would certainly be expected of him, and Hyacinth made an unsuccessful effort to hire garments for the night which would fit him. In the end, since it seemed absurd to purchase even a second-hand suit for a single evening, he brushed his Sunday clothes and bought a pair of patent-leather shoes.

He arrived at the platform of Westland Row Station in good time for the train he meant to catch. He was soon joined by Miss O'Dwyer, who appeared with her head and neck swathed in a fluffy shawl and the train of a silk skirt gathered in her hand. The view of several flounces of nebulous white petticoat confirmed Hyacinth in his conjecture that she was bound for Miss Goold's party. No one who could be supposed to be a member of Captain Quinn's corps appeared on the platform, and Hyacinth became painfully conscious of the shortcomings of his costume. He thought that even Miss O'Dwyer glanced at it with some contempt. He wished that, failing a dress-suit, he could have imitated the Imperial Yeomen who paraded the streets, and donned some kind of uniform. His discomfort reached a climax when Ginty received them at the door, passed Miss O'Dwyer on to the incompetent niece, and solemnly extracted the new shoes from their brown-paper parcel.

Miss Goold stood chatting to Captain Quinn when Hyacinth entered the drawing-room. She moved forward to meet him, radiant and splendid, he thought, beyond imagination. The rustle of her draperies, the faint scent that hung around her, and the glitter of the stones on her throat, bewildered him.

It was not till after he had been presented to his commander that he was able to take his eyes off her. Then, in spite of his embarrassment, he experienced surprise and disappointment. He had formed no clear idea of what he expected Captain Quinn to be like, but he had a vague mental picture of a furiously-moustachioed swashbuckler, a man of immense power and hirsute hands. Instead, there stood before him a slim, small man, clean shaved, with shiny black hair smoothly brushed. His clothes were so well cut and his linen so glossy that he seemed fittingly placed even beside the magnificent Finola. His hand, when Hyacinth shook it, seemed absurdly small, and his feet, in their neat pumps, were more like a woman's than a man's. Then, when he turned to resume his conversation with his hostess, Hyacinth was able to watch his face. He noticed the man's eyes. They were small and quick, like a bird's, and shifted rapidly, never resting long on any object. His mouth was seldom closed, and the lips, like the eyes, moved incessantly, though very slightly. There were strange lines about the cheeks and jaws, which somehow suggested that the man had seen a good deal of the evil of the world, and not altogether unwillingly. His voice was wonderfully soft and clear, and he spoke without a trace of any provincial accent.

During dinner Captain Quinn took the largest share in the conversation. It appeared that he was a man of considerable knowledge of the world. He had been a sailor in his time, and had made two voyages to Melbourne as apprentice in a large sailing-ship. His stories were interesting and humorously told; though they all dealt with experiences of his own, he never allowed himself to figure as anything of a hero. He recounted, for instance, how one night in Melbourne Docks he had run from a half-drunken Swede, armed with a knife, and had spent hours dodging round the deck of a ship and calling for help before he could get his assailant arrested. His career as an officer in the mercantile navy was cut short by a period of imprisonment in a small town in Madagascar. He did not specify his offence, but gave a vivid account of life in the gaol.

'There were twenty of us altogether,' he said--'nineteen niggers and myself. There was no nonsense about discipline or work. We just sat about all day in an open courtyard, with nothing but a big iron gate between us and liberty. All the same, there was very little chance of escape. There were always four black soldiers on guard, truculent scoundrels with curly swords. A sort of missionary man got wind of my being there, and used to come and visit me. One day he gave me a tract called "Gideon." I read the thing because I had absolutely nothing else to read. In the end it turned out an extremely useful tract, for it occurred to me that the old plan for defeating the Midianites might work with the four black soldiers. I organized the other prisoners, and divided them into three bands. We raked up a pretty fair substitute for pitchers and lamps. Then one night we played off the stratagem, and flurried the sentries to such an extent that I got clear away. I rather fancy one or two others got off, too, but I don't know. I got into a rather disagreeable tramp steamer, and volunteered as stoker. It's so difficult to get stokers in the tropics that the captain took his risks and kept me. I must say I was sorry afterwards that I hadn't stayed in the gaol.'

The story was properly appreciated by the audience, and Hyacinth began to feel a liking for the Captain.

'Do you know,' said Miss Goold, when their laughter had subsided, 'I believe I know that identical tract. I once had an evangelical aunt, a dear old lady who went about her house with a bunch of keys in a small basket. She used to give me religious literature. I never was reduced to reading it, but I distinctly remember a picture of Gideon with his mouth open waving a torch on the front page. Could it have been the same?'

'It must have been,' said the Captain. 'Mine had that picture, too. Gideon had nothing on but a sort of nightshirt with a belt to it, and only one sleeve. By the way, if you are up in tracts, perhaps you know one called "The Rock of Horeb"?''

Miss Goold shook her head.

'Ah, well,' said the Captain, after appealing to Mary O'Dwyer and Hyacinth, 'it can't be helped, but I must say I should like to meet someone who had read "The Rock of Horeb." I once sailed from Peru in an exceedingly ill-found little barque loaded with guano. We had a very dull time going through the tropics, and absolutely the only thing to read on board was the first half of "The Rook of Horeb." There were at least two pages missing. I read it until I nearly knew it off by heart, and ever since I've been trying to get a complete copy to see how it ended.'

Some of his stories dealt with more civilized life. He delighted Miss Goold with an account, not at all unfriendly, of the humours of the third battalion of the Connaught Rangers. He quoted one of Mary O'Dwyer's poems to her, and pleased Hyacinth by his enthusiastic admiration of the Connemara scenery. Good food, good wine, and a companion like Captain Quinn, gladden the heart, and the little party was very merry when Ginty deposited coffee and cigarettes and finally departed.

In Miss Goold's house it was not the custom for the ladies to desert the dinner-table by themselves. Very often the hostess was the only lady present, and she had the greatest dislike to leaving a conversation just when it was likely to become really interesting. Moreover, Miss Goold smoked, not because it was a smart or emancipated thing to do, but because she liked it, and--a curious note of femininity about her--she objected to her drawing-room smelling of tobacco.

When Ginty had disappeared, and the serious business of enjoying the food was completed, the talk of the party turned on the South African campaign and the prospects of the Irish volunteers. Captain Quinn displayed a

considerable knowledge of the operations both of the Boers and the British Generals. For the latter he expressed what appeared to Hyacinth to be an exaggerated contempt, but the two ladies listened to it with evident enjoyment. He delighted Miss Goold by his extreme eagerness to be off.

'I don't see,' he said, 'why we shouldn't start to-morrow.'

'I'm afraid that's out of the question,' said Augusta Goold. 'M. de Villeneuve arranged to send me a wire when he was ready for our men, and I can't well send them sooner.'

'Ah,' said the Captain, 'but it seems to me the Frenchman is inclined to dawdle. Don't you think that if we went over it might hurry him up a bit?'

She agreed that this was possible, but represented the difficulty of keeping the men suitably employed in Paris for perhaps three weeks or a month.

'You see,' she said, 'they are all right here in Dublin, where I can keep an eye on them. Besides, they have all got some sort of employment here, and I don't have to pay them. I haven't got money enough to keep them in Paris, and they won't get anything from Dr. Leyds until you have them on board the steamer.'

Captain Quinn seemed satisfied, but later on in the evening he returned to the subject.

'I can't help feeling that it would be better for me, at all events, to go over to Paris at once. I shouldn't ask to draw any pay at present. I have enough by me to keep me going for a few weeks.'

'But what about the men? Will you come back for them?'

'No, I think that would be foolish and unnecessary. There is no use in attracting attention to our movements. We can't have a public send-off, with cheers and that sort of thing, in any case, or march through the streets like those ridiculous yeomen. Our fellows have got to slip away quietly in twos and threes. We can't tell whether we're not being watched this minute.'

There was a note of sincerity in the Captain's voice which convinced Hyacinth that he was genuinely frightened at the thought of having a policeman on his track. Miss Goold, too, looked appropriately solemn at the suggestion. As a matter of fact, the authorities in Dublin Castle did occasionally send a detective in plain clothes to walk after her. It is not conceivable that they suspected her of wanting to blow up Nelson's pillar or assassinate a judge. Probably they merely wished to exercise the members of the force, and, in the absence of any actual crime in the country, felt that no harm could come to anyone through the 'shadowing' of Miss Goold. The plan, though the authorities probably did not consider this, had the incidental advantage of gratifying the lady herself. She was perfectly acquainted with most of the officers who were put on her track, and was always in good spirits when she recognised one of them waiting for her in Westland Row Station. Captain Quinn kept a watch on her face with his sharp shifting eyes while he spoke, and he was quick to realize that he had hit on a way of flattering her.

'You are a person, Miss Goold, of whose actions the Government is bound to take cognisance. I dare say they have their suspicions of me, and if you and I are seen together in Dublin during the next week or two there will certainly be inquiries; whereas, if I go over to Paris at once, there will be no reason to watch you or anybody else.'

Augusta Goold hesitated.

'What do you say, Mr. Conneally?' she asked.

Hyacinth was puzzled at this extreme eagerness to be off. A suspicion crossed his mind that the Captain meditated some kind of treachery. He made what appeared to him to be a brilliant suggestion.

'Let me go with Captain Quinn. I can start to-morrow if necessary. I should like to see something of Paris; and you know, Miss Goold, I've plenty of money.'

He thought it likely that the Captain would object to this plan. If he meditated any kind of crooked dealing when he got to Paris, though Hyacinth failed to see any motive for treachery, he would not want to be saddled with a companion. The answer he received surprised him.

'Delightful! I shall be glad to have a friend with me. In the intervals of military preparation we can have a gay time--not too gay, of course, Miss Goold. I shall keep Mr. Conneally out of serious mischief. When we have a little spare cash we may as well enjoy ourselves. We shan't want to carry money about with us in the Transvaal. We mean to live at the expense of the English out there.'

Augusta Goold smiled almost maternally at Hyacinth.

'My dear boy,' she said, 'what seems plenty of money to you won't go very far in Paris. What is it? Let me see, you said two hundred pounds, and you want to buy your outfit out of that. Keep a little by you in case of accident.'

'Well,' said the Captain, 'that's settled. And if we are really to start to-morrow, we ought to get home to-night. Mr. Conneally may be ready to start at a moment's notice, but he must at least pack up his tooth-brush. May we see you safe back to town, Miss O'Dwyer? Remember, we shall expect a valedictory ode in the next number of the *Croppy*. Write us something that will go to a tune, something with a swing in it, and we'll sing it beside the camp fires on the veldt. Miss Goold!--he held out his hand as he spoke--'I'm a plain fellow!--he did not look in the least as if he thought so--'I've

led too rough a life to be any good at making pretty speeches, but I'm glad I've seen you and talked to you. If I'm knocked on the head out there I shall go under satisfied, for I've met a woman fit to be a queen—a woman who is a queen, the queen of the heart of Ireland.'

It is likely that Augusta Goold, though she was certainly not a fool, was a little excited by the homage, for she refused to say good-bye, declaring that she would see the boat off next morning. It was a promise which would cost her something to keep, for the mail steamer leaves at 8 a.m., and Miss Goold was a lady who appreciated the warmth of her bed in the mornings, especially during the early days of March, when the wind is likely to be in the east.

CHAPTER XII

Captain Quinn made himself very agreeable to Mary O'Dwyer during the short journey back to Dublin. At Westland Row he saw her into a cab, which he paid for. His last words were a reminder that he would expect to have her war-song, music and all, sent after him to Paris. Then he turned to Hyacinth.

'That's all right. We've done with her. It was better to pay the cab for her, else she might have scrupled about taking one, and we should have been obliged to go home with her in a beastly tram. Come along. I'm staying at the Gresham. It's always as well to go to a decent place if you have any money. You come with me, and we'll have a drink and a talk.'

There were two priests and a Bishop in earnest conference round the fire in the hall of the hotel when they entered. When he discovered that their talk was of the iniquities of the National Board of Education, and therefore likely to last beyond midnight, Captain Quinn led the way into the smoking-room, which was unoccupied. A sufficient supply of whisky and a syphon of soda-water were set before them. The Captain stretched himself in a comfortable chair, and lit his pipe.

'A fine woman, Miss Goold,' he said meditatively. Hyacinth murmured an assent.

'A very fine woman, and apparently pretty comfortably off. I wonder why on earth she does it.'

He looked at Hyacinth as if he expected some sort of explanation to be forthcoming.

'Does what?' asked Hyacinth at length.

'Oh, all this revolutionary business: the *Croppy*, seditious speeches, and now this rot about helping the Boers. What does she stand to gain by it? I don't suppose there's any money in the business, and a woman like that might get all the notoriety she wants in her own proper set, without stumping the country and talking rot.'

This way of looking at Augusta Goold's patriotism was new to Hyacinth, and he resented it.

'I suppose she believes in the principles she professes,' he said.

The Captain looked at him curiously, and then took a drink of his whisky-and-soda.

'Well,' he said, 'let's suppose she does. After all, her motives are nothing to us, and she's a damned fine woman, whatever she does it for.'

He drank again.

'It would have been very pleasant, now, if she would have spent the next few weeks with me in Paris. You won't mind my saying that I'd rather have had her than you, Conneally, as a companion in a little burst. However, I saw at once that it wouldn't do. Anyone with an eye in his head could tell at a glance that she wasn't that sort.'

He sighed. Hyacinth was not quite sure that he understood. The suggestion was so calmly made and reasoned on that it seemed impossible that it could be as iniquitous as it appeared.

'There's no one such an utter fool about women,' went on the Captain, 'as your respectable married man, who never does anything wrong himself. I'd heard of Miss Goold, as everybody has, and listened to discussions about her character. You know just as well as I do the sort of things they say about her.'

Hyacinth did know very well, and flared up in defence of his patroness.

'They are vile lies.'

'That's just what I'm saying. Those respectable people who tell the lies are such fools. They think that every woman who doesn't mew about at afternoon parties must be a bad one. Now, anyone with a little experience would know at once that Miss Goold--what's this the other one called her? Oh yes, Finola--that Finola may be a fool, but she's not *that*.'

He pulled himself together as he spoke. Evidently he plumed himself, on his experience and the faculty for judging it had brought him.

'Now, I'd just as soon have asked my sister-in-law to come to Paris with me for a fortnight as Finola. You don't know Mrs. James Quinn, I think. That's a pity. She's the most domesticated and virtuous *haus-frau* in the world.'

He paused, and then asked Hyacinth, 'Why are you doing it?'

Again Hyacinth was reduced by sheer surprise to a futility.

'Doing what?'

'Oh, going out to fight for the Boers. Now, don't, like a good fellow, say you're acting on principle. It's all well enough to give Finola credit for that kind of thing. She is, as we agreed, a splendid woman. But you mustn't ask me to believe in the whole corps in the same way.'

Hyacinth meditated a reply. It was clearly impossible to assert that he wanted to fight for liberty, to give his life to the cause of an oppressed nationality. It would be utterly absurd to tell the story of his father's vision, and say that he looked on the South African War as a skirmish preliminary to the Armageddon. Sitting opposite to this cynical man of

the world and listening to his talk, Hyacinth came himself to disbelieve in principle. He felt that there must be some baser motive at the bottom of his desire to fight, only, for the life of him, he could not remember what it was. He could not even imagine a good reason--good in the estimation of his companion--why anyone should do so foolish a thing as go out to the Transvaal. The Captain was not at all impatient. He sat smoking quietly, until there seemed no prospect of Hyacinth answering; then he said:

'Well, if you don't want to tell me, I don't mind. Only I think you're foolish. You see, little accidents happen in these affairs. There are such things as bullets, and one of them might hit you somewhere that would matter. Then it would be my duty to send home your last words to your sorrowing relatives, and it would be easier to do that if I knew exactly what you had done. The death-bed repentance of the prodigal is always most consoling to the elder brother--much more consoling, in fact, than the prodigal's return. Now, how the deuce am I to make up a plausible repentance for you, if I don't know what you've done?'

'But I've not done anything,' said Hyacinth ineffectively.

The Captain ignored him.

'Come, now, it can't be anything very bad at your age. Have you got into a mess with a girl? Or'--he brightened up at the guess--'are you hopelessly enamoured of the beautiful Finola? That would be most suitable. The bold, bad woman sends the minstrel boy to his death, with his wild harp slung behind him. I could draw tears from the stoniest-hearted elder brother over that.'

If he could have thought of a crime at the moment, Hyacinth would probably have confessed it; but he was bewildered, and could hit on nothing better than:

'I have no elder brother--in fact, no relation of any sort.'

'Lucky man! Now, I have a perfect specimen of a brother--James Quinn, Esquire, of Ballymoy. He's a churchwarden. Think of that! If it should be your melancholy duty to send the message home to him--in case that bullet hits me, I mean--tell him----- Oh, there's no false pride about me. Fill your glass again. I don't in the least mind your knowing that I wouldn't go a step to fight for Boer or Briton either if it wasn't for a little affair connected with some horses and a cheque. You see, the War Office people sent down a perfect idiot to buy remounts for the cavalry in Galway and Mayo. He was the sort of idiot that would tempt an Archbishop to swindle him. I rather overdid it, I'm afraid, and now the matter is likely to come out.'

For all his boasted powers of observation, Captain Quinn failed to notice the disgust and alarm on Hyacinth's face.

'I stuck the fool,' he went on, 'with every old screw in the country. I got broken-winded mares from the ploughs. I collected a regular hospital of spavined, knock-kneed beasts, and he took them from me without a word at thirty pounds apiece. It would have been all right if I had gone no further. But, hang it all! I got to the end of my tether. I declare to you I don't believe there was another screw left in the whole county of Mayo, and unless I took to selling him the asses I couldn't go on. Then I heard of this plan of your friend Finola's, and I determined to make a little coup and clear. I altered a cheque. The idiot was on his way to an out-of-the-way corner of Connemara looking for mounted infantry cobs. I knew he wouldn't see his bank-book for at least a week, so I chanced it. That's the reason why I am so uncommonly anxious to get clear at once. If I once get off, it will be next door to impossible to get me back again. General Joubert will hardly give me up. I'm not the least afraid of those ridiculous policemen who walk about after Finola. But I am very much afraid of being tapped on the shoulder for reasons quite non-political. I can tell you I've been on the jump ever since yesterday, when I cashed the cheque, and I shan't feel easy till I've left France behind me. I fancy I'm safe for the present. The idiot is sure to try fifty ways of getting his accounts straight before he lights on my little cheque; and when he does, I've covered my tracks pretty well. My dear brother hasn't the slightest notion what's become of me. I dare say he'll stop making inquiries as soon as the police begin. Poor old chap! He'll feel it about the family name, and so on.'

He smiled at his own reflection in the mirror over the chimneypiece. He was evidently well satisfied with the performance he had narrated. Then at last Hyacinth found himself able to speak. Again, as when he had defeated Dr. Spenser in the college lecture-room, his own coolness surprised him.

'You're an infernal blackguard!' he said.

Captain Quinn looked at him with a surprise that was perfectly genuine. He doubted if he could have heard correctly.

'What did you say?'

'I said,' repeated Hyacinth, 'you are an infernal blackguard!'

'Did you really suppose that I would be going on this fool of an expedition if I wasn't?'

'I shall tell Miss Goold the story you have just told me. I shall tell her to-morrow morning before the boat sails.'

'Very well,' said the Captain; 'but don't suppose for a moment that you'll shock Finola. She doesn't know this particular story about me, but I expect she knows another every bit as bad, and I dare say she will regard the whole thing as a justifiable spoiling of the Egyptians. By the way '--there was a note of anxiety in his voice--'I hope you won't

find it necessary to repeat anything I've said about the lady herself. *That* might irritate her.'

'Is it likely,' said Hyacinth, 'that I would repeat that kind of talk to any woman?'

'Quite so. I admire your attitude. Such things are entirely unfit for repetition. But seriously, now, what on earth do you expect to happen when you tell her? I'm perfectly certain that every single volunteer she's got is just as great a blackguard--your word, my dear fellow--as I am, and Finola knows it perfectly well.'

Hyacinth hesitated. The phrase in Miss Goold's letter in which she had originally described her men as blackguards recurred to his mind. He remembered the story of Doherty. His anger began to give way to a sick feeling of disgust.

'Think, now,' said the Captain: 'is it likely that you could enlist a corps of Sunday-school teachers for this kind of work? I'll give you credit for the highest motives, though I'm blest if I understand them; but how can you suppose that there is anyone else in the whole world that feels the way you feel or wants to act as you are doing?'

'I dare say you are right,' said Hyacinth feebly.

'Of course I'm right--perfectly right.'

Hyacinth tried to lift his glass of whisky-and-water to his lips, but his hand trembled, and he was obliged to put it down. Captain Quinn watched him wipe the spilt liquid off his hand, and then settle down in his chair with his head bowed and his eyes half shut.

'Sit up, man,' he said. 'It's all right. You've done nothing to be ashamed of, at all events. But look here, you ought not to come with us at all.

It's no job for a man like you. You back out of it. Don't turn up to-morrow morning. I'll explain to Finola if she's there, and if not I'll write her a letter that will set you straight with her. I'm really sorry for you, Conneally.'

Hyacinth looked up at him.

'I'm sorry I called you a blackguard,' he said. 'You're not any worse than everyone else in the world.'

'Nonsense,' said Captain Quinn. 'Don't take it like that. From your point of view you were quite right to call me a blackguard. And, mind you, there are plenty of people in the world who aren't blackguards. There's my brother, for instance. He's a bit of a prig--in fact, he's as priggish as he well can be--but he's never done anything but run straight. I don't suppose he could go crooked if he tried.'

Hyacinth got up.

'Good-night,' he said, 'and good-bye. I shan't go with you.'

'Wait a minute,' said Captain Quinn. 'I think I've done you one good turn to-night in stopping you going to South Africa. Now I'll do you another, and one at the same time to that brother of mine. I left him in a hurry. I told you that, but I don't think I mentioned that I was in his employment. He runs a woollen factory down in Mayo. I owned a share in the business once, but that went long ago, and the whole thing belongs to James now. I was a sort of clerk and general agent. I wasn't really the least use, for I never did any work. James was for ever complaining, but I'm bound to say he stuck to me. I'll give you a letter to him, and I dare say you may get the job that I've chucked. It's not much of a thing, but it may suit you for a while. Sit down till I write my letter.'

Hyacinth obeyed. Since his anger evaporated a sort of numbness had crept over his mind. He scarcely understood what was said to him. He had a vague feeling of gratitude towards Captain Quinn, and at the same time a great desire to get away and be alone. He felt that he required to adjust his mind to the new thoughts which had been crowded into it. When he received the letter he put it into his pocket, and rose again to go. The Captain saw him to the door.

'Good-bye.' Hyacinth heard him, but his voice seemed far off, and his words meaningless. 'Take my advice and run down to Ballymoy at once. Don't hang about Finola any more. She's a splendid woman, but she's not for you. If you married her you'd be perfectly miserable. Not that I think she'd ever marry you. Still, she might. Women do such odd things. If by any chance she does, you'll have to be very careful. Give her her head, and take her easy up to the jumps. Don't try to hustle her, and for God's sake don't begin sawing at her mouth. I'd very much like to be here to see you in the character of Mr. Augusta Goold.' He sighed. 'But, of course, I can't. The British Isles will be too hot for me for a while. However, who can tell what might happen if I win a good medal from old Kruger, and capture a few British Generals? I might act best man for you yet, if you'll wait a year or two.'

When Hyacinth got home to his lodgings the first object that met his eye was Grealy's ancient rifle. He tied a label round its barrel addressed to the owner. Then he packed his few belongings carefully and strapped his bag. So far he was sure of himself. He had no doubt whatever that he must leave Dublin at once. He felt that he could not endure an interview with Augusta Goold. She might blame him or might pity him. Either would be intolerable. She might even justify herself to him, might beat him into submission by sheer force of her beauty and her passion, as she had done once before. He would run no such risk. He felt that he could not sacrifice his sense of right and wrong, could not allow himself to be dragged into the moral chaos in which, it seemed to him now, Miss Goold lived. He was unconscious of any Divine leading, or even of any direct reliance on the obligations of honour. He could not himself have told why he clung with such desperate terror to his plan of escaping from his surroundings. Simply he could not do certain things

or associate as a friend with people who did them. To get away from Dublin was the first necessity. For a moment it occurred to him that he might go to Dr. Henry, tell him the whole story, and ask for advice and help. But that was impossible. How could he confess the degradation of his ideal? How could he resist the inevitable reminder that he had been warned beforehand? Besides, not even now, after all that he had seen, could he accept Dr. Henry's point of view. He still believed in Ireland, still hoped to serve her, still looked for the coming of his father's captain to lead the saints to the final victory. Miss Goold had failed him, but he was not yet ready to enrol himself a citizen of England.

No, he must leave Dublin. But where to go? His lamp burnt dim and expired as he sat thinking. His fire had long ago gone out. He shivered with cold and misery, while the faint light of the dawn stole into his room. He heard the first twitter of the birds in the convent garden behind his lodging. Then came the noise of the earliest traffic, the unnaturally loud rattle of the dust-carts on their rounds. A steamer hooted far away down the river, and an early bell rang the neighbouring nuns to prayer. Hyacinth grew desperate. Could he go home, back to the fishing-boats and simple people of Carrowkeel? A great desire for the old scenes seized upon him. He fought against it with all his might. He had rejected the offer of the home life once. Now, no doubt, it would be closed against him. The boat that might have been his was sold long ago. He would not go back to confess himself a fool and a failure.

Gradually his mind worked back over the conversation in the hotel with Captain Quinn. The recollection of the latter part of it, which had meant nothing at the time, grew clear. He felt for the letter in his pocket, and drew it out. After all, why should he not offer himself to James Quinn? Ballymoy was remote enough to be a hiding-place. It was in County Mayo, the Captain had said. He had never heard of the place, and it seemed likely that no one else, except its inhabitants, knew of it either. At least, there was no reason that he could see why he should not go there. His brain refused to work any longer, either at planning or remembering. His lips formed the word Ballymoy. He repeated it again and again. He seemed to go on repeating it in the troubled sleep which came to him.

CHAPTER XIII

The Irish get credit, even from their enemies, for being a quick-witted, imaginative, and artistic people, yet they display astonishingly little taste or originality in their domestic architecture. In Connaught, where the Celtic genius may be supposed to have the freest opportunity for expressing itself, the towns are all exactly alike, and their resemblance consists in the absence of any beauty which can please the eye. An English country town, although the English bucolic is notoriously as stupid as an ox, has certain features of its own. So has a Swiss cottage or a French village. It is possible to represent these upon Christmas cards or the lids of chocolate-boxes without labelling them English, Swiss, or French. Any moderately well educated young lady will recognise them at once, and exclaim without hesitation, 'How truly English!' or 'How sweetly Swiss!' But no one can depict an Irish town with any hope of having it recognised unless he idealizes boldly, introducing a highly-intelligent pig, or a man in knee-breeches kissing a fancifully-attired colleen. And then, after all, he might as well have labelled it Irish at once in good plain print, and saved himself the trouble of drawing the symbolic figures.

To describe Ballymoy, therefore, mountains, rivers, and such like natural eccentricities being left out of the count, is to describe fifty other West of Ireland towns. There is a railway-station, bleak, gray, and windswept, situated, for the benefit of local car-owners, a mile and a half from the town, and the road which connects the two is execrable. There is a workhouse, in Ballymoy as everywhere else in this lost land the most prominent building. There is a convent, immense and wonderfully white, with rows and rows of staring windows and a far-seen figure of the Blessed Virgin, poised in a niche above the main door. There is a Roman Catholic church, gray-walled, gray-roofed, and unspeakably hideous, but large and, like the workhouse and the convent, obtruding itself upon the eye. It seems as if the inhabitants of the town must all of them be forced, and that at no distant date, either into religion or pauperism, just as small bodies floating in a pond are sucked into connection with one or other of the logs which lie among them. The shops in the one tortuous street block the footpaths in front of their doors with piles of empty packing-cases. The passenger is saluted, here by a buffet in the face from a waterproof coat suspended outside a draper's, there by a hot breath of whisky-laden air. Two shops out of every three are public-houses. These occupy a very beautiful position in the economic life of the town. Their profits go to build the church, to pay the priests, and to fill the coffers of the nuns. The making of the profits fills the workhouse. A little aloof stands the Protestant church, austere to look upon, expressing in all its lines a grim reproach of the people's life. Beyond it, among scanty, stooped trees, is the rectory, gray, as everything else is, wearing, like a decayed lady, the air of having lived through better days.

Such, save for one feature, is Ballymoy, as the traveller sees it, as Hyacinth Conneally saw it when he arrived there one gusty afternoon. The one unusual feature is Mr. James Quinn's woollen mill. It stands, a gaunt and indeed somewhat dilapidated building, at the bottom of the street, in the angle where the river turns sharply to flow under the bridge. The water just above the bridge is swept into a channel and forced to turn the wheel which works some primitive machinery within. In the centre of the mill's front is an archway through which carts pass into the paved square behind. Here is the weighbridge, and here great bundles of heavy-smelling fleeces are unloaded. Off the square is the office where Mr. Quinn sits, pays for the wool, and enters the weight of it in damp ledgers. Here on Saturdays two or three men and a score of girls receive their wages. The business is a peculiar one. You may bring your wool to Mr. Quinn in fleeces, just as you shear it off the sheep's back. He will pay you for it, more or less, according to the amount of trouble you have taken with your sheep. This is the way the younger generation likes to treat its wool. If you are older, and are blessed with a wife able to card and spin, you deal differently with Mr. Quinn. For many evenings after the shearing your wife sits by the fireside with two carding-combs in her hands, and wipes off them wonderfully soft rolls of wool. Afterwards she fetches the great wheel from its nook, and you watch her pulling out an endless gray thread while she steps back and forwards across the floor. The girls watch her, too, but not, as you do, with sleepy admiration. Their emotion is amused contempt. Nevertheless, your kitchen wall is gradually decorated with bunches of great gray balls. When these have accumulated sufficiently, you take them to Mr. Quinn. A certain number of them become his property. Out of the rest he will weave what you like--coarse yellow flannel, good for bawneens, and, when it is dyed crimson, for petticoats; or blankets--not fluffy like the blankets that are bought in shops, but warm to sleep under when the winter comes; or perhaps frieze, very thick and rough, the one fabric that will resist the winter rain.

This portion of his business Mr. Quinn finds to be decreasing year by year. Fewer and fewer women care to card and spin the wool. The younger men find it more profitable to sell it at once, and to wear, instead of the old bawneens, shirts called flannel which are brought over from cotton-spinning Lancashire, and sold in the shops. The younger women think that they look prettier in gowns made artfully by the local dressmaker out of feeble materials got up to catch the eye. If now and then, for the sake of real warmth, one of them makes a petticoat of the old crimson flannel, it is kept so short that, save in very heavy rain, it can be concealed. Unfortunately, while these old-fashioned profits are vanishing, Mr. Quinn finds it very hard to increase the other branch of his business. The fabrics which he makes are good, so good that he finds it difficult to sell them in the teeth of competition. The country shops are flooded with what he calls 'shoddy.' An army of eager commercial travellers pushes showy goods on the shopkeepers and the public

at half his price. Even the farmers in remote districts are beginning to acquire a taste for smartness. Some things in which he used to do a useful trade are now scarcely worth making. There is hardly any demand for the checked headkerchiefs. The women prefer hats and bonnets, decked with cheap ribbons or artificial flowers; and these bring no trade to Mr. Quinn's mill. Still, he manages to hold on. The Lancashire people, though they have invented flannelette, cannot as yet make a passable imitation of frieze, and there is a Dublin house which buys annually all the blankets he can turn out. It is true that even there, and for the best class of customers, prices have to be cut so as to leave a bare margin of profit. Yet since there is a margin, Mr. Quinn holds on, though not very hopefully.

Hyacinth left the bulk of his luggage--a packing-case containing the books which the auctioneer had failed to dispose of in Carrowkeel--at the station, and walked into Ballymoy carrying his bag. He had little difficulty in making his way to the mill, and found the owner of it in his office. It was difficult at first to believe that James Quinn could be any relation to Captain Albert, the traveller, horse-dealer, soldier, and thief. This man was tall, though he stooped when he stood to receive his visitor. His movements were slow. His fair hair lay thin across his forehead, and was touched above the ears with gray. His blue eyes were very gentle, and had a way of looking long and steadily at what they saw. A glance at his face left the impression that life, perhaps by no very gentle means, had taught him patience.

'This letter will introduce me,' said Hyacinth; 'it is from your brother, Captain, or Mr. Albert, Quinn.'

James Quinn took the letter, and turned it over slowly. Then, without opening it, he laid it on the table in front of him. His eyes travelled from it to Hyacinth's face, and rested there. It was some time before he spoke, and then it was to correct Hyacinth upon a trivial point.

'My half-brother,' he said. 'My father married twice, and Albert is the son of his second wife. You may have noticed that he is a great deal younger than I am.'

'He looks younger, certainly,' said Hyacinth, for the other was waiting for a reply.

'Nearly twenty years younger. Albert is only just thirty.'

The exact age of the Captain was uninteresting and seemed to be beside the purpose of the visit. Hyacinth shifted his chair and fidgeted, uncertain what to do or say next.

'Albert gave you this letter to me. Is he a friend of yours?'

'No.'

James Quinn looked at him again steadily. It seemed--but this may have been fancy--that there was a kindlier expression in his eyes after the emphatic repudiation of friendship with Albert. At length he took up the letter, and read it through slowly.

'Why did my brother give you this letter?'

The question was a puzzling one. Hyacinth had never thought of trying to understand the Captain's motives. Then the conversation in the hotel recurred to him.

'He said that he wanted to do a good turn to me and to you also.'

'What had you done for him?'

'Nothing whatever.'

Apparently James Quinn was not in the least vexed at the brevity of the answers he received, or disturbed because his cross-examination was obviously disagreeable to Hyacinth.

'In this letter,' he went on, referring to the document as he spoke, 'he describes you as a young man who is "certainly honest, probably religious, and possibly intelligent." I presume you know my brother, and if you do, you may be surprised to hear that I am quite prepared to take his word for all this. I have very seldom known Albert to tell me lies, and I don't know why he should want to deceive me in this case. Still, I am a little puzzled to account for his giving you the letter. Can you add nothing in the way of explanation to what you have said?'

'I don't know that I can,' said Hyacinth.

'Will you tell me how you met my brother, and what he is doing now, or where he is?'

'I do not think I should be justified in doing so.'

'Ah, well! I can understand that in certain circumstances Albert would be very grateful to a man who would hold his tongue. He might be quite willing to do you a good turn if you undertook to answer no questions about him.'

He smiled as he spoke, a little grimly, but there was laughter lurking in the corners of his eyes. A Puritan will sometimes smile in such a way at the thought of a sinful situation, too solemn to be laughed at openly, but appealing to a not entirely atrophied sense of humour. Hyacinth felt reassured.

'Indeed,' he said, 'I made no promise of silence. It is only that--well, I don't think----'

James Quinn waited patiently for the conclusion of the sentence, but Hyacinth never arrived at it.

'In this letter,' he said at last, 'my brother asks me to give you the place he lately held in my business. Now, I don't want to press you to say anything you don't want to, but before we go further I must ask you this, Were you implicated

in the affair yourself?'

'I beg your pardon. I don't quite understand what you mean.'

'Well, I suppose that since my brother is anxious that you should hold your tongue, he has done something that won't bear talking about. Were you implicated in--in whatever the trouble was?'

'Certainly not,' said Hyacinth. 'In fact, it was on account of what you speak of as "trouble" that I declined to have anything more to do with your brother.'

'That is probably very much to your credit, and, in the light of my brother's estimate of your character, I may say that I entirely believe what you say. Am I to understand that you are an applicant for the post in my business which Albert held, and which this letter tells me I may consider vacant?'

'That is what brought me down here,' said Hyacinth.

'Have you any other recommendations or testimonials as to character to show me?'

'No. But there are several people who would answer questions about me if you wrote to them: Dr. Henry, of Trinity College, would, or Miss Augusta Goold, or Father Moran, of Carrowkeel, in County Galway.'

'You have given me the most remarkable list of references I ever came across in my life. I don't suppose anyone ever before was recommended for a post by a Protestant divinity professor, a notoriously violent political agitator, a Roman Catholic priest, and a--well, we won't describe my brother. How do you come to be mixed up with all these people? Who are you?'

'I am the son of Aeneas Conneally, Rector of Carrowkeel, who died last Christmas.'

'Well,' said James Quinn, 'I suppose if all these people are prepared to recommend you, your character must be all right. Now, tell me, do you know what the post is you are applying for?'

'No,' said Hyacinth. 'And I may as well say that I have had no experience or business training whatever.'

'So I should suppose from the way you have come to me. Well, my brother was clerk and traveller for my business. He was supposed to help me to keep accounts and to push the sale of my goods among the shopkeepers in Connaught. As a matter of fact, he never did either the one or the other. When he was at home he did nothing. When he was on the road he bought and sold horses. I paid him eighty pounds a year and his travelling expenses. I also promised him a percentage on the profits of the sales he effected. Now, do you think this work would suit you?'

'I might not be able to do it,' said Hyacinth, 'but I should very much like to be allowed to try. I can understand that I shall be very little use at first, and I am willing to work without any salary for a time, perhaps six months, until I have learned something about your business.'

'Come, now, that's a business-like offer. I'll give you a trial, if it was only for the sake of your list of references. I won't keep you six months without paying you if you turn out to be any good at all. And I think there must be something in you, for you've gone about getting this job in the queerest way I ever heard of. Would you like any time to make up your mind finally before accepting the post?'

'No,' said Hyacinth; 'I accept at once.'

They walked together through the mill, and looked at the machines and the workers. The girls smiled when Mr. Quinn stopped to speak to them, and looked with frank curiosity at Hyacinth. The three or four men who did the heavier work stopped and chatted for a few minutes when they came to them. Evidently there was no soreness or distrust here between the employer and the employed. When they had gone through the rooms where the work was going on, they climbed a staircase like a ladder, and came to the loft where the wool was stored. Hyacinth handled it as he was directed, and endeavoured to appreciate the difference between the good and the inferior qualities. They passed by an unglazed window at the back of the mill, and Mr. Quinn pointed out his own house. It stood among trees and shrubs, now for the most part bare, but giving promise of shady privacy in summertime. Long windows opened out on to a lawn stretching down to the watercourse which fed the millwheel. A gravel path skirted one side of the house leading to a bridge, and thence to a doorway in a high wall, beyond which lay the road. As they looked the door opened, and a woman with two little girls came through. They crossed the bridge, and walked up to the house.

'That is my wife,' said Mr. Quinn, 'and my two little girls.'

He stretched out between the bars of the window, and shouted to them. All three looked back. Mrs. Quinn waved her hand, and the two children shouted in reply. Then a light appeared in one of the windows, and Hyacinth caught a glimpse of a trim maid-servant pulling the curtains across it.

'We shall be having tea at half-past six,' said Mr. Quinn. 'Will you come and join us? By the way, where are you staying?'

Hyacinth accepted the invitation, and confessed that he had not as yet looked for any place to lay his head.

'Ah! Better go to the hotel for to-night. It's not much of a place, but you will have to learn to put up with that sort of accommodation. Tomorrow we'll try and find you some decent lodgings.'

The hotel struck even Hyacinth as of inferior quality, though it boasted great things in the timetable advertisements, and called itself 'Imperial' in large gold letters above its door. A smell of whisky and tobacco greeted him as he entered, and a waiter with a greasy coat, in answer to inquiries about a bed, sent him down a dark passage to seek a lady called Miss Sweeney at the bar. Large leather cases with broad straps and waterproof-covered baskets blocked the passage, and Hyacinth stumbled among them for some time before he discovered Miss Sweeney reading a periodical called *Spicy Bits* among her whisky-bottles. She was a young woman of would-be fashionable appearance, and acted apparently in the double capacity of barmaid and clerk. On hearing that Hyacinth required, not whisky, but a bedroom, she requested him to go forward to the office, indicating a glass case at the far end of the bar counter. Here he repeated his request to her through a small opening in the glass, and received her assurance, given with great condescension, that No. 42 was vacant, and, further, that there was a fire in the commercial room. A boy whom she summoned carried Hyacinth's bag to an extremely dirty and ill-furnished bedroom, and afterwards conducted him to the promised fire. Two other guests were seated at it when he entered, who, after a long stare, made room for him. Apparently there was no one else stopping in the hotel, and the whole mass of cumbrous baggage which blocked the passage to the bar must belong to them. Hyacinth realized, with a feeling of disgust which he could not account for, that these were two members of his new profession--fellow-travellers in the voyages of commerce. He gathered--for they talked loudly, without regarding his presence--that they represented two Manchester firms which were rivals in the wholesale drapery business. Very much of what they said was unintelligible to him, though the words were familiar. He knew that 'lines' could be 'quoted,' but not apparently in the same sense in which they discussed these operations, and it puzzled him to hear of muslins being 'done at one and seven-eighths.' He sat for a time wondering at the waste of money and energy involved in sending these men to remote corners of Ireland to search for customers. Then he left them, and made his way down the muddy street to Mr. Quinn's house.

The room into which he was shown was different from any he had ever seen. It was lit by a single lamp with a dull glass globe and a turf fire which burnt brightly. Two straight-backed, leather-covered chairs stood one on either side of the tiled hearth. Near one stood a little table covered with neatly-arranged books, and, rising from among them, a reading-lamp, as yet unlit. Beyond the other was a work-table strewn with reels and scissors, on which lay a child's frock and some stockings. The table was laid for tea. On it were plates piled up with floury scones, delicate beelek saucers full of butter patted thin into the shapes of shells, and jam in coloured glass dishes cased in silver filigree. A large home-baked loaf of soda bread on a wooden platter stood at one end of the table, and near it a sponge-cake. At the other end was an array of cups and saucers with silver spoons that glittered, a jug of cream, and one of milk. Two of the cups were larger than the others, and had those curious bars across them which are designed to save men from wetting their moustaches when they drink. No room and no preparation for a meal could have offered a more striking contrast to Augusta Goold's dining-room, her groups of wineglasses, multiplicity of heavy-handled knives and forks, and her candles shrouded in silk. Nor was the dainty neatness less remote from the cracked delf and huddled sordidness of his old home.

Long before Hyacinth had realized an impression of the scene before him Mrs. Quinn greeted him, and led him to the fire. Her two little girls, who lay on the hearthrug with a picture-book between them, were bidden to make room for him. When her husband appeared she bustled off, and in a minute or two she and the maid came in bringing toast and tea and hot water hissing in a silver urn.

As the evening passed Hyacinth began to realize that he had entered into a home of peace. He felt that these people were neither greatly anxious to be rich nor much afraid of being poor. They seemed in no way fretted that there were others higher in the social scale, cleverer or more brilliant than they were. He understood that they were both of them religious in a way quite different from any he had known. They neither spoke of mysteries, like his father, nor were eager about disputings, like the men who had been his fellow-students. They were living a very simple life, of which faith and a wide charity formed a part as natural as eating or sleeping. When the children's bedtime came it seemed to him a very wonderful thing that they should kneel in turns beside their father's knee and say their prayers aloud, when he, a stranger, was in the room. It seemed to him less strange, because then he had been two hours longer in the company of the Quinns, that before leaving he, too, should kneel beside his hostess and listen while his new employer repeated the familiar words of some of the old collects he had heard his father read in church.

CHAPTER XIV

On Sunday, the third day after his arrival in Ballymoy, Hyacinth went to church. He could hardly have avoided doing so, even if he had wanted to, for Mrs. Quinn invited him to share her pew. There was no real necessity for such hospitality, for the church was never, even under the most favourable circumstances, more than half full. The four front seats were reserved for a Mr. Stack, on whose property the town of Ballymoy stood. But this gentleman preferred to live in Surrey, and even when he came over to Ireland for the shooting rarely honoured the church with his presence. A stone tablet, bearing the name of this magnate's father, a Cork pawnbroker, who had purchased the property for a small sum under the Encumbered Estates Court Act, adorned the wall beside the pulpit. The management of the property was in the hands of a Dublin firm, so the parish was deprived of the privilege of a resident land agent. The doctor, recently appointed to the district, was a Roman Catholic of plebeian antecedents, which reduced the resident gentry of Ballymoy to the Quinns, a bank manager, and the Rector, Canon Beecher. A few farmers, Mr. Stack's gamekeeper, and the landlady of the Imperial Hotel, made up the rest of the congregation.

The service was not of a very attractive or inspiring kind. Canon Beecher--his title was a purely honorary one, not even involving the duty of preaching in the unpretending building which, in virtue of some forgotten history, was dignified with the name of Killinacoff Cathedral--read slowly with somewhat ponderous emphasis. His thirty years in Holy Orders had slightly hardened an originally luscious Dublin brogue, but there remained a certain gentle aspiration of the *d's* and *t's*, and a tendency to omit the labial consonants altogether. He read an immense number of prayers, gathering, as it seemed to Hyacinth, the longest ones from the four corners of the Prayer-Book. At intervals he allowed himself to be interrupted with a hymn, but resumed afterwards the steady flow of supplication. The eldest Miss Beecher--the Canon had altogether two daughters and three sons--played a harmonium. The other girl and the three boys, with the assistance of an uncertain bass from Mr. Quinn, gave utterance to the congregation's praise. Hyacinth tried to join in the first hymn, which happened to be familiar to him, but quavered into silence towards the end of the second verse, discovering that the eyes of Mrs. Beecher from her pew, of the Canon from the reading-desk, of the vocal Miss Beecher and her brothers, were fixed upon him. The sermon proved to be long and uninteresting. It was about Melchizedek, and was so far appropriate to the Priest and King that it had no recognisable beginning and need not apparently have ever had an end. Perhaps no one, unless he were specially trained for the purpose, could have followed right through the quiet meanderings of the Canon's thought. This kind of sermon, however, has the one advantage that the listener can take it up and drop it again at any point without inconvenience, and Hyacinth was able to give his attention to some sections of it. There was no attempt at eloquence or any kind of learning displayed, but he understood, as he listened, where the Quinns got their religion, or at least how their religion was kept alive. Certain very simple things were reiterated with a quiet earnestness which left no doubt that the preacher believed exactly what he said, and lived by the light of his faith.

One evening shortly afterwards Canon Beecher called upon Hyacinth. The conversation during the visit resolved itself into a kind of catechism, which, curiously enough, was quite inoffensive. The Canon learnt by degrees something of Hyacinth's past life, and his career in Trinity College. He shook his head gravely over the friendship with Augusta Gould, whom he evidently regarded as almost beyond the reach of the grace of God. Hyacinth was forced to admit, with an increasing sense of shame, that he had never signed a temperance pledge, did not read the organ of the Church Missionary Society, was not a member of a Young Men's Christian Association, or even of a Gleaners' Union. He felt, as he made each confession sorrowfully, that he was losing all hope of the Canon's friendship, and was most agreeably surprised when the interview closed with a warm invitation to a mid-day dinner at the Rectory on the following Sunday. Mrs. Quinn, who took a sort of elder sister's interest in his goings out and comings in, was delighted when she heard that he was going to the Rectory, and assured him that he would like both Mrs. Beecher and the girls. She confided afterwards to her husband that the influence of a Christian home was likely to be most beneficial to the 'poor boy.'

The Rectory displayed none of the signs of easy comfort which had charmed Hyacinth in the Quinns' house. The floor of the square hall was covered with a cheap, well-worn oilcloth. Its walls were damp-stained, and the only furniture consisted of a wooden chair and a somewhat rickety table. In the middle of the wall hung a large olive-green card with silver lettering. 'Christ is the unseen Guest in this house,' Hyacinth read, 'the Sharer in every pleasure, the Listener to every conversation.' A fortnight before, he would have turned with disgust from such an advertisement, but now, since he had known the Quinns and listened to the Canon's wandering sermons, he looked at it with different eyes. He felt that the words might actually express a fact, and that a family might live together as if they believed them to be true.

'Yes,' said the Canon, who had come in with him, and saw him gaze at it, 'these motto-cards are very nice. I bought several of them last time I was in Dublin, and I think I have a spare one left which I can give you if you like. It has silver letters like that one, but printed on a crimson ground.'

Evidently the design and the colouring were what struck him as noticeable. The motto itself was a commonplace of Christian living, the expression of a basal fact, quite naturally hung where it would catch the eye of chance visitors.

In the drawing-room Mrs. Beecher and her two daughters, still in their hats and gloves, stood round a turf fire. They made a place at once for Hyacinth, and one of the girls drew forward a rickety basket-work chair, covered with faded cretonne. He was formally introduced to them. Miss Beecher and Miss Elsie Beecher had both, the latter very recently, reached the dignity of young womanhood, and wore long dresses. The three boys, who were younger, were made known afterwards.

When they went into the dining-room the Canon selected the soundest of a miscellaneous collection of chairs for Hyacinth, and seated him beside Mrs. Beecher. Then the elder girl--Miss Beecher's name, he learnt, was Marion--entered in a long apron carrying a boiled leg of mutton followed by her sister with dishes of potatoes and mashed parsnips.

'You see,' said Mrs. Beecher, and there was no note of apology in her voice as she made the explanation, 'my girls are accustomed to do a good deal of the house-work. We have only one servant, and she is not very presentable when she has just cooked the dinner.'

Hyacinth glanced at Marion Beecher, who smiled at him with frank friendliness, as she took her seat beside her father. He saw suddenly that the girl was beautiful. He had not noticed this in church. There he had no opportunity of observing the subtle grace with which she moved, and the half-light left unrevealed the lustrous purity of her complexion, the radiant red and white which only the warm damp of the western seaboard can give or preserve. Her eyes he had seen even in the church, but now first he realized what unfathomable gentleness and what a wonder of frank innocence were in them. The Canon looked round the table at his children, and there was a humorous twinkle in his eye when he turned to Hyacinth and quoted:

"Your sons shall grow up as young plants, and your daughters shall be as the polished corners of the temple."

Perhaps nine-tenths of civilized mankind would regard five children as five misfortunes under any circumstances, as quite overwhelming when they have been showered on a man with a very small income, who is obliged to live in a remote corner of Ireland. Apparently the Canon did not look upon himself as an afflicted man at all. There was an unmistakable sincerity about the way in which he completed his quotation:

"Lo! thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord."

It dawned on Hyacinth that quite possibly the Canon's view of the situation might be the right one. It was certainly wonderfully pleasant to see the girls move through the room, and it seemed to him that they actually realized the almost forgotten ideal of serviceable womanhood. The talk at dinner turned first on the ailments of an old woman who was accustomed to clean the church, but was now suspected of being past her work; then, by an abrupt transition, on the new hat which the bank-manager's wife had brought home from Dublin; and, finally, the connection of thought being again far from obvious, on the hymns which had been sung that morning. It was at this point that Hyacinth was included in the conversation. Marion Beecher announced that one of the hymns was a special favourite of hers, because she remembered her mother singing the younger children to sleep with it when they were babies. She caught Hyacinth looking at her while she spoke, and said to him:

'Do you sing, Mr. Conneally?'

'I do a little.'

'Oh, then you must come and help us in the choir.' 'Choir' seemed a grandiose name for the four Beechers and Mr. Quinn, but Marion, who had little experience of anything better, had no misgivings. 'I hope you sing tenor. I always long to have a tenor in my choir. Why, we might have one of Bamby's anthems at Easter, and we haven't been able to sing one since Mr. Nash left the bank.'

Hyacinth had never sung a part in his life, and could not read music, but he grew bold, and, professing to have an excellent ear, said he was willing to learn. The prospect of a long series of choir practices conducted by Marion Beecher seemed to him just then an extremely pleasant one.

After dinner, while the two girls cleared away the plates and dishes, Canon Beecher invited Hyacinth to smoke.

'I never learnt the habit myself,' he said. 'It wasn't so much the fashion in my young days as it is now, but I have no objection whatever to the smell.'

Hyacinth lit a cigarette apologetically. It seemed to him almost a wicked thing to do, but his host evidently wished him to be comfortable. Their talk after the girls had left the room turned on politics. Hyacinth's confession of his friendship with Augusta Gould had impressed the Canon, and he delivered himself of a very kindly little lecture on the duty of loyalty and the sinfulness of contention with the powers that be. His way of putting the matter neither irritated Hyacinth, like the flamboyant Imperialism of the Trinity students, nor drove him into self-assertion, like Dr. Henry's contemptuous reasonableness. Still, he felt bound to make some sort of defence of the opinions which were still his own.

'Surely,' he said, 'there must be some limit to the duty of loyalty. If a Government has no constitutional right to rule, is a man bound to be loyal to it?'

'I think,' said the Canon, 'that the question is decided for us. Is it not, Mr. Conneally? "Render unto Caesar"--you

remember the verse. Even if the Government were as unconstitutional as you appear to think, it would not be more so than the Roman Government of Judaea when these words were spoken.'

Hyacinth pondered this answer. It opened up to him an entirely new way of looking at the subject, and he could see that it might be necessary for a Christian to acquiesce without an attempt at resistance in any Government which happened to exist.

He remembered other verses in the New Testament which could be quoted even more conclusively in favour of this passive obedience. Yet he felt that there must be a fallacy lurking somewhere. It was, on the face of it, an obvious absurdity to think that a man, because he happened to be a Christian, was therefore bound to submit to any form of tyranny or oppression.

'Suppose,' he said--'I only say suppose--that a Government did immoral things, that it robbed or allowed evil-disposed people to rob, would it still be right to be loyal?'

'I think so,' said the Canon quietly.

Hyacinth looked at him in astonishment.

'Do you mean to say that you yourself would be loyal under such circumstances?'

'I prefer not to discuss the question in that personal way, but the Church to which you and I belong is loyal still, although the Government has robbed us of our property and our position, and although it is now allowing our people to be robbed still further.'

'You mean by the Disestablishment and the Land Acts?'

'Yes. I think it is our great glory that our loyalty is imperishable, that it survives even such treatment as we have received and are receiving.'

'That is very beautiful,' said Hyacinth slowly. 'I see that there is a great nobility in such loyalty, although I do not even wish to share it myself. You see, I am an Irishman, and I want to see my country great and free.'

'I suppose,' said the Canon, 'that it is very natural that we should love the spot on earth in which we live. I think that I love Ireland too. But we must remember that our citizenship is in heaven, and it seems to me that any departure from the laws of the King of that country dishonours us, and even dishonours the earthly country which we call our own.'

Hyacinth said nothing. There flashed across him a recollection of Augusta Gould's hope that some final insult would one day goad the Irish Protestants into disloyalty. Clearly, if Canon Beecher was to be regarded as a type, she had no conception of the religious spirit of the Church of Ireland. But was there anyone else like this clergyman? He did not know, but he guessed that his friends the Quinns would think of the matter in somewhat the same way. It seemed to him quite possible that in scattered and remote parishes this strangely unreasonable conception of Christianity might survive. After a pause the Canon went on:

'You must not think that I do not love Ireland too. I look forward to seeing her free some day, but with the freedom of the Gospel. It will not be in my time, I know, but surely it will come to pass. Our people have still the simple faith of the early ages, and they have many very beautiful virtues. They only want the dawn of the Dayspring from on high to shine on them, and then Ireland will be once more the Island of Saints--*insula sanctorum*.' He dwelt tenderly on the two words. 'I do not think it will matter much then what earthly Government bears rule over us. But come, I see that you have finished your smoke, and I must go to my study to think over my sermon.'

When Hyacinth entered the drawing-room the girls surrounded him, asking him for answers to a printed list of questions. It appeared that the committee of a bazaar for some charity in which it was right to be interested had issued a sort of examination-paper, and promised a prize to the best answerer. The questions were all of one kind: 'What is the Modern Athens--the Eternal City--the City of the Tribes? Who was the Wizard of the North--the Bulwark of the Protestant Faith? The earlier names on the list presented little difficulty to Hyacinth. Marion took down his answers, whilst Elsie murmured a pleasant chorus of astonishment at his cleverness. Suddenly he came to a dead stop. 'Who was the Martyr of Melanesia?'

'I have never heard of him,' said Hyacinth.

'Never heard of the Martyr of Melanesia!' said Elsie. 'Why, we knew that at once.'

'Yes,' said Marion, 'there was an article on him in last month's *Gleaner*. Surely you read the *Gleaner*, Mr. Conneally?'

Hyacinth felt Marion's eyes fixed on him with something of a reproach in them. He wrestled with a vague recollection of having somewhere heard the name of the periodical. For a moment he thought of risking cross-questioning, and saying that he had only missed the last number. Then he suddenly remembered the card with silver lettering which hung above his coat in the hall, and told the truth with even a quite unnecessary aggravation.

'No, I never remember seeing a copy of it in my life. I don't even know what it is about.'

'Oh!' said the girls, round-eyed with horror. 'Just think! And we all have collecting-boxes.'

'It is a missionary periodical,' said Marion. 'It has news in it from every corner of the mission-field, and every month a

list of the stations that specially need our prayers.'

Hyacinth left the Rectory that night with three well-read numbers of the *Gleaner* in his pocket.

Afterwards he had many talks with Canon Beecher and the Quinns about the work of the missionary societies. He learnt, to his surprise, that really immense sums of money were subscribed every year by members of the Church of Ireland for the conversion of the heathen in very remote parts of the world. It could not be denied that these contributions represented genuine self-denial. Young men went without a sufficiency of tobacco, and refrained from buying sorely-needed new tennis-racquets. Ladies, with the smallest means at their command, reared marketable chickens, and sold their own marmalade and cakes. In such ways, and not from the superfluity of the rich, many thousands of pounds were gathered annually. It was still more wonderful to him to discover that large numbers of young men and women, and these the most able and energetic, devoted themselves to this foreign service, and that their brothers and sisters at home were banded together in unions to watch their doings and to pray for them. He found himself entirely untouched by this enthusiasm, in spite of the beautiful expression it found in the lives of his new friends.

But it astonished him greatly that there should be this potent energy in the Irish Church. The utter helplessness of its Bishops and clergy in Irish affairs, the total indifference of its people to every effort at national regeneration, had led him to believe that the Church itself was moribund. Now he discovered that there was in it an amazing vitality, a capacity of giving birth to enthusiastic souls. The knowledge brought with it first of all a feeling of intense irritation. It seemed to him that all religions were in league against Ireland. The Roman Church seized the scanty savings of one section of the people, and squandered them in buying German glass and Italian marble. Were the Protestants any better, when they spent PS20,000 a year on Chinamen and negroes? The Roman Catholics took the best of their boys and girls to make priests and nuns of them. The Protestants were doing the same thing when they shipped off their young men and young women to spend their strength among savages. Both were robbing Ireland of what Ireland needed most--money and vitality. He would not say, even to himself, that all this religious enthusiasm was so much ardour wasted. No doubt the Roman priest did good work in Chicago, as the Protestant missionary did in Uganda; only it seemed to him that of all lands Ireland needed most the service and the prayers of those of her children who had the capacity of self-forgetfulness. Afterwards, when he thought more deeply, he found a great hope in the very existence of all this altruistic enthusiasm. He had a vision of all that might be done for Ireland if only the splendid energy of her own children could be used in her service. He tried more than once to explain his point of view. Mr. Quinn met him with blank disbelief in any possible future for Ireland.

'The country is doomed,' he said. 'The people are lazy, thriftless, and priest-ridden. The best of them are flying to America, and those that remain are dying away, drifting into lunatic asylums, hospitals, and workhouses. There is a curse upon us. In another twenty years there will be no Irish people--at least, none in Ireland. Then the English and Scotch will come and make something of the country.'

From Canon Beecher he met with scarcely more sympathy or understanding.

'Yes,' he admitted, 'no doubt we ought to make more efforts than we do to convert our fellow-countrymen. But it is very difficult to see how we are to go to work. There is one society which exists for this purpose. Its friends are full of the very kind of enthusiasm which you describe. I could point you out plenty of its agents whose whole souls are in their work, but you know as well as I do how completely they are failing.'

'But,' said Hyacinth, 'I do not in the least mean that we should start more missions to Roman Catholics. It does not seem to me to matter much what kind of religion a man professes, and I should be most unwilling to uproot anyone's belief. What we ought to do is throw our whole force and energy into the work of regenerating Ireland. It is possible for us to do this, and we ought to try.'

'Well, well,' said the Canon, 'I must not let you make me argue with you, Conneally; but I hope you won't preach these doctrines of yours to my daughters. I think it is better for them to drop their pennies into missionary collecting-boxes, and leave the tangled problems of Irish politics to those better able to understand them than we are.'

CHAPTER XV

There are certain professions, in themselves honest, useful, and even estimable, for which society has agreed to entertain a feeling of contempt. It is, for instance, very difficult to think of a curate as anything except a butt for satirists, or to be respectful to the profession of tailoring, although many a man for private pecuniary reasons is meek before the particular individual who makes his clothes. Yet the novelist and the playwright, who hold the mirror up to modern humanity, are occasionally kind even to curates and tailors. There is a youthful athlete in Holy Orders who thrashes, to our immense admiration, the village bully, bewildering his victim and his admirers with his mastery of what is described a little vaguely as the 'old Oxford science.' Once, at least, a glamour of romance has been shed over the son of a tailor, and it becomes imaginable that even the chalker of unfinished coats may in the future be posed as heroic. There is still, however, a profession which no eccentric novelist has ever ventured to represent as other than entirely contemptible. The commercial traveller is beneath satire, and outside the region of sympathy. If he appears at all in fiction or on the stage, he is irredeemably vulgar. He is never heroic, never even a villain, rarely comic, always, poor man, objectionable. This is a peculiar thing in the literature of a people like the English, who are not ashamed to glory in their commercial success, and are always ready to cheer a politician who professes to have the interests of trade at heart. Amid the current eulogies of the working man and the apotheosis of the beings called 'Captains of Industry,' the bagman surely ought to find at least an apologist. Without him it seems likely that many articles would fail to find a place in the windows of the provincial shopkeepers. Without him large sections of the public would probably remain ignorant for years of new brands of cigarettes, and dyspeptic people might never come across the foods which Americans prepare for their use.

Also the individual bagman is often not without his charm. He knows, if not courts and princes, at least hotels and railway companies. He is on terms of easy familiarity with every 'boots' in several counties. He can calculate to a nicety how long a train is likely to be delayed by a fair 'somewhere along the line.' He is also full of information about local politics. In Connaught, for instance, an experienced member of the profession will gauge for you the exact strength of the existing League in any district. He knows what publicans may be regarded as 'priest's men,' and who have leanings towards independence. His knowledge is frequently minute, and he can prophesy the result of a District Council election by reckoning up the number of leading men who read the *United Irishman*, and weighing them against those who delight in the pages of the *Leader*. The men who can do these things are themselves local. They reside in their district, and, as a rule, push the sales and collect the debts of local brewers and flour-merchants. The representatives of the larger English firms only make their rounds twice or three times a year, and are less interesting. They pay the penalty of being cosmopolitan, and tend to become superficial in their judgment of men and things.

Hyacinth, like most members of the public, was ignorant of the greatness and interest of his new profession. He entered upon it with some misgiving, and viewed his trunk of sample blankets and shawls with disgust. Even a new overcoat, though warm and weatherproof, afforded him little joy, being itself a sample of Mr. Quinn's frieze. One thought alone cheered him, and even generated a little enthusiasm for his work. It occurred to him that in selling the produce of the Ballymoy Mill he was advancing the industrial revival of Ireland. He knew that other people, quite heroic figures, were working for the same end. A Government Board found joyous scope for the energies of its officials in giving advice to people who wanted to cure fish or make lace. It earned the blessing which is to rest upon those who are reviled and evil spoken of, for no one, except literary people, who write for English magazines, ever had a good word for it. There were also those--their activity took the form of letters to the newspapers--who desired to utilize the artistic capacity of the Celt, and to enrich the world with beautiful fabrics and carpentry. They, too, were workers in the cause of the revival. Then there were great ladies, the very cream of the Anglo-Irish aristocracy, who petted tweeds and stockings, and offered magnificent prizes to industrious cottagers. They earned quite large sums of money for their proteges by holding sales in places like Belfast and Manchester, where titles can be judiciously cheapened to a wealthy bourgeoisie, and the wives of ship-builders and cotton-spinners will spend cheerfully in return for the privilege of shaking hands with a Countess. A crowd of minor enthusiasts fostered such industries as sprigging, and there was one man who believed that the future prosperity of Ireland might be secured by teaching people to make dolls. It was altogether a noble army, and even a commercial traveller might hold his head high in the world if he counted himself one of its soldiers. Hitherto results have not been at all commensurate with the amount of printer's ink expended in magazine articles and advertisements. Yet something has been accomplished. Nunneries here and there have been induced to accept presents of knitting-machines, and people have begun to regard as somehow sacred the words 'technical education.' The National Board of Education has also spent a large sum of money in reviving among its teachers the almost forgotten art of making paper boats.

Hyacinth very soon discovered that his patriotic view of this work did not commend itself to his brother travellers. He found that they had no feeling but one of contempt for people whom they regarded as meddling amateurs. Occasionally, when some convent, under a bustling Mother Superior, advanced from the region of half-charitable sales at exhibitions into the competition of the open market, contempt became dislike, and wishes were expressed in quite

unsuitable language that the good ladies would mind their own proper business. Until Hyacinth learnt to conceal his hopes of Ireland's future as a manufacturing country he was regarded with suspicion. No one, of course, objected to his making what use he could of patriotism as an advertisement, but he was given to understand that, like other advertisements, it could not be quoted among the initiated without a serious breach of good manners. Even as an advertisement it was not rated highly.

There was an elderly gentleman, stout and somewhat bibulous, who superintended the consumption of certain brands of American cigarettes in the province of Connaught. Hyacinth met him in the exceedingly dirty Railway Hotel at Knock. Since there were no other guests, and the evening was wet, the two were thrown upon each other's society in the commercial-room.

'I don't think,' said Mr. Hollywell, in reply to a remark of Hyacinth's, 'that there's the least use trying to drag patriotic sentiment into business. Of course, since you represent an Irish house--woollen goods, I think you said--you're quite right to run the fact for all it's worth. I don't in the least blame you. Only I don't think you'll find it pays.'

He sipped his whisky-and-water--it was still early, and he had only arrived at his third glass--and then proceeded to give his personal experience.

'Now, I work for an American firm. If there was any force in the patriotic idea I shouldn't sell a single cigarette. My people are in the big tobacco combine. You must have read the sort of things the newspapers wrote about us when we started. From any point of view, British Imperial or Irish National, we should have been boycotted long ago if patriotism had anything to do with trade. But look at the facts. Our chief rivals in this district are two Irish firms. They advertise in Gaelic, which is a mistake to start with, because nobody can read it. They get the newspaper people to write articles recommending a "great home industry" to public support. They get local branches of all the different leagues to pass resolutions pledging their members to smoke only Irish tobacco. But until quite lately they simply didn't have a look in.'

'Why?' asked Hyacinth. 'Were your things cheaper or better?'

'No,' said the other, 'I don't think they were either. You see, prices are bound to come out pretty even in the long run, and I should say that, if anything, they sold a slightly better article. It's hard to say exactly why we beat them. When competition is really keen a lot of little things that you would hardly notice make all the difference. For one thing, I get a free hand in the matter of subscribing to local bazaars and race-meetings. I've often taken as much as a pound's worth of tickets for a five-pound note that some priest was raffling in aid of a new chapel. It's wonderful the orders you can get from shopkeepers in that kind of way. Then, we get our things up better. Look at that.'

He handed Hyacinth a highly-glazed packet with a picture of a handsome brown dog on it.

'Keep it,' said Mr. Hollywell. 'I give away twenty or thirty of those packets every week. Now look inside. What have you? Oh, H.M.S. *Majestic*. That's one of a series of photos of "Britain's first line of defence." Lots of people go on buying those cigarettes just to get a complete collection of the photos. We supply an album to keep them in for one and sixpence. There's another of our makes which has pictures of actresses and pretty women. They are extraordinarily popular. They're perfectly all right, of course, from the moral point of view, but one in every ten is in tights or sitting with her legs very much crossed, just to keep up the expectation. It's very queer the people who go for those photos. You'd expect it to be young men, but it isn't.'

The subject was not particularly interesting to Hyacinth, but since his companion was evidently anxious to go on talking, he asked the expected question.

'Young women,' said Mr. Hollywell. 'I found it out quite by accident. I got a lot of complaints from one particular town that our cigarettes had no photos with them. I discovered after a while that a girl in one of the principal shops had hit on a dodge for getting out the photos without apparently injuring the packets. The funny thing was that she never touched the ironclads or the "Types of the soldiers of all nations," which you might have thought would interest her, but she collared every single actress, and had duplicates of most of them. And she wasn't an exception. Most girls goad their young men to buy these cigarettes and make collections of the photos. Queer, isn't it? I can't imagine why they do it.'

'You said just now,' said Hyacinth, 'that latterly you hadn't done quite so well. Did you run out of actresses and battleships?'

'No; but one of the Irish firms took to offering prizes and enclosing coupons. You collected twenty coupons, and you got a silver-backed looking-glass--girls again, you see--or two thousand coupons, and you got a new bicycle. It's an old dodge, of course, but somehow it always seems to pay. However, all this doesn't matter to you. All I wanted was to show you that there is no use relying on patriotism. The thing to go in for in any business is attractive novelties, cheap lines, and, in the country shops, long credit.'

It was not very long before Hyacinth began to realize the soundness of Mr. Hollywell's contempt for patriotism. In the town of Clogher he found the walls placarded with the advertisements of an ultra-patriotic draper. 'Feach Annseo,' he read, 'The Irish House. Support Home Manufactures.' Another placard was even more vehement in its appeal. 'Why curse England,' it asked, 'and support her manufactures?' Try O'Reilly, the one-price man.' The sentiments were so

admirable that Hyacinth followed the advice and tried O'Reilly.

The shop was crowded when he entered, for it was market day in Clogher. The Irish country-people, whose manners otherwise are the best in the world, have one really objectionable habit. In the street or in a crowded building they push their way to the spot they want to reach, without the smallest regard for the feelings of anyone who happens to be in the way. Sturdy country-women, carrying baskets which doubled the passage room they required, hustled Hyacinth into a corner, and for a time defeated his efforts to emerge. Getting his case of samples safely between his legs, he amused himself watching the patriot shopkeeper and his assistants conducting their business. It was perfectly obvious that in one respect the announcements of the attractive placard departed from the truth: O'Reilly was not a 'one-price man,' He charged for every article what he thought his customers were likely to pay. The result was that every sale involved prolonged bargaining and heated argument. In most cases no harm was done. The country-women were keenly alive to the value of their money, and evidently enjoyed the process of beating down the price by halfpennies until the real value of the article was reached. Then Mr. O'Reilly and his assistants were accustomed to close the haggale with a beautiful formula:

'To *you*,' they said, with confidential smiles and flattering emphasis on the pronoun--'to *you* the price will be one and a penny; but, really, there will be no profit on the sale.'

Occasionally with timid and inexperienced customers O'Reilly's method proved its value. Hyacinth saw him sell a dress-length of serge to a young woman with a baby in her arms for a penny a yard more than he had charged a moment before for the same material. Another thing which struck him as he watched was the small amount of actual cash which was paid across the counter. Most of the women, even those who seemed quite poor, had accounts in the shop, and did not shrink from increasing them. Once or twice a stranger presented some sort of a letter of introduction, and was at once accommodated with apparently unlimited credit.

At length there was a lull in the business, and Hyacinth succeeded in spreading his goods on a vacant counter, and attracting the attention of Mr. O'Reilly. He began with shawls.

'I hope,' he said, 'that you will give me a good order for these shawls.'

Mr. O'Reilly fingered them knowingly.

'Price?' he said.

Hyacinth mentioned a sum which left a fair margin of profit for Mr. Quinn. O'Reilly shook his head and laughed.

'Can't do it.'

Hyacinth reduced his price at once as far as possible.

'No use,' said Mr. O'Reilly.

Compared with the suave oratory to which he treated his customers, this extreme economy of words was striking.

'See here,' he said, producing a bundle of shawls from a shelf beside him. 'I get these for twenty-five shillings a dozen less from Thompson and Taylor of Manchester.'

Hyacinth looked at them curiously. Each bore a prominent label setting forth a name for the garment in large letters surrounded with wreaths of shamrocks. 'The Colleen Bawn,' he read, 'Erin's Own,' 'The Kathleen Mavourneen,' 'The Cruiskeen Lawn.' The appropriateness of this last title was not obvious to the mere Irishman, but the colour of the garment was green, so perhaps there was a connection of thought in the maker's mind between that and 'Lawn.' 'Cruiskeen' he may have taken for the name of a place.

'Are these,' asked Hyacinth, 'what you advertise as Irish goods?'

Mr. O'Reilly cleared his throat twice before he replied.

'They are got up specially for the Irish market.' In the interests of his employer Hyacinth kept his temper, but the effort was a severe one.

'These,' he said, 'are half cotton. Mine are pure wool. They are really far better value even if they were double the price.'

Mr. O'Reilly shrugged his shoulders.

'I don't say they're not, but I should not sell one of yours for every dozen of the others.'

'Try,' said Hyacinth; 'give them a fair chance. Tell the people that they will last twice as long. Tell them that they are made in Ireland.'

'That would not be the slightest use. They would simply laugh in my face. My customers don't care a pin where the goods are made. I have never in my life been asked for Irish manufacture.'

'Then, why on earth do you stick up those advertisements?' said Hyacinth, pointing to the 'Feach Annseo' which appeared on a hoarding across the street.

Mr. O'Reilly was perfectly frank and unashamed.

'The other drapery house in the town is owned by a Scotchman, and of course it pays more or less to keep on saying

that I am Irish. Besides, I mean to stand for the Urban Council in March, and those sort of ads. are useful at an election, even if they are no good for business.'

'I'll tell you what I'll do,' said Hyacinth, shirking a discussion on the morality of advertising: 'I'll let you have a dozen shawls at cost price, and take back what you can't sell, if you give me your word to do your best for them.'

Similar discussions followed the display of serges and blankets. It appeared that nice-looking goods could be sent over from England at lower prices. It was vain for Hyacinth to press the fact that his things were better. Mr. O'Reilly admitted as much.

'But what am I to do? The people don't want what is good. They want a cheap article which looks well, and they don't care a pin whether the thing is made in England, Ireland, or America. Take my advice,' he added as Hyacinth left the shop: 'get your boss to do inferior lines--cheap, cheap and showy.'

So far Mr. Hollywell's opinions were entirely justified. The appeal of the patriotic press to the public and the shopkeepers on behalf of the industrial revival of Ireland had certainly not affected the town of Clogher. Hyacinth was bitterly disappointed; but hope, when it is born of enthusiasm, dies hard, and he was greatly interested in a speech which he read one day in the 'Mayo Telegraph'. It had been made at a meeting of the League by an Ardnaree shopkeeper called Dowling. A trade rival--the fact of the rivalry was not emphasized--had advertised in a Scotch paper for a milliner. Dowling was exceedingly indignant. He quoted emigration statistics showing the number of girls who left Mayo every year for the United States. He pointed out that all of them might be employed at home, as milliners or otherwise, if only the public would boycott shops which sold English goods or employed Scotch milliners. He more than suspected that the obnoxious advertisement was part of an organized attempt to effect a new plantation of Connaught--'worse than Cromwell's was.' The fact that Connaught was the only part of Ireland which Cromwell did not propose to plant escaped the notice of both Mr. Dowling and his audience. The speech concluded with a passionate peroration and a verse, no doubt declaimed soundingly, of 'The West's Awake.'

Hyacinth made an expedition to Ardnaree, and called hopefully on the orator. His reception was depressing in the extreme. The shop, which was large and imposing, was stocked with goods which were obviously English, and Mr. Dowling curtly refused even to look at the samples of Mr. Quinn's manufactures. Hyacinth quoted his own speech to the man, and was amazed at the cynical indifference with which he ignored the dilemma.

'Business is one thing,' he said, 'and politics is something entirely different.'

Hyacinth lost his temper completely.

'I shall write to the papers,' he said, 'and expose you. I shall have your speech reprinted, and along with it an account of the way you conduct your business.'

A mean, hard smile crossed Mr. Dowling's mouth before he answered:

'Perhaps you don't know that my wife is the Archbishop's niece?'

Hyacinth stared at him. For a minute or two he entirely failed to understand what Mrs. Dowling's relationship to a great ecclesiastic had to do with the question. At last a light broke on him.

'You mean that an editor wouldn't print my letter because he would be afraid of offending a Roman Catholic Archbishop?'

The expression 'Roman Catholic' caught Mr. Dowling's attention.

'Are you a Protestant?' he asked. 'You are--a dirty Protestant--and you dare to come here into my own house, and insult me and trample on my religious convictions. I'm a Catholic and a member of the League. What do you mean, you Souper, you Sour-face, by talking to me about Irish manufactures? Get out of this house, and go to the hell that's waiting for you!'

As Hyacinth turned to go, there flashed across his mind the recollection of Miss Gould and her friends who wrote for the *Croppy*.

'There's one paper in Ireland, anyhow,' he said, 'which is not afraid of your wife nor your Archbishop. I'll write to the *Croppy*, and you'll see if they won't publish the facts.'

Mr. Dowling grinned.

'I don't care if they do,' he said. 'The priests are dead against the *Croppy*, and there's hardly a man in the town reads it. Go up there now to Hely's and try if you can buy a copy. I tell you it isn't on sale here at all, and whatever they publish will do me no harm.'

When Hyacinth returned to the hotel he found Mr. Hollywell seated, with the inevitable whisky-and-water beside him, in the commercial-room.

'Well, Mr. Conneally,' he said, 'and how is patriotism paying you? Find people ready to buy what's Irish?'

Hyacinth, boiling over with indignation, related his experience with Mr. Dowling.

'What did I tell you?' said Mr. Hollywell. 'But anyhow you're just as well out of a deal with that fellow. I wouldn't care

to do business with him myself. I happen to know, and you may take my word for it '--his voice sunk to a confidential whisper--that he's very deep in the books of two English firms, and that he daren't--simply daren't--place an order with anyone else. They'd have him in the Bankruptcy Court to-morrow if he did. I shouldn't feel easy with Mr. Dowling's cheque for an account until I saw how the clerk took it across the bank counter. You mark my words, there'll be a fire in that establishment before the year's out.'

The prophecy was fulfilled, as Hyacinth learnt from the *Mayo Telegraphy* and Mr. Dowling's whole stock of goods was consumed. There were rumours that a sceptical insurance company made difficulties about paying the compensation demanded; but the inhabitants of Ardnaree marked their confidence in the husband of an Archbishop's niece by presenting him with an address of sympathy and a purse containing ten sovereigns.

Most of Hyacinth's business was done with small shopkeepers in remote districts. The country-people who lived out of reach of such centres of fashion as Ardnaree and Clogher were sufficiently unsophisticated to prefer things which were really good. Hats and bonnets were not quite universal among the women in the mountain districts far back where they spoke Irish, and Mr. Quinn's head-kerchiefs were still in request. Even the younger women wanted garments which would keep them warm and dry, and Hyacinth often returned well satisfied from a tour of the country shops. Sometimes he doubted whether he ought to trust the people with more than a few pounds' worth of goods, but he gradually learnt that, unlike the patriotic Mr. Dowling, they were universally honest. He discovered, too, that these people, with their imperfect English and little knowledge of the world, were exceedingly shrewd. They had very little real confidence in oratorical politicians, and their interest in public affairs went no further than voting consistently for the man their priest recommended. But they quickly understood Hyacinth's arguments when he told them that the support of Irish manufactures would help to save their sons and daughters from the curse of emigration.

'Faith, sir,' said a shopkeeper who kept a few blankets and tweeds among his flour-sacks and porter-barrels, 'since you were talking to the boys last month, I couldn't induce one of them to take the foreign stuff if I was to offer him a shilling along with it.'

CHAPTER XVI

When he returned to Ballymoy after his interview with Mr. Dowling, Hyacinth set himself to fulfil his threat of writing to the *Croppy*. He spent Saturday afternoon and evening in his lodgings with the paper containing the blatant speech spread out before him. He blew his anger to a white heat by going over the evidence of the man's grotesque hypocrisy. He wrote and rewrote his article. It was his first attempt at expressing thought on paper since the days when he sought to satisfy examiners with disquisitions on Dryden's dramatic talent and other topics suited to the undergraduate mind. This was a different business. It was no longer a question of filling a sheet of foolscap with grammatical sentences, discovering synonyms for words hard to spell. Now thoughts were hot in him, and the art lay in finding words which would blister and scorch. Time after time he tore up a page of bombast or erased ridiculous flamboyancies. Late at night, with a burning head and ice-cold feet, he made his last copy, folded it up, and, distrusting the cooler criticism of the morning, went out and posted it to the *Croppy*.

A letter from Miss Goold overtook him the following Thursday in the hotel at Clogher.

'I was delighted to hear from you again,' she wrote. 'I was afraid you had cut me altogether, gone over to the respectable people, and forgotten poor Ireland. Captain Quinn told me that you and he had quarrelled, and I gathered that you rather disapproved of him. Well, he was a bit of a blackguard; but, after all, one doesn't expect a man who takes on a job of that kind to be anything else. I never thought it would suit you, and you will do me the justice of remembering that I never wanted you to volunteer. Now about your article. It was admirable. These "Cheap Patriots"--it was thus the article was headed--are just the creatures we want to scarify. Dowling and his kind are the worst enemies Ireland has to-day. We'll publish anything of that kind you send us, and remember we're not the least afraid of anybody. It's a grand thing for a paper to be as impecunious as the *Croppy*. No man but a fool would take a libel action against us with any hope of getting damages. A jury might value Dowling's character at any fantastic sum they chose, but it would be a poor penny the *Croppy* would pay. Still, we're not so hard up that we can't give our contributors something, and next week you'll get a small cheque from the office. I hope it may encourage you to send us more. Don't be afraid to speak out. If anything peculiarly seditious occurs to you, write it in Irish. I know it's all the same to you which language you write in. Do us half a column every fortnight or so on Western life and politics.'

Hyacinth was absurdly elated by Miss Goold's praise. He made up his mind to contribute regularly to the *Croppy*, and had visions of a great future as a journalist, or perhaps a literary exponent of the ideas of Independent Ireland.

Meanwhile, he became very intimate both with the Quinns and with Canon Beecher's family. Mrs. Quinn was an enthusiastic gardener, and early in the spring Hyacinth helped her with her flowerbeds. He learnt to plait the foliage of faded crocuses, and pin them tidily to the ground with little wooden forks. He gathered suitable earth for the boxes in which begonias made their earliest sprout-ings, and learned to know the daffodils and tulips by their names. Later on he helped Mr. Quinn to mow the grass and mix a potent weed-killer for the gravel walks. There came to be an understanding that, whenever he was not absent on a journey, he spent the latter part of the afternoon and the evening with the Quinns. As the days lengthened the family tea was pushed back to later and later hours to give more time out of doors.

There is something about the very occupation of gardening which is deadening to enthusiasm. Perhaps a man learns patience by familiarity with growing plants. Nature is never in a hurry in a garden, and there is no use in trying to hustle a flower, whereas a great impatience is the very life-spirit of enthusiastic patriotism. There has probably never been a revolutionary gardener, or even a strong Radical who worked with open-air flowers. Of course, in greenhouses things can be forced, and the spirit of the ardent reformer may find expression in the nurture of premature blooms. Perhaps also the constant stooping which gardening necessitates, especially in the early spring, when the weeds grow plentifully, tends to destroy the stiff mental independence which must be the attitude of the militant patriot. It is very difficult for a man who has stooped long enough to have conquered his early cramps and aches to face the problems of politics with uncompromising rigidity. Hyacinth recognised with a curious qualm of disgust that his thoughts turned less and less to Ireland's wrongs and Ireland's future as he learnt to care for the flowers and the grass.

No doubt, too, the atmosphere of the Quinns' family life was not congenial to the spirit of the Irish politician. Mrs. Quinn was totally uninterested in politics, and except a prejudice in favour of what she called loyalty, had absolutely no views on any question which did not directly affect her home and her children. Mr. Quinn had a coldly-reasonable political and economic creed, which acted on the luxuriant fancies of Hyacinth's enthusiasm as his weed-killer did on the tender green of the paths. He declined altogether to see any good in supporting Irish manufactures simply because they were Irish. The story of O'Reilly's attitude towards his shawls moved him to no indignation.

'I think he's perfectly right,' he said. 'If a man can buy cheap shawls in England he would be a fool to pay more for Irish ones. Business can't be run on those lines. I'm not an object of charity, and if I can't meet fair competition I must go under, and it's right that I should go under.'

Hyacinth had no answer to give. He shirked the point at issue, and attacked Mr. Quinn along another line in the hope

of arousing his indignation.

'But it is not fair competition that you are called upon to face. Do you call it fair competition when the Government subsidizes a woollen factory in a convent?'

'Ah!' said Mr. Quinn, 'you are thinking of the four thousand pounds the Congested Districts Board gave to the convent at Robeen. But it is hardly fair to hold the Government responsible for the way that body wastes eighty thousand pounds a year.'

'The Government is ultimately responsible, and you must admit that, after such a gift, and in view of the others which will certainly follow, you are called upon to meet most unfair competition.'

'Yes, I admit that. But isn't that exactly what you want to make general? There doesn't seem to me any difference between giving a bounty to one industry and imposing a protective tariff in favour of another; and if your preference for Irish manufactures means anything, it means a sort of voluntary protection for every business in the country. If you object to the Robeen business being subsidized you can't logically try to insist on mine being protected.'

It was puzzling to have the tables turned on him so adroitly. Hyacinth was reduced to feeble threat.

'Just wait a while till the nuns get another four thousand pounds, and perhaps four thousand pounds more after that, and see how it will affect you.'

Mr. Quinn smiled.

'I'm not much afraid of nuns as trade competitors, or, for the matter of that, of the Congested Districts Board either. If the Yorkshire people would only import a few Mother Superiors to manage their factories, and take the advice of members of our Board in their affairs, I would cheerfully make them a present of any reasonable subsidy, and beat them out of the market afterwards.'

There was another influence at work on Hyacinth's mind which had as much to do with the decay of his patriotism as either the gardening or Mr. Quinn's logic. Marion Beecher and her sister were very frequently at the Mill House during the spring and summer. There was one long afternoon which was spent in the marking out of the tennis-ground. Mr. Quinn had theories involving calculations with a pencil and pieces of paper about the surest method of securing right angles at the corners and parallel lines down the sides of the court. Hyacinth and Marion worked obediently with a tape measure and the garden line. One of the boys messed cheerfully with a pail of liquid whitening. Afterwards the gardening was somewhat deserted, and Hyacinth was instructed in the game. It took him a long time to learn, and for many afternoons he and Marion were regularly beaten, but she would not give up hope of him. Often the excuse of her coming to the Quinns was the necessity of practising some new hymn or chant for Sunday. Hyacinth worked as hard at the music as at the tennis under her tuition, and there came a time when he could sing an easy tenor part with fair accuracy. Then in the early summer, when the evenings were warm, hymns were sung on the lawn in front of the house. There seemed no incongruity in Marion Beecher's company in passing without a break from lawn-tennis to hymn-singing, and Mr. Quinn was always ready to do his best at the bass with a serious simplicity, as if it were a perfectly natural and usual thing to close an afternoon's amusement with 'Rock of Ages.' Hyacinth was not conscious of any definite change in his attitude towards religion. He still believed himself to be somehow outside the inner shrine of the life which the Beechers and the Quinns lived, just as he had been outside his father's prayers. But he found it increasingly difficult after an hour or two of companionship with Marion Beecher to get back to the emotions which had swayed him during the weeks of his intimacy with Miss Goold. To write for the *Croppy* after sitting beside Marion in church on Sunday evenings was like passing suddenly from a quiet wood into a heated saloon where people wrangled. A wave of the old passionate feeling, when it returned, affected him as raw spirit would the palate of a boy.

One day early in summer--the short summer of Connaught, which is glorious in June, and dissolves into windy mist and warm rain in the middle of July--Hyacinth was invited by Canon Beecher to join a boating party on the lake. The river, whose one useful function was the turning of Mr. Quinn's millwheel, wound away afterwards through marshy fields and groves of willow-trees into the great lake. At its mouth the Beechers kept their boat, a cumbrous craft, very heavy to row, but safe and suited to carry a family in comfort. The party started early--Canon Beecher, Hyacinth, and one of the boys very early, for they had to walk the two miles which separated Ballymoy from the lake shore. Mrs. Beecher, the girls, the two other boys, and the baskets of provisions followed a little later on the Rectory car, packed beyond all possibility of comfort. The Canon himself pulled an oar untiringly, but without the faintest semblance of style, and the party rippled with joy when they discovered that Hyacinth also could row.

'Now,' said Elsie, 'we can go anywhere. We can go on rowing and rowing all day, and see places we've never seen before.'

'My dear girl,' said her mother, 'remember that Mr. Conneally and your father aren't machines. You mustn't expect them to go too far.'

'Oh, but,' said Elsie, 'father says he never gets tired if he has only one oar to pull.'

The Canon was preparing for his toil. The old coat, in colour now almost olive green, was folded and used as a cushion by Marion in the bow. His white cuffs, stowed inside his hat, were committed to the care of Mrs. Beecher. He

rolled his gray shirtsleeves up to the elbow, and unbuttoned his waistcoat.

'Now,' he said, 'I'm ready. If I'm not hurried, I'll pull along all day. But what about you, Conneally? You're not accustomed to this sort of thing?'

But Hyacinth for once was self-confident. He might be a poor singer and a contemptible tennis player, but he knew that nothing which had to do with boats could come amiss to him. He looked across the sparkling water of the lake.

'I'll go on as long as you like. You won't tire me when there's no tide and no waves. This is a very different business from getting out the sweeps to pull a nobby five miles against the strength of the ebb, with a heavy ground swell running.'

About eleven o'clock they landed on an island and ate biscuits. The Canon told Hyacinth the story of the ruin under whose walls they sat.

'It belonged to the Lynotts, the Welshmen of Tyrawley. They were at feud with the Burkes, and one night in winter---

The girls wandered away, carrying their biscuits with them. It is likely that they had heard the story every summer as long as they could remember. Mrs. Beecher alone still maintained an attitude of admiration for her husband's antiquarian knowledge, the more creditable because she must have been familiar with the onset of the MacWilliam Burkes before even Marion was old enough to listen. To Hyacinth the story was both new and interesting. It stirred him to think of the Lynotts fighting hopelessly, or begging mercy in the darkness and the cold just where he sat now saturate with sunlight and with life. He gazed across the mile of shining water which separated the castle from the land, and tried to realize how the Irish servant-girl swam from the island with an infant Lynott on her back, and saved the name from perishing. How the snow must have beaten in her face and the lake-waves choked her breath! It was a great story, but the girls, shouting from the water's edge, reminded him that he was out to pull an oar, and not to sentimentalize. He and the Canon rose, half smiling, half sighing, and took their places in the boat.

They penetrated before luncheon time to a bay hitherto unknown to the Beechers. A chorus of delight greeted its discovery. The water shone bright green and very clear above the slabs of white limestone. The shore far inland was almost verdure-less. Broad flat rocks lay baking in the sunshine, and only the scantiest grass struggled up between their edges. Sometimes they overlapped each other, and rose like an immense staircase. Fifty yards or so from the land was a tiny island entirely overgrown with stunted bushes. The boat was pushed up to it and a landing-place sought, but the shrubs were too thick, and it was decided to picnic among the rocks on the land. Then Marion in the bow made a discovery. A causeway about a foot under water led from the island to the shore. The whole party leaned over to examine it. Every stone was visible in the clear water, and it was obvious that it had been planned and built, and was no merely accidental formation of the rocks. The Canon had heard of a similar device resorted to by an island hermit to insure the privacy of his cell. Hyacinth spoke vaguely of the settlements of primitive communities of lake-dwellers. The three boys planned an expedition across the causeway after luncheon.

'We'll carry our shoes and stockings with us,' they said, 'and then explore the island. Perhaps there is a hermit there still, or a primitive lake-dweller. What is a primitive lake-dweller, Mr. Conneally?'

Hyacinth was uncertain, but hazarded a suggestion that the lake-dwellers were the people who buried each other in raths. The Canon, whose archaeology did not go back beyond St. Patrick, offered no correction.

Tea was made later on in yet another bay, this time on the eastern shore of the lake. An oak wood grew down almost to the water's edge, and the branches overhung a sandy beach, more golden than any sea-strand. The whole party collected dead wood and broken twigs for the fire. Then, while the girls unpacked the baskets and secured the kettle amidst the smoke, Hyacinth lay back luxuriously and watched the sun set behind the round-shouldered mountain opposite. The long, steep slope shone bright green while the sun still rested in view above the summit; then suddenly, when the topmost rim of it had dipped out of sight, the whole mountainside turned purple, and a glory of gold and crimson hung above it on the motionless streaks of cloud. Slowly the splendour faded, the purple turned gray, and a faint breeze fluttered across the lake.

The day was the first of many which Hyacinth gave to such expeditions. The work of Mr. Quinn's office was not so pressing as to necessitate his spending every day there when he was in Ballymoy, and a holiday was always obtainable. The lake scenery remained vivid in his memory in after-years, and had its influence upon him even while he enjoyed it, unconscious of anything except the present pleasure. There was something besides the innocent gaiety of the girls and the simple sincerity of the Canon's platitudes, something about the lake itself, which removed him to a spiritual region utterly remote from the fiery atmosphere of Miss Gould's patriotism. Many things which once loomed very large before him sank to insignificance as he drank to the full of the desolation around him. The past, in which no doubt men strove and hoped, hated and loved and feared, had left the just recognisable ruins of some castles and the causeway built by an unknown hermit or the prehistoric lake-dwellers. A few thatched cabins, faintly smoking, and here and there a cairn of stones gathered laboriously off the wretched fields, were the evidences of present activity. Now and then a man hooted to his dog as it barked at the sheep on the hillside, or a girl drove a turf-laden donkey inland from the boggy shore. Otherwise there were no signs of human life. A deep sense of monotony and inevitableness

settled down upon Hyacinth. He came for the first time under the great enchantment which paralyzes the spirit and energy of the Celt. He knew himself to be, as his people were, capable of spasms of enthusiasm, the victim of transitory burnings of soul. But the curse was upon him--the inevitable curse of feeling too keenly and seeing too clearly to be strenuous and constant. The flame would die down, the enthusiasm would vanish--it was vanishing from him, as he knew well--and leave him, not indeed content with common life, but patient of it, and to the very end sad with the sense of possibilities unrealized.

Yet it was not without many struggles and periods of return to the older emotions that Hyacinth surrendered his enthusiasm. There still recurred to him memories of his father's vision of an Armageddon and the conception of his own part in it. Sometimes, waking very early in the morning, he became vividly conscious of his own feebleness of will and his falling away from great purposes. The conviction that he was called to struggle for Ireland's welfare, to sacrifice, if necessary, his life and happiness for Ireland, was strong in him still. He felt himself affected profoundly by the influences which surrounded him, but he had not ceased to believe that the idea of self-sacrificing labour was for him a high vocation. He writhed, his limbs twisting involuntarily, when these thoughts beset him, and often he was surprised to discover that he was actually uttering aloud words of self-reproach.

Then he would write fiercely, brutally, catch at the excuse of some hypocrisy or corruption, or else denounce selfishness and easy-going patriotic sentiment, finding subject for his satire in himself. His articles brought him letters of praise from Miss Goold. 'You have it,' she wrote once, 'the thing we all seek for, the power of beating red-hot thought into sword-blades. Write more like the last.' But the praise always came late. The violent mood, the self-reproach, the bitterness, were past. His life was wrapt round again with softer influences, and he read his own words with shame when they reached him in print. Afterwards for a while, if he wrote at all, it was of the peasant life, of quaint customs, half-forgotten legends and folklore. These articles appeared too, but brought no praise from Miss Goold. Once she reproached him when he lapsed into gentleness for many consecutive weeks.

'You oughtn't to waste yourself. There are fifty men and women can do the sort of thing you're doing now; we don't want you to take it up. It's fighting men we need, not maundering sentimentalists.'

CHAPTER XVII

It was during the second year of Hyacinth's residence in Ballymoy that the station-master at Clogher died. The poor man caught a cold one February night while waiting for a train which had broken down three miles outside his station. From the cold came first pneumonia, and then the end. Now, far to the east of Clogher, on a different branch of the railway-line, is a town with which the people of Mayo have no connection whatever. In it is a very flourishing Masonic lodge. Almost every male Protestant in the town and the neighbourhood belongs to it, and the Rector of the parish is its chaplain. Among its members at that time was an intelligent young man who occupied the position of goods clerk on the railway. The Masonic brethren, as in duty bound, used their influence to secure his promotion, and brought considerable pressure to bear on the directors of the company to have him made station-master at Clogher.

It is said with some appearance of truth that no appointment in Ireland is ever made on account of the fitness of the candidate for the post to be filled. Whether the Lord Lieutenant has to nominate a Local Government Board Inspector, or an Urban Council has to select a street scavenger, the principle acted on is the same. No investigation is made about the ability or character of a candidate. Questions may be asked about his political opinions, his religious creed, and sometimes about the social position of his wife, but no one cares in the least about his ability. The matter really turns upon the amount of influence which he can bring to bear. So it happened that John Crawford, Freemason and Protestant, was appointed station-master at Clogher. Of course, nobody really cared who got the post except a few seniors of John Crawford's, who wanted it for themselves. Probably even they would have stopped grumbling after a month or two if it had not happened that a leading weekly newspaper, then at the height of its popularity and influence, was just inaugurating a crusade against Protestants and Freemasons. The case of John Crawford became the subject of a series of bitter and vehement articles. It was pointed out that although Roman Catholics were beyond all question more intelligent, better educated, and more upright than Protestants, they were condemned by the intolerance of highly-paid officials to remain hewers of wood and drawers of water. It was shown by figures which admitted of no controversy that Irish railways, banks, and trading companies were, without exception, on the verge of bankruptcy, entirely owing to the apathy of shareholders who allowed their interests to be sacrificed to the bigotry of directors. It was urged that a public meeting should be held at Clogher to protest against the new appointment.

The meeting was convened, and Father Fahey consented to occupy the chair. He was supported by a dispensary doctor, anxious to propitiate the Board of Guardians with a view to obtaining a summer holiday; a leading publican, who had a son at Maynooth; a grazier, who dreaded the possible partition of his ranch by the Congested Districts Board; and Mr. O'Reilly, who saw a hope of drawing custom from the counter of his rival draper, the Scotchman.

Father Fahey opened the proceedings with a speech. He assured his audience that he was not actuated by any spirit of religious bigotry or intolerance. He wished well to his Protestant fellow-countrymen, and hoped that in the bright future which lay before Ireland men of all creeds would be united in working for the common good of their country. These sentiments were not received with vociferous applause. The audience was perfectly well aware that something much more to the point was coming, and reserved their cheers. Father Fahey did not disappoint them. He proceeded to show that the appointment of the new station-master was a deliberate insult to the faith of the inhabitants of Clogher.

'Are we,' he asked, 'to submit tamely to having the worst evils of the old ascendancy revived in our midst?'

He was followed by the dispensary doctor, who also began by declaring his freedom from bigotry. He confused the issue slightly by complaining that the new station-master was entirely ignorant of the Irish language. It was perfectly well known that in private life the doctor was in the habit of expressing the greatest contempt for the Gaelic League, and that he could not, if his life depended on it, have translated even Mr. O'Reilly's advertisements; but his speech was greeted with tumultuous cheers. He proceeded to harrow the feelings of his audience by describing what he had heard at the railway-station one evening while waiting for the train. As he paced the platform his attention was attracted by the sound of a piano in the station-master's house. He listened, and, to his amazement and disgust, heard the tune of a popular song, 'a song'--he brought down his fist on the table as he uttered the awful indictment--'imported from England.'

'I ask,' he went on--'I ask our venerated and beloved parish priest; I ask you, fathers of innocent families; I ask every right-thinking patriot in this room, are our ears to be insulted, our morals corrupted, our intellects depraved, by sounds like these?'

He closed his speech by proposing a resolution requiring the railway company to withdraw the obnoxious official from their midst.

The oratory of the grazier, who seconded the resolution, was not inferior. It filled his heart with a sense of shame, so he said, to think of his cattle, poor, innocent beasts of the field, being handled by a Protestant. They had been bred, these bullocks of his, by Catholics, fed by Catholics, were owned by a Catholic, bought with Catholic money at the fairs, and yet they were told that in all Ireland no Catholic could be discovered fit to put them into a train.

Neither the resolution itself nor the heart-rending appeal of the grazier produced the slightest effect on the railway

company. John Crawford continued to sell tickets, even to Father Fahey himself, and appeared entirely unconcerned by the fuss.

About a fortnight after the meeting Hyacinth spent a night in Clogher. Mr. Holywell, the cigarette man, happened to be in the hotel, and, as usual, got through a good deal of desultory conversation while he drank his whisky-and-water. Quite unexpectedly, and apropos of nothing that had been said, he plumped out the question:

'What religion are you, Conneally?'

The inquiry was such an unusual one, and came so strangely from Mr. Holywell, who had always seemed a Gallio in matters spiritual, that Hyacinth hesitated.

'I'm a Baptist myself,' he went on, apparently with a view to palliating his inquisitiveness by a show of candour. 'I find it a very convenient sort of religion in Connaught. There isn't a single place of worship belonging to my denomination in the whole province, so I'm always able to get my Sundays to myself. I don't want to convert you to anything or to argue with you, but I have a fancy that you are a Church of Ireland Protestant.'

Hyacinth admitted the correctness of the guess, and wondered what was coming next.

'Ever spend a Sunday here?'

'Never,' said Hyacinth; 'I always get back home for the end of the week if I can.'

'Ah! Well, do you know, if I were you, I should spend next Sunday here, and go to Mass.'

'I shall not do anything of the sort.'

'Well, it's your own affair, of course; only I just think I should do it if I were you. Good-night.'

'Wait a minute,' said Hyacinth. 'I want to know what you mean.'

Mr. Holywell sat down again heavily.

'Been round your customers here lately?'

'No. I only arrived this evening, and have done nothing yet. I mean to go round them to-morrow.'

'You may just as well go home by the early train for all the good you'll do.'

Hyacinth restrained himself with an effort. He reflected that he was more likely to get at the meaning of these mysterious warnings if he refrained from direct questioning. After a minute of two of silence Mr. Holywell went on:

'They had a meeting here a little while ago about the appointment of a Protestant station-master. They didn't take much by it so far as the railway company is concerned, but I happen to know that word has gone round that every shopkeeper in the town is to order his goods as far as possible from Catholics. Now, everybody knows your boss is a Protestant, but the people are a little uncertain about you. They've never seen you at Mass, which is suspicious, but, on the other hand, the way you gas on about Irish manufactures makes them think you can't be a Protestant. The proper thing for you to do is to lie low till you've put in an appearance at Mass, and then go round and try for orders.'

'That's the kind of thing,' said Hyacinth, 'that I couldn't do if I had no religion at all; but it happens that I have convictions of a sort, and I don't mean to go against them.'

'Oh, well, as I said before, it's your own affair; only better Protestants than you have done as much. Why, I do it myself constantly, and everyone knows that a Baptist is the strongest kind of Protestant there is.'

This reasoning, curiously enough, proved unconvincing.

'I can't believe,' said Hyacinth, 'that a religious boycott of the kind is possible. People won't be such fools as to act clean against their own interests. Considering that nine-tenths of the drapery goods in the country come from England and are sold by Protestant travellers, I don't see how the shopkeepers could act as you say.'

'Oh, of course they won't act against their own interests. I've never come across a religion yet that made men do that. They won't attempt to boycott the English firms, because, as you say, they couldn't; but they can boycott you. Everything your boss makes is turned out just as well and just as cheap, or cheaper, by the nuns at Robeen. Perhaps you didn't know that these holy ladies have hired a traveller. Well, they have, and he's a middling smart man, too—quite smart enough to play the trumps that are put into his hand; and he's got a fine flush of them now. What with the way that wretched rag of a paper, which started all the fuss, goes on rampaging, and the amount of feeling that's got up over the station-master, the peaceablest people in the place would be afraid to deal with a Protestant at the present moment. The Robeen man has the game in his own hands, and I'm bound to say he'd be a fool if he didn't play it for all it's worth. I'd do it myself if I was in his shoes.'

Hyacinth discovered next day that Mr. Holywell had summed up the situation very accurately. No point-blank questions were asked about his religion, but he could by no means persuade his customers to give him even a small order. Every shop-window was filled with goods placarded ostentatiously as 'made in Robeen.' Every counter had tweeds, blankets, and flannels from the same factory. No one was in the least uncivil to him, and no one assigned any plausible reason for refusing to deal with him. He was simply bowed out as quickly as possible from every shop he entered.

He returned home disgusted and irritated, and told his tale to his employer. Mr. Quinn recognised the danger that threatened him. For the first time, he admitted that his business was being seriously injured by the competition of Robeen. He took Hyacinth into his confidence more fully than he had ever done before, and explained what seemed to be a hopeful plan.

'I may tell you, Conneally, that I have very little capital to fall back upon in my business. Years ago when things were better than they are now, I had a few thousands put by, but most of it went on buying my brother Albert's share of the mill. Lately I have not been able to save, and at the present moment I can lay hands on very little money. Still, I have something, and what I mean to do is this: I shall give up all idea of making a profit for the present. I shall even sell my goods at a slight loss, and try to beat the nunnery out of the market. I think this religious animosity will weaken after a while, and if we offer the cheapest goods we must in the end get back our customers.'

Hyacinth was not so sanguine.

'You forget,' he said, 'that these people have Government money at their backs, and are likely to get more of it. If you sell at a loss they will do so, too, and ask for a new grant from the Congested Districts Board to make good their deficiency.'

Mr. Quinn sighed.

'That is quite possible,' he said. 'But what can I do? I must make a fight for my business.'

Hyacinth hesitated.

'Perhaps I have no right to make the suggestion, but it seems to me that you are bound to be beaten. Would it not be better to give in at once? Don't risk the money you have safe. Keep it, and try to sell the mill and the business.'

'I shall hold on,' said Mr. Quinn.

'Ought you not to think of your wife? Remember what it will mean to her if you are beaten in the end, when your savings are gone and your business unsaleable.'

For a moment there were signs of wavering in Mr. Quinn's face. The fingers of his hands twisted in and out of each other, and a pitiable look of great distress came into his eyes. Then he unclasped his hands and placed them flat on the table before him.

'I shall hold on,' he said. 'I shall not close my mill while I have a shilling left to pay my workers with.'

'Well,' said Hyacinth, 'it is for you to decide. At least, you can count on my doing my best, my very best.'

CHAPTER XVIII

Mr. Quinn carried on his struggle for nearly a year, although from the very first he might have recognised its hopelessness. Time after time Hyacinth made his tour, and visited the shopkeepers who had once been his customers. Occasionally he succeeded in obtaining orders, and a faint gleam of hope encouraged him, but he had no steady success. Mr. Quinn's original estimate of the situation was so far justified that after a while the religious animosity died out. Shopkeepers even explained apologetically that they gave their orders to the Robeen convent for purely commercial reasons.

'Their goods are cheaper than yours, and that's the truth, Mr. Conneally.'

Hyacinth recognised that Mr. Quinn was being beaten at his own game. He had attempted to drive the nuns out of the market by underselling them, and now it appeared that they, too, were prepared to face a loss. It was obvious that their losses must be great, much greater than Mr. Quinn's. Rumours were rife of large loans raised by the Mother Superior, of mortgages on the factory buildings and the machinery. These stories brought very little consolation, for, as Hyacinth knew, Mr. Quinn was very nearly at the end of his resources. He refused to borrow.

'When I am forced to close up,' he said, 'I shall do so with a clear balance-sheet. I have no wish for bankruptcy.'

'I should like,' said Hyacinth vindictively, 'to see the Reverend Mother reduced to paying a shilling in the pound.'

'I am afraid,' said Mr. Quinn, 'you won't see that. The convent is a branch of an immense organization. No doubt, if it comes to a pinch, funds will be forthcoming.'

'Yes, and they won't draw on their own purse till they have got all they can out of the Congested Districts Board. I have no doubt they are counting on another four thousand pounds to start them clear when they have beaten you.'

One day, quite accidentally, Hyacinth came by a piece of information about the working of the Robeen factory which startled him. He was travelling home by rail. It happened to be Friday, and, as usual in the early summer, the train was crowded with emigrants on their way to Queenstown. The familiar melancholy crowd waited on every platform. Old women weeping openly and men with faces ridiculously screwed and puckered in the effort to restrain the rising tears clung to their sons and daughters. Pitiful little boxes and carpet bags were piled on the platform. Friends clung to hands outstretched through the carriage-windows while the train moved slowly out. Then came the long mournful wail from those left behind, and the last wavings of farewell. At the Robeen station the crowd was no less than elsewhere. The carriages set apart for the emigrants were full, and at the last minute two girls were hustled into the compartment where Hyacinth sat. A woman, their mother, mumbled and slobbered over their hands. An old man, too old to be their father, shouted broken benedictions to them. Two young men--lovers, perhaps, or brothers--stood red-eyed, desolate and helpless, without speaking. After the train had started Hyacinth looked at the girls. One of them, a pretty creature of perhaps eighteen years old, wept quietly in the corner of the carriage. Beside her lay her carpet bag and a brown shawl. On her lap was an orange, and she held a crumpled paper bag of biscuits in her hand. There was nothing unusual about her. She was just one instance of heartbreak, the heart-break of a whole nation which loves home as no other people have ever loved it, and yet are doomed, as it seems inevitably, to leave it. She was just one more waif thrown into the whirlpool of the great world to toil and struggle, succeed barrenly or pitifully fail; but through it all, through even the possible loss of faith and ultimate degradation, fated to cling to a love for the gray desolate fatherland. The other girl was different. Hyacinth looked at her with intense interest. She was the older of the two, and not so pretty as her sister. Her face was thin and pale, and a broad scar under one ear showed where a surgeon's knife had cut. She sat with her hands folded on her lap, gazing dry-eyed out of the window beside her. There was no sign of sorrow on her face, nothing but a kind of sulky defiance.

After a while she took the paper bag out of her sister's hand, opened it, and began to eat the gingerbread biscuits it contained. Hyacinth spoke to her, but she turned her head away, and would not answer him. His voice seemed to rouse the younger sister, who stopped crying and looked at him curiously. He tried again, and this time he spoke in Irish.

At once the younger girl brightened and answered him. Apparently she had no fear that malice could lurk in the heart of a man who spoke her own language. In a few minutes she was chatting to him as if he were an old friend.

He learnt that the two girls were on their way to New York. They had a sister there who had sent them the price of their tickets. Yes, the sister was in a situation, was getting good wages, and had clothes 'as grand as a lady's.' She had sent home a photograph at Christmas-time, which their mother had shown all round the parish. These two were to get situations also as soon as they arrived. Oh yes, there was no doubt of it: Bridgy had promised. There were four of them left at home--three boys and a girl. No doubt in time they would all follow Bridgy to America--all but Seumas; he was to have the farm. No, the girls could not get married, because their father was too poor to give them fortunes. There was nothing for them but to go to America. But their mother had not wanted them to go. The clergy and the nuns were against the girls going. Indeed, they nearly had them persuaded to send Bridgy's money back.

'But Onny was set on going.'

She glanced at her sister in the corner of the carriage. Hyacinth turned to her.

'Why do you want to leave Ireland?'

But Onny remained silent, sulky, at it seemed. It was the younger girl who answered him.

'They say it's a fine life they have out there. There's good money to be earned, and mightn't we be coming home some day with a fortune?'

'But aren't you sorry to leave Ireland?'

Again he looked at the elder girl, and this time was rewarded with a flash of defiant bitterness from her eyes.

'Sorry, is it? No, but I'm glad!'

'Onny's always saying that there was nothing to be earned in the factory. And she got more than the rest of us. Wasn't she the first girl that Sister Mary Aloysius picked out of the school when the young lady from England came over to teach us? She was the best worker they had.'

'It's true what she says,' said Onny. 'I was the best worker they had. I worked for them for three years, and all I was getting at the end of it was six shillings a week. Why would I be working for that when I might be getting wages like Bridgy's in America? What sense would there be in it?'

'But why did you work for such wages?'

'Well, now,' said the younger girl, 'how could we be refusing the Reverend Mother when she came round the town herself, and gave warning that we'd all be wanted?'

'There's few,' continued Onny, without noticing her sister, 'that earned as much as I did. Many a girl works there and has no more than one and ninepence to take home at the end of the week.'

Hyacinth began to understand how it was that Mr. Quinn was being hopelessly beaten. This was no struggle between two trade rivals, to be won by the side with the longer purse. Nor was it simply a fight between an independent manufacturer and a firm fed with Government bounties. Mr. Quinn's rival could count on an unlimited supply of labour at starvation wages, while he had to hire men and women at the market value of their services. He had been sorry for the two girls when they got into the train. Now he felt almost glad that they were leaving Ireland. It appeared that they had certainly chosen the wiser part.

He arrived at home dejected, and sat down beside the fire in his room to give himself up to complete despair. He found no hope anywhere. Irish patriotism, so he saw it, was a matter of words and fine phrases. No one really believed in it or would venture anything for it. Politics was a game at which sharpers cheated each other and the people. The leaders were bold only in sordid personal quarrels. The mass of the people were utterly untouched by the idea of nationality, in earnest about nothing but huckstering and petty gains. Over all was the grip of a foreign bureaucracy and a selfish Church tightening slowly, squeezing out the nation's life, grasping and holding fast its wealth. No man any longer made any demand except to be allowed to earn what would buy whisky enough to fuddle him into temporary forgetfulness of the present misery and the imminent tyranny.

The slatternly maid-servant who brought him his meals and made his bed tapped at the door.

'Please, sir, Jimmy Loughlin's after coming with a letter from Mr. Quinn, and he's waiting to know if you'll go.'

Hyacinth read the note, which asked him to call on his employer that afternoon.

'Tell him I'll be there.'

'Will you have your dinner before you go? The chops is in the pan below. Or will I keep them till you come back?'

'Oh, I've time enough. Bring them as soon as they're cooked, and for goodness' sake see that the potatoes are properly boiled.'

He took up a great English weekly paper, with copies of which Canon Beecher supplied him at irregular intervals, and propped it against the dish-cover while he ate. The article which caught his attention was headed 'Angels in Connaught.' It contained an idealized account of the work of the Robeen nuns, from whose shoulders it seemed to the writer likely that wings would soon sprout. There was a description of the once miserable cabins now transformed into homesteads so comfortable that English labourers would not disdain them. The people shared in the elevation of their surroundings. Men and women, lately half-naked savages, starved and ignorant, had risen in the scale of civilization and intelligence to a level which almost equalled that of a Hampshire villager. The double stream of emigration to the United States and migration to the English harvest-fields was stopped. An earthly paradise had been created in a howling wilderness by the self-denying labours of the holy ladies, aided by the statesmanlike liberality of the Congested Districts Board. There was another page of the article, but Hyacinth could stand no more.

He stood up and glanced at his watch. It was already nearly five o'clock. He pushed his way down the street, where the country-people, having completed their week's marketing, were loading donkeys on the footpath or carts pushed backwards against the kerbstone. Women dragged their heavily-intoxicated husbands from the public-houses, and girls, damp and bedraggled, stood in groups waiting for their parents. He turned into the gloomy archway of the mill,

unlocked the iron gate, and crossed the yard into the Quinns' garden. The lamp burned brightly in the dining-room, and he could see Mrs Quinn in her chair by the fireside sewing. Her children sat on the rug at her feet. He saw their faces turned up to hers, gravely intent. No doubt she was telling them some story. He stood for a minute and watched them, while the peaceful joy of the scene entered into his heart. This, no doubt, a home full of such love and peace, was the best thing life had got to give. It was God's most precious benediction. 'Lo, thus shall a man be blessed who feareth the Lord.' He turned and passed on to the door. The servant showed him in, not, as he expected, to the sitting-room he had just gazed at, but to Mr. Quinn's study.

It was a desolate chamber. A plain wooden desk like a schoolmaster's stood in one corner, and upon it a feeble lamp. A bookcase surmounted a row of cupboards along one wall. Its contents--Hyacinth had often looked over them--were a many-volumed encyclopaedia, Macaulay's 'History of England,' Foxe's 'Book of Martyrs,' a series entitled 'Heroes of the Reformation,' and some bound volumes of a trade journal. Above the chimneypiece hung two trout-rods, a landing-net, and an old gun. The grate was tireless. It was a room obviously not loved by its owner. Neither pleasure nor comfort was looked for in it. It was simply a place of escape from the attractions of quiet ease when business overflowed the proper office hours. Mr. Quinn rose from his desk when Hyacinth entered.

'I am very glad to see you,' he said; 'I want to have a talk with you.'

Hyacinth waited while he arranged and rearranged some papers on the desk in front of him. Mr. Quinn, although he had specially sent for Hyacinth, seemed in no hurry to get to the subject of the interview. When he did speak, it was evident from his tone that the important topic was still postponed.

'How did you get on this week?'

Hyacinth had nothing good to report. He took from his pocket the note-book in which he entered his orders, and went over it. It contained an attenuated list. Moreover, the harvest had been bad, and old debts very difficult to collect. Mr. Quinn listened, apparently not very attentively, and when the reading was over said:

'What you report this week is simply a repetition of the story of the last six months. I did not expect it to be different. It makes the decision I have to make a little more inevitable, that is all. Mr. Conneally, we have been very good friends, and since you have been in my employment I have been satisfied with you in every way. Now I am unable to employ you any longer. I am giving up my business.'

Hyacinth made an effort to speak, but Mr. Quinn held up his hand and silenced him.

'This week,' he continued, 'I received news which settled the matter for me. Jameson and Thorpe, the big drapers in Dublin, were my best customers for certain goods. Last Monday they wrote that they had an offer of blankets at a figure a long way below mine. I didn't believe that articles equal in quality to mine could be produced at the price, and wrote a hint to that effect. I received--nothing could have been more courteous--a sample of the blankets offered. Well, I admit that it was at least equal to what I could supply in every way. I wrote again asking as a favour to be supplied with the name of the competing firm. I got the answer to-day. Mr. Thorpe wrote himself. The Robeen convent has undersold me.'

Hyacinth made another attempt to speak.

'Let me finish,' said Mr. Quinn. 'I had foreseen, of course, that this was coming. I have no more capital to fall back upon. I do not mean to run into debt. There is nothing for me but to dismiss my employees and shut up.'

'Yes,' said Hyacinth. 'And then----'

He knew he had no right to ask a question about the future, but the thought of Mrs. Quinn and her children as he had seen them in the dining-room almost forced him to inquire what was to happen to them. A spasm of extreme pain crossed Mr. Quinn's face.

'You are thinking of my wife. It will be hard--yes, very hard. She loved this place, her friends here, her garden, and all the quiet, peaceful life we have lived. Well, there is to be an end of it. But don't look so desperate.' He forced himself to smile as he spoke. 'We shall not starve or go to the workhouse. I have a knowledge of woollen goods if I have nothing else, and I dare say I can get an appointment as foreman or traveller for some big drapery house. But I may not be reduced to that. There is a secretary wanted just now in the office of one of the Dublin charitable societies. I mean to apply for the post. Canon Beecher and our Bishop are both members of the committee, and I am sure will do their best for me. The salary is not princely--a hundred and twenty pounds a year, I think. But there, I ought not to be talking all this time about myself. I must try and do something for you.'

'Never mind me,' said Hyacinth; 'I shall be all right. But I can't bear to think of you and Mrs. Quinn. Poverty like that in Dublin! Have you thought what it means? A shabby little house in a crowded street, off at the back of somewhere; dirt and stuffiness and vulgarity all around you. She can't be expected to stand it--or you either.'

'My dear boy,' said Mr. Quinn, 'my wife and I have been trying all our lives to be Christians. Shall we receive good at the Lord's hand and not evil also? However it may be with me, I know that she will not fail in the trial.'

His face lit up as he spoke, and the smile on it was no longer forced, but clear and brave. Hyacinth knew that he was once again in the presence of that mysterious power which enables men and women to meet and conquer loss and

pain, against which every kind of misfortune beats in vain. His eyes filled with tears as he took Mr. Quinn's hand and bade him good-night.

CHAPTER XIX

Hyacinth had three months' work to do before he actually left Mr. Quinn's employment. He knew that at the end of that time he would be left absolutely without income, and that it was necessary for him to look out for some other situation. He reckoned up the remains of his original capital, and found himself with little more than a hundred pounds to fall back upon. Yet he did nothing. From time to time he bestirred himself, pondered the newspaper advertisements of vacant situations, and mentally resolved to commence his search at once. Always some excuse offered itself to justify putting the unpleasant business off, and he allowed himself to slip back into the quiet routine of life as if no catastrophe threatened him. He was, indeed, far more troubled about the Quinns' future than his own, and when, at the end of April, Canon Beecher returned from Dublin with the news that he had secured the secretaryship of the Church of Ireland Scriptural Schools Society for Mr. Quinn, Hyacinth felt that his mind was relieved of a great anxiety. That no such post had been discovered for him did not cost him a thought. In spite of his spasmodic efforts to goad himself into a condition of reasonable anxiety for his future, there remained half consciously present in his mind a conviction that somehow a way of getting sufficient food and clothes would offer itself in due time.

The conviction was justified by the event. It was on Saturday evening that the Canon returned with his good news, and on Sunday morning Hyacinth received a letter from Miss Goold.

'You have no doubt heard,' she wrote, 'that we have got a new editor for the *Croppy*--Patrick O'Dwyer, Mary's brother. Of course, you remember Mary and her unpoetical hysterics the morning after the Rotunda meeting. The new editor is a splendid man. He has been on the staff of a New York paper for the last five years, and thoroughly understands the whole business. But that's not the best of him. He hates England worse than I do. I'm only a child beside him, bursting out into fits of temper now and then, and cooling off again. He hates steadily, quietly, and intensely. But even that is not all that is to be said. He has got brains--brains enough, my dear Hyacinth, to make fools of you and me every day and all day long. He has devised a new policy for Ireland. The plan is simplicity itself, like all really great plans, and it *must* succeed. I won't go into it now, because I want you to come up to Dublin and see O'Dwyer. He tells me that he needs somebody else besides himself on the staff of the *Croppy*, which, by the way, is to be enlarged and improved. He wants a man who can write a column a week in Irish, as well as an article now and then in good strong plain English. I suggested your name to him, and showed him some of the articles you had written. He was greatly pleased with the one about O'Dowd's cheap patriotism, and liked one or two of the others. He just asked one question about you: "Does Mr. Conneally hate England and the Empire, and everything English, from the Parliament to the police barrack? It is this hatred which must animate the work." I said I thought you did. I told him how you had volunteered to fight for the Boers, and about the day you nearly killed that blackguard Shea. He seemed to think that was good enough, and asked me to write to you on the subject. We can't offer you a big salary. The editor himself is only to get a hundred pounds a year for the present, and I am guaranteeing another hundred for you. I am confident that I shan't have to pay it for more than six months. The paper is sure to go as it never went before, and in a few years we shall be able to treble O'Dwyer's salary and double yours. Nothing like such a chance has ever offered itself in Irish history before. Everything goes to show that this is our opportunity. England is weaker than she has been for centuries, is clinging desperately to the last tatters of her old prestige. She hasn't a single statesman capable of thinking or acting vigorously. Her Parliament is the laughingstock of Europe. Her Irish policy may be summed up in four words--intrigue with the Vatican. In Ireland the power of the faithful garrison is gone. The Protestants in the North are sick of being fooled by one English party after another. The landlords, or what's left of them, are beginning to discover that they have been bought and sold. The Bishops, England's last line of defence, are overreaching themselves, and we are within measurable distance of the day when the Church will be put into her proper place. There is not so much as a shoneen publican in a country town left who believes in the ranting of O'Rourke and his litter of blind whelps. Ireland is simply crying out for light and leading, and the *Croppy* is going to give both. You always wanted to serve Ireland. Now I am offering you the chance. I don't say you ought to thank me, though you will thank me to the day of your death. I don't say that you have an opportunity of becoming a great man. I know you, and I know a better way of making sure of you than that. I say to you, Hyacinth Conneally, that we want you--just *you* and nobody else. Ireland wants you.'

The letter, especially the last part of it, was sufficiently ridiculous to have moved Hyacinth to a smile. But it did no such thing. On the contrary, its rhetoric excited and touched him. The flattery of the final sentences elated him. The absurdity of the idea that Ireland needed him, a fifth-rate office clerk, an out-of-work commercial traveller who had failed to sell blankets and flannels, did not strike him at all. The figure of Augusta Goold rose to his mind. She flashed before him, an Apocalyptic angel, splendored and terrible, trumpet-calling him to the last great fight. He forgot in an instant the Quinns and their trouble. The years of quietness in Ballymoy, the daily intercourse with gentle people, the atmosphere of the religion in which he had lived, fell away from him suddenly.

He sat absorbed in an ecstasy of joyful excitement until the jangling of Canon Beecher's church bell recalled him to common life again. It speaks for the strength of the habits he had formed in Ballymoy that he rose without hesitation and went to take his part in the morning service.

He sat down as usual beside Marion Beecher and her harmonium. He listened to her playing until her father entered. He found himself gazing at her when she stood up for the opening words of the service. He felt himself strangely affected by the gentleness of her face and the slender beauty of her form. When she knelt down he could not take his eyes off her. There came over him an inexplicable softening, a relaxation of the tense excitement of the morning. He thought of her kneeling there in the faded shabby church Sunday after Sunday for years and years, when he was working at hot pressure far away. He knew just how her eyes would look calmly, trustfully up to the God she spoke to; how her soul would grow in gentleness; how love would be the very atmosphere around her. And all the while he would struggle and fight, with no inspiration except a bitter hate. Suddenly there came on him a feeling that he could not leave her. The very thought of separation was a fierce pain. A desire of her seized on him like uncontrollable physical hunger. Wherever he might be, whatever life might have in store for him, he knew that his heart would go back to her restlessly, and remain unsatisfied without her. He understood that he loved her. Canon Beecher's voice came to him as if from an immense distance:

'O God, make speed to save us.'

Then he heard very clearly Marion's sweet voice replying:

'O Lord, make haste to help us.'

There was a faint shuffling, and the congregation rose to their feet. His eyes were still on Marion, and now his whole body quivered with the force of his newly-found love. She half turned and looked at him. For one instant their eyes met, and he saw in hers a flash of recognition, then a strange look of fear, and she turned away from him, flushed and trembling. He saw that she had read his heart and knew his love.

'Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost,' read the Canon heavily.

Hyacinth's heart swelled in him. His whole being seemed to throb with exultation, and he responded in a voice he could not recognise for his.

'As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.'

Marion stood silent. Her head was bowed down, and her hands clasped tight together.

Of the remainder of the morning's service Hyacinth could never afterwards remember anything. No doubt Canon Beecher read the Psalms and lessons and prayers; no doubt he preached. Probably, also, hymns were sung, and Marion played them, but he could not imagine how. It seemed quite impossible that she could have touched the keys with her fingers, or that she could have uttered any sound; yet no one had remarked the absence of hymns or even noticed any peculiarity in their performance. Not till after the service was over did he regain full consciousness of himself and his surroundings; then he became exceedingly alert. He watched the Canon disappear into the vestry, heard the congregation trample down the aisle, listened to Marion playing a final voluntary. It seemed to him as he sat there waiting for her to stop that she played much longer than usual. He could hear Mrs. Beecher and Mr. Quinn talking in the porch, and every moment he expected the Canon to appear. At last the music ceased, and the lid of the harmonium was closed and locked. He stepped forward and took Marion's hands in his.

'Marion,' he said, 'I love you. It was only this morning that I found it out, but I know--oh, I know--that I love you far, far more than I can tell you.'

The hand which lay in his grew cold, and the girl's head was bowed so that he could not see her face. He felt her tremble.

'Marion, Marion, I love you, love you, love you!'

Then very slowly she raised her head and looked at him. He stooped to kiss her lips, and felt her face flush and glow when he touched it. Then she drew her hands from his and fled down the church to her mother.

Hyacinth stood agape with wonder at the words which he had spoken. The knowledge of his love had come on him like a sudden gust, and he only half realized what he had done. He walked back to his lodgings, going over and over the amazing words, recalling with flushed astonishment the kiss. Then a chilling doubt beset him suddenly. Did Marion know how poor he was? Never in his life had the fear of poverty or the desire of gain determined Hyacinth's plans. He knew very well that no such considerations would have in any way affected his conduct towards Marion. Once he realized that he loved her, the confession of his love was quite inevitable. Yet he felt vaguely that he might be judged blameworthy. He had read a few novels, and he knew that even the writers whose chief business it is to glorify the passion of love do not dare to represent it as independent of money. He knew, too, that many penniless heroes won admiration--he did not in the least understand why they should--by silently deserting affectionate women. He knew that kisses were immoral except for those who possessed a modest competence. These authorized ethics of marriage engagements were wholly incomprehensible to him, and it in no way disquieted his conscience that he had bound Marion to him with his kiss; yet he felt that she had a right to know what income he hoped to earn, and what kind of home he would have to offer her. A hundred pounds a year might be deemed insufficient, and he knew that, not being either a raven or a lily, he could not count on finding food and clothes ready when he wanted them.

The daughters of the Irish Church clergy, even of the dignitaries, are not brought up in luxury. Still, they are most of

them accustomed to a daily supply of food--plain, perhaps, but sufficient--and will look for as much in the homes of their husbands. A girl like Marion Beecher does not expect to secure a position which will enable her to send her own clothes to a laundress or hire a cook who can make pastry; but it is not fair to ask her to wash the family's blankets or to boil potatoes for a pig. Probably her friends would think her lucky in marrying a curate or a dispensary doctor with one hundred and fifty pounds a year, and the prospect of one-third as much again after a while. But Hyacinth remembered that he was poorer than any curate. He determined to put the matter plainly before Marion without delay.

The Rectory door was opened for him by Elsie Beecher, and, in spite of her wondering protests, Hyacinth walked into the dining-room and asked that Marion should be sent to him. The room was empty, as he expected. He stood and waited for her, deriving faint comfort and courage from the threadbare carpet, patched tablecloth, and poor crazy chairs. They were strange properties for a scene with possibilities of deep romance in it, but they made his confession of poverty easier.

Marion entered at last and stood beside him. He neither took her hand nor looked at her.

'When I told you to-day that I loved you,' he said, 'I ought to have told you that I am very poor.'

'I know it,' she said.

'But I am poorer even than you know. I am not in Mr. Quinn's employment any more. I have no settled income, and only a prospect of earning a very small one.' He paused. 'I shall have to go away from Ballymoy. I must live in Dublin. I do not think it is fair to ask you to marry me. I shall have no more to live upon than----'

She moved a step nearer to him and laid her hand on his arm.

'Look at me,' she said.

He raised his eyes to her face, and saw again there, as he had seen in church, the wonderful shining of love, which is stronger than all things and holds poverty and hardship cheap.

'Keep looking at me still,' she said. 'Now tell me: Do you really think it matters that you are poor? Do you think I care whether you have much or little? Tell me.'

He could not answer her, although he knew that there was only one answer to her question.

'Do you think that I love money? Do you doubt that I love you?'

Her voice sunk almost to a whisper as she spoke, and her eyes fell from looking into his. Just as when he kissed her in the church, she flushed suddenly, but this time she did not try to escape from him. Instead she clung to his arm, and hid her face against his shoulder. He put his arms round her and held her close.

'I know,' he said. 'I was a fool to come here thinking that my being poor would matter. I might have known. Indeed, I think I did know even before I spoke to you.'

She had no answer except a long soft laugh, which was half smothered in his arms.

CHAPTER XX

On Saturday evenings and Sunday afternoons Canon Beecher enjoyed the privilege of a fire in his study. He was supposed to be engaged at these seasons in the preparation of his sermons, a serious and exacting work which demanded solitude and profound quiet. In earlier years he really had prepared his sermons painfully, but long practice brings to the preacher a certain fatal facility. Old ideas are not improved by being clothed in new phrases, and of new ideas—a new idea will occasionally obtrude itself even on the Christian preacher—the Canon was exceedingly mistrustful. The study was an unexciting and comparatively comfortable room. The firelight on winter afternoons played pleasantly on the dim gold backs of the works of St. Augustine, a fine folio edition bequeathed to Mrs. Beecher by a scholarly uncle, which reposed undisturbed along a lower shelf. Adventurous rays occasionally explored a faded print of the Good Shepherd which hung above the books, and gleamed upon the handle of the safe where the parish registers and church plate were stored. The quiet and the process of digesting his mid-day dinner frequently tempted the Canon to indulge in a series of pleasant naps on Sunday afternoons.

When Hyacinth tapped at the study door and entered, the room was almost dark, and the sermon preparation, if proceeding at all, can have got no further than the preliminary concatenation of ideas. The Canon, however, was aggressively, perhaps suspiciously, wide awake.

'Who is that?' he asked. 'Oh, Conneally, it is you. I am very glad to see you. Curiously enough, I thought of going down to call on you this afternoon. I wanted to have a talk with you. I dare say you have come up to consult me.'

Hyacinth was astonished. How could anyone have guessed what he came about? Had Marion told her father already?

'It is a sad business,' the Canon went on--' very distressing and perplexing indeed. But so far as you personally are concerned, Conneally, I cannot regard it as an unmixed misfortune. You were meant for something better, if I may say so, than selling blankets. Now, I have a plan for your future, which I talked over last week with an old friend of yours. Now that something has been settled about the Quinns, we must all give our minds to your affairs.'

Then Hyacinth understood that Canon Beecher expected to be consulted about his future plans, and even had some scheme of his own in mind.

'Yes,' he replied, 'I shall be very glad of your help and advice, although I think I have decided about what I am going to do. It was not on that subject I came to speak to you to-day, but on another, more important, I think, for you and for Marion.'

'For Marion?'

'I ought to tell you at once that I love your daughter Marion, and I am sure that she loves me. I want to marry her.'

'My dear boy! I had not the slightest idea of this. It is one of the most extraordinary things--or perhaps extraordinary is not exactly the proper word--one of the most surprising things I----'

The Canon stopped abruptly and sat stroking his chin with his forefinger in the effort to adjust his mind to the new situation presented to it. It was characteristic of the man that the thought of Hyacinth's poverty was not the first which presented itself. Indeed, Canon Beecher was one of those unreasonable Christians who are actually convinced of the truth of certain paradoxical sayings in the Gospel about wealth and poverty. He believed that there were things of more importance in life than the possession of money. Fortunately, such Christians are rare, for their absurd creed forms a standing menace to the existence of Church and sect alike. Fortunately also, ecclesiastical authorities have sufficient wisdom to keep these eccentrics in the background, confining them as far as possible to remote and obscure places. If ever a few of them escape into the open and find means of expressing themselves, the whole machinery of modern religion will become dislocated, and the Church will very likely relapse into the barbarity of the Apostolic age.

'I believe, Conneally,' said the Canon at last, 'that you are a good man. I do not merely mean that you are moral and upright, but that you sincerely desire to follow in the footsteps of the Master.'

He looked as if he wanted some kind of answer, at least a confirmation of his belief. Fresh from his interview with Marion, and having the Canon's eyes upon him, it did not seem impossible to Hyacinth to answer yes. Even the thought of the work he was to engage in with Miss Gould and Patrick O'Dwyer seemed to offer no ground for hesitation. Was he not enlisting with them to take part in the great battle? He had never ceased to believe his father's words: 'And the battlefield is Ireland--our dear Ireland which we love!' He felt for the moment that he was altogether prepared to make the confession of faith the Canon required.

'Yes,' he said, 'I am on His side.'

'And you love Marion? Are you quite sure of that? Are you certain that this is not a passing fancy?'

This time Hyacinth had no doubt whatever about his answer.

'I am as certain of my love as I am of anything in the world.'

'I am glad. I am very glad that this has happened--for your sake, because I have always liked you; also for Marion's sake. I shall see you happy because you love one another, and because you both love the Lord. I ask no more than those two things. But I must go and tell my wife at once. She will be glad, too.'

He rose and went to the door. With his hand stretched out to open it he stopped, struck by a sudden thought.

'By the way, I ought to ask you--if you mean to be married--have you any--I mean it is necessary--I hope you won't think I am laying undue stress upon such matters, but I really--I mean we really ought to consider what you are to live upon.'

It was the prospect of imparting the news to his wife which forced this speech from him. Mrs. Beecher was, indeed, the least worldly of women. Did she not marry the Canon, then a mere curate, on the slenderest income, and bear him successively five babies in defiance of common prudence? But it had fallen to her lot to order the affairs of the household, and she had learnt that the people who give you bread and beef demand, after an interval, more or less money in exchange. It was likely that, after her first rapture had subsided, she would make some inquiry about Hyacinth's income and prospects. The Canon felt he ought to be prepared.

'Of course, I have lost my position with Mr. Quinn. You know that. But I have an offer of work which I hope will lead on to something better, and will enable me in a short time to earn enough money to marry on. You know--or perhaps you don't, for I am afraid I never told you '--he remembered that he had carefully concealed his connection with the *Croppy* from his friends at Ballymoy, and paused--' I have done some little writing. Oh, nothing very much--not a book, or anything like that, only a few articles for the press. Well, a friend of mine has got me the offer of a post in connection with a weekly paper. It is not a very great thing in itself just now, but it may improve, and there is always the prospect of picking up other work of the same kind.'

The Canon, who had never seen even an abstract of one of his own sermons in print, had a proper reverence for the men who guide the world's thought through the press.

'That is very good, Conneally--very satisfactory indeed. I always knew you had brains. But why did you never tell me what you were doing? I should have been deeply interested in anything you wrote.'

Hyacinth's conscience smote him.

'The truth is, that I was sure you wouldn't approve of the paper I wrote for. It is the *Croppy*, the organ of the extreme left wing of the Nationalist party. It is Miss Goold--Augusta Goold--who now offers me work on that paper. She says--- But you had better read what she says for yourself. Then you will know the worst of it.'

He took the letter from his pocket. The Canon lit a candle and read it through slowly and attentively. When he had finished he laid it upon the table and sat down. Hyacinth waited in extreme anxiety for what was to come.

'I do not like the cause you mean to work for or the people you call your friends. I would rather see my daughter's husband doing almost anything else in the world. I would be happier if you proposed to break stones upon the roadside. You know what my political opinions are. I regard the *Croppy* as a disloyal and seditious paper, bent upon fostering a dangerous spirit.'

Hyacinth listened patiently. He had steeled himself against the hearing of some such words, and was determined not to be moved to argument or self-defence except as a last resort.

'I hope,' he said, 'that you will at least give me credit for honestly acting in accordance with my convictions.'

'I am sure--quite sure--that you are honest, and believe that your cause is the right one. I recognise, too, though this is a very difficult thing to do, that you have every right to form and hold your own political opinions. It seems to me that they are very wrong and very mischievous, but it is quite possible that I am mistaken and prejudiced. In any case, I am not called upon to refuse you my affection or to separate you from my daughter because we differ about politics.'

Hyacinth breathed a great sigh of relief. He looked at the Canon in wonder and admiration. It had been beyond hope that a man grown gray in a narrow faith, a faith in which for centuries religion and politics had been inextricably blended, could have risen in one clear flight above the mire of prejudice. It seemed, even after he had spoken, impossible that in Ireland, where political opponents believe each other to be thieves and murderers, there could be found even one man, and he from the least emancipated class of all, who could understand and practise tolerance.

'I say,' went on the Canon, speaking very slowly, and with evident difficulty, 'that I have no right to put you away from me because of your political opinions. But there is something here '--he touched Miss Goold's letter--' from which I must by all means try to save you. Will you let me speak to you, not as Marion's father, not even as your friend, but as Christ's ambassador set here to watch for your soul? But I need not excuse myself for what I am about to say. You will at least listen to me patiently.'

He took up Miss Goold's letter and searched through it for a short time; then he read aloud:

'''He just asked one question about you: Does Mr. Conneally hate England and the Empire and everything English, from the Parliament to the police barrack? For it is this hatred which must animate our work. I said I thought you did.' Now consider what those words mean. You are to dedicate your powers, the talents God has given you, to preaching a

gospel of hate. This is not a question of politics. I am ready to believe that in the contest of which our unhappy country is the battle-ground a man may be either on your side or mine, and yet be a follower of Christ. It is impossible to think that anyone can deliberately, with his eyes open, accept hatred for the inspiration of his life and still be true to Him.'

Hyacinth was greatly moved by the solemnity with which the Canon spoke. There was that in him which witnessed to the truth of what he heard. Yet he refused to be convinced. When he spoke it was clear that he was not addressing his companion, for his eyes were fixed upon the picture of the Good Shepherd, faintly illuminated by the candle light. He desired to order his own thought on the dilemma, to justify, if he could, his own position to himself. 'It is true that the Gospel of Christ is a Gospel of love. Yet there are circumstances in which it is wrong to follow it. Is it possible to rouse our people out of their sordid apathy, to save Ireland for a place among the nations, except by preaching a mighty indignation against the tyranny which has crushed us to the dust?'

He felt that Canon Beecher's eyes never left him for a moment while he spoke. He looked up, and saw in them an intense pleading. There stole over him a desire to yield, to submit himself to this appealing tenderness. He defended himself desperately against his weakness.

'I am not choosing the pleasanter way. It would be easier for me to give up the fight for Ireland, to desert the beaten side, to forget the lost cause.' He turned to Canon Beecher, speaking almost fiercely: 'Do you think it is a small thing for me to surrender your friendship, and perhaps--perhaps to lose Marion? Is there not *some* of the nobility of sacrifice in refusing to listen to you?'

'I cannot argue with you. No doubt you are cleverer than I am. But I *know* this--God is love, and only he who dwelleth in love dwelleth in God.'

'But I do love: I love Ireland.'

'Ah yes; but He says, "Love your enemies."'

'Then,' said Hyacinth, 'I will not have Him for my God.'

Hardly had he spoken than he started and grew suddenly cold. It was no doubt some trick of memory, but he believed that he heard very faintly from far off a remembered voice:

'Will you be sure to know the good side from the bad, the Captain from the enemy.'

They were the last words his father had said to him. They had passed unregarded when they were spoken, but lingered unthought of in some recess of his memory. Now they came on him full of meaning, insistent for an answer.

'You have chosen,' said the Canon.

He had chosen. Could he be sure that he had chosen right, that he knew the good side from the bad?

'You have chosen, and I have no more to say. Only, before it becomes impossible for you and me to kneel together, I ask you to let me pray with you once more. You can do this because you still believe He hears us, although you have decided to walk no more with Him.'

They knelt together, and Hyacinth, numbly indifferent, felt his hand grasped and held.

'O Christ,' said Canon Beecher, 'this child of Thine has chosen to live by hatred rather than by love. Do Thou therefore remove love from him, lest it prove a hindrance to him on the way on which he goes. Let the memory of the cross be blotted out from his mind, so that he may do successfully that which he desires.'

Hyacinth wrenched his hand free from the grasp which held it, and flung himself forward across the table at which they knelt. Except for his sobs and his choking efforts to subdue them, there was silence in the room. Canon Beecher rose from his knees and stood watching him, his lips moving with unspoken supplication. At last Hyacinth also rose and stood, calm suddenly.

'You have conquered me,' he said.

'My son, my son, this is joy indeed! All along I knew He could not fail you. But I have not conquered you. The Lord Jesus has saved you.'

'I do not know,' said Hyacinth slowly, 'whether I have been saved or lost. I am not sure even now that I know the good side from the bad. But I do know that I cannot live without the hope of being loved by Him. Whether it is the better part to which I resign myself I cannot tell. No doubt He knows. As for me, if I have been forced to make a great betrayal, if I am to live hereafter very basely--and I think I am--at least I have not cut myself off from the opportunity of loving Him.'

CHAPTER XXI

Canon Beecher took no notice of Hyacinth's last speech. He had returned with amazing swiftness and ease from the region of high emotion to the commonplace. Excursions to the shining peaks of mystical experience are for most men so rare that the glory leaves them with dazzled eyes, and they walk stumbingly for a while along the dull roads of the world. But Canon Beecher, in the course of his pleading with Hyacinth, had been only in places very well known to him. The presence chamber of the King was to him also the room of a familiar friend. It was no breathless descent from the green hill of the cross to the thoroughfare of common life.

'Now, my dear boy,' he said, 'we really must go and talk to my wife and Marion. Besides, I must tell you the plan I have made for you--the plan I was just going to speak about when you put it out of my head with the news of your love-making.'

For Hyacinth a great effort was necessary before he could get back to his normal state. His hands were trembling violently. His forehead and hair were damp with sweat. His whole body was intensely cold. His mind was confused, and he listened to what was said to him with only the vaguest apprehension of its meaning. The Canon laid a firm hand upon his arm, and led him away from the study. In the passage he stopped, and asked Hyacinth to go back and blow out the candle which still burned on the study table.

'And just put some turf on the fire,' he added; 'I don't want it to go out.'

The pause enabled Hyacinth to regain his self-command, and the performance of the perfectly ordinary acts required of him helped to bring him back again to common life.

When they entered the drawing-room it was evident that Mrs. Beecher had already heard the news, and was, in fact, discussing the matter eagerly with Marion. She sprang up, and hastened across the room to meet them.

'I am so glad,' she said--'so delighted! I am sure you and Marion will be happy together.'

She took Hyacinth's hands in hers, and held them while she spoke, then drew nearer to him and looked up in his face expectantly. A fearful suspicion seized him that on an occasion of the kind she might consider it right to kiss him. It was with the greatest difficulty that he suppressed a wholly unreasonable impulse to laugh aloud. Apparently the need of such affectionate stimulant was strong in Mrs. Beecher. When Hyacinth hung back, she left him for her husband, put her arms round his neck, and kissed him heartily on both cheeks.

'Isn't it fortunate,' she said, 'that you saw Dr. Henry last week while you were in Dublin? You little thought how important that talk with him was going to turn out--I mean, of course, important for us. It always was important for Mr.--I mean for Hyacinth.'

The Canon seemed a little embarrassed. He cleared his throat somewhat unnecessarily, and then said:

'I haven't mentioned that matter yet.'

'Not mentioned Dr. Henry's offer! Then, what have you been talking about all this time?'

It did not seem necessary to tell Mrs. Beecher all that had been said, or to repeat the scene in the study for her benefit. The Canon cleared his throat again.

'I was in Dublin last week attending a meeting of the Scriptural Schools Society, and I met Dr. Henry. We were talking about the Quinns. I told you that Mr. Quinn is to be the new secretary of the society, didn't I? Dr. Henry knows Mr. Quinn slightly, and was greatly interested in him. Your name naturally was mentioned. Dr. Henry seems to have taken a warm interest in you when you were in college, and to have a very high opinion of your abilities. He did not know what had become of you, and was very pleased to hear that you were a friend of ours.'

Hyacinth knew at once what was coming--knew what Canon Beecher's plan for his future was, and why he was pleased with it; understood how Mrs. Beecher came to describe this conversation with Dr. Henry as fortunate. He waited for the rest of the recital, vaguely surprised at his own want of feeling.

'I told him,' the Canon went on, eying Hyacinth doubtfully, 'that you had lost your employment here. I hope you don't object to my having mentioned that. I am sure you wouldn't if you had heard how sympathetically he spoke of you. He assured me that he was most anxious to help you in any way in his power. He just asked one question about you.' Hyacinth started. Where had he heard those identical words before? Oh yes, they were in Miss Goid's letter. Patrick O'Dwyer also had just asked one question about him. He smiled faintly as the Canon went on: "'Is he fit, spiritually fit, to be ordained? For it is the desire to serve God which must animate our work.'" I said I thought you were. I told him how you sang in our choir here, and how fond you seemed of our quiet life, and what a good fellow you are. You see, I did not know then that I was praising the man who is to be my son-in-law. He asked me to remind you of a promise he had once made, and to say that he was ready to fulfil it. I understood him to mean that he would recommend you to any Bishop you like for ordination.'

Hyacinth remained silent. He felt that in surrendering his work for the *Croppy* he surrendered also his right to make any choice. He was ready to be shepherded into any position, like a sheep into a pen. And he had no particular wish to

resist. He saw a simple satisfaction in Mrs. Beecher's face and a beautiful joy in Marion's eyes. It was impossible for him to disappoint them. He smiled a response to Mrs. Beecher's kindly triumph.

'Isn't that splendid! Now you and Marion will be able to be married quite soon, and I do dislike long engagements. Of course, you will be very poor at first, but no poorer than we were. And Marion is not afraid of being poor--are you, dear?'

'That is just what I have been saying to him,' said Marion; 'isn't it, Hyacinth? Of course I am not afraid. I have always said that if I ever married I should like to marry a clergyman, and if one does that one is sure to be poor.'

Evidently there was no doubt in either of their minds that Hyacinth would accept Dr. Henry's offer. Nor had he any doubt himself. The thing seemed too inevitable to be anything but right. Only on Canon Beecher's face there lingered a shadow of uncertainty. Hyacinth saw it, and relieved his mind at once.

'I shall write to Dr. Henry to-night and thank him. I shall ask him to try and get me a curacy as soon as possible.'

'Thank you,' said the Canon.

'I think,' added Hyacinth, 'that I should prefer getting work in England.'

'Oh, why,' said Mrs. Beecher. 'Wouldn't it be better to stay in Ireland! and then we might have Marion somewhere within reach.'

'My dear,' said the Canon, 'we must let Hyacinth decide for himself. I am sure he knows what is wisest for him to do.'

Hyacinth was not at all sure that he knew what was wisest, and he was quite certain that he had not decided for himself in any matter of the slightest importance. He had suggested an English curacy in the vague hope that it might be easier there to forget his hopes and dreams for Ireland. It seemed to him, too, that a voluntary exile, of which he could not think without pain, might be a kind of atonement for the betrayal of his old enthusiasm.

The Canon followed him to the door when he left.

'My dear boy'--there was a break in his voice as he spoke--'my dear boy, you have made me very happy. I am sure that you will not enter upon the work of the ministry from any unworthy motive. The call will become clearer to you by degrees. I mean the inward call. The outward call, the leading of circumstance, has already made abundantly plain the way you ought to walk in. The other will come--the voice which brings assurance and peace when it speaks.'

Hyacinth looked at him wistfully. There seemed very little possibility of anything like assurance for him, and only such peace as might be gained by smothering the cries with which his heart assailed him. The Canon held his hand and wrung it.

'I can understand why you want to go to England. Your political opinions will interfere very little with your work there. Here, of course, it would be different. Yes, your choice is certainly wise, for nothing must be allowed to hinder your work. "Laying aside every weight," you remember, "let us run the race." Yes, I understand.'

It was perfectly clear to Hyacinth that the Canon did not understand in the least. It was not likely that anyone ever would understand.

Gradually his despondency gave way before the crowding in of thoughts of satisfaction. He was to have Marion, to live with her, to love her, and be loved by her as long as they both lived. He saw life stretching out before him, a sunlit, pleasant journey in Marion's company. It did not seem to him that any trouble could be really bad, any disappointment intolerable, any toil oppressive with her love for an atmosphere round him. He believed, too, that the work he was undertaking was a good work, perhaps the highest and noblest kind of work there is to be done in the world. From this conviction also came a glow of happiness. Yet there kept recurring chill shudderings of self-reproach. Something within him kept whispering that he had bartered his soul for happiness.

'I have chosen the easier and therefore the baser way,' he said. 'I have shrunk from toil and pain. I have refused to make the sacrifice demanded of me.'

He went back again to the story of his father's vision. For a moment it seemed quite clear that he had deliberately refused the call to the great fight, that he had judged himself unworthy, being cowardly and selfish in his heart. Then he remembered that the Captain of whom his father had told him was no one else but Christ, the same Christ of whom Canon Beecher spoke, the Good Shepherd whose love he had discovered to be the greatest need of all.

'I must have Him,' he said--'I must have Him--and Marion.'

Again with the renewed decision came a glow of happiness and a sense of rest, until there rose, as if to smite him, the thought of Ireland--of Ireland, poor, derided of strangers, deserted by her sons, roped in as a prize-ring where selfish men struggle ignobly for sordid gains. The children of the land fled from it sick with despair. Its deserted houses were full of all doleful things. Cormorants and the daughters of the owl lodged in the lintels of them.

Sullen desolation was on the threshold, while satyrs cried to their fellows across tracts of brown rush-grown land. Aliens came to hiss and passed by wagging their hands. Over all was the monotony of the gray sky, descending and still descending with clouds that came upon the land, mistily folding it in close embraces of death. Voices sounded far off and unreal through the gloom. The final convulsive struggles of the nation's life grew feebler and fewer. Of all

causes Ireland's seemed the most hopelessly lost. Was he, too, going to forsake her? He felt that in spite of all the good promised him there would always hang over his life a gloom that even Marion's love would not disperse, the heavy shadow of Ireland's Calvary. For Marion there would be no such darkness, nor would Marion understand it. But surely Christ understood. Words of His crowded to the memory. 'When He beheld the city He wept over it, saying, Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem!' Most certainly He understood this, as He understood all human emotion. He, too, had yearned over a nation's fall, had felt the heartbreak of the patriot.

'I have chosen Him,' he said at last. 'Once having caught a glimpse of Him, I could not do without Him. He understands it all, and He has given me Marion.'

CHAPTER XXII

It was a brilliant July day, and the convent at Robeen was decked for a festival. The occasion was a very great one. Cloth of gold hung in the chapel, the entrance-hall was splendid with flowers, and the whole white front of the buildings had put on signs of holiday. Indeed, this festival was unique, the very greatest day in the history of the sisterhood. Easter, Christmas, and the saints' days recurred annually in their proper order, and the emotions they brought with them were no doubt familiar to holy ladies whose business it was to live in close touch with the other world. But on this day the great of the earth, beings much more unapproachable, as a rule, than the saints, were to visit the convent. Honour was to be paid to ladies whose magnificence was guaranteed by worldly titles; to the Proconsuls of the far-off Imperial power, holders of the purse-strings of the richest nation upon earth; to Judges accustomed to sit in splendid robes and awful head-dresses, pronouncing the doom of malefactors; to a member of the Cabinet, a very mighty man, though untitled; and quite possibly--a glittering hope--to the Lord Lieutenant himself.

It was therefore no wonder that the nuns had decked their convent with all possible splendour. On each side of the iron gateway was a flag-post. From the top of one fluttered the green banner of Ireland, with its gold harp and a great crown over it. From the other hung the Union Jack, emblem of that marriage of nationalities for whose consummation eight centuries have not sufficed. It was hoisted upside down--not with intentional disrespect, but because Sister Gertrude, who superintended this part of the decorations, had long ago renounced the world, and did not remember that the tangled crosses had a top or a bottom to them. Between the posts hung a festoon of signalling flags, long pointed strips of bunting with red balls or blue on them. The central streamer just tipped as it fluttered the top of the iron cross which marked the religious nature of the gateway. The straight gravel walk inside was covered with red baize, and on each side of it were planted tapering poles, round which crimson and white muslin circled in alternate stripes, giving them the appearance of huge old-fashioned sugar-sticks. These added to the gaiety of the scene, though it cannot be supposed that they were of any actual use. The most bewildered visitor was hardly likely to stray off the red baize or miss his way to the door in front of him. Within the great entrance-hall were palms and flowering shrubs in pots or tubs. The mosaic flooring, imported from Italy, and a source of pride to all the Sisters, shone with much washing and polishing. The Madonna with the blue eyes and the golden crown, before which even Bishops crossed themselves, was less in evidence than usual, for the expected guests were mostly heretics. She stood retired behind the flower-pots, and veiled her benignity with the leaves of palms.

Right and left of the hall stretched corridors, whose shining parquet invited the curious to explore the working-rooms and eating-rooms which lay beyond. The door of the chapel stood open, and offered a vision of simpering angels crowding the canvas of the altar-piece, a justly-admired specimen of German religious art. Before it, dimly seen, two nuns knelt, types of conventual piety, absorbed in spiritual contemplation amid the tumult of the world's invasion of their sanctuary. Another door led to the garden. Here a fountain played into a great stone basin, and neat gravel walks intersected each other at sharp angles among flower-beds. The grass which lay around the maze of paths was sacred as a rule, even from the list slippers of the nuns, but to-day booths stood on it like stalls at a charity bazaar, hung with tweeds, blankets, and stockings. A tall Calvary lowered incongruously over one. An inferior Madonna, deposed from her old station in the entrance-hall, presided in a weather-beaten blue robe over another.

Beyond the garden, blocked off from it by a white wall, lay the factory itself, the magnet which was drawing the great of the earth to the nunnery. Here were the workers, all of them bright young women, smiling pleasantly and well washed for the occasion. They were dressed in neat violet petticoats and white blouses, with shawls thrown back from their heads, a glorified presentment of the Mayo woman's working dress. Here and there, a touch of realism creditable to the Reverend Mother's talent for stage management, one sat in bare feet--not, of course, dust or mud stained, as bare feet are apt to be in Connaught, but clean. The careful observer of detail might have been led to suppose that the Sisters improved upon the practice of the Holy Father himself, and daily washed the feet of the poor.

Everywhere fresh-complexioned, gentle-faced nuns flitted silently about. The brass crosses pendent over their breasts relieved with a single glitter the sombre folds of their robes. Snowy coifs, which had cost the industrial schoolgirls of a sister house hours of labour and many tears, shone, glazed and unwrinkled, round their heads. Even the youngest of them had acquired the difficult art of walking gracefully with her hands folded in front of her.

At about two o'clock the visitors began to arrive, although the train from Dublin which was to bring the very elect was not due for another half-hour. Lady Geoghegan, grown pleasantly stout and cheerfully benignant, came by a local train, and rejoiced the eyes of beholders with a dress made of one of the convent tweeds. Sir Gerald followed her, awkward and unwilling. He had been dragged with difficulty from his books and the society of his children, and was doubtful whether a cigar in a nunnery garden might not be counted sacrilege. With them was a wonderful person--an English priest: it was thus he described himself--whom Lady Geoghegan had met in Yorkshire. His charming manners and good Church principles had won her favour and earned him the holiday he was enjoying at Clogher House. He was arrayed in a pair of gray trousers, a white shirt, and a blazer with the arms of Brazenose College embroidered on the pocket, his sacerdotal character being marked only by his collar. He leaped gaily from the car which brought them from

the station, and, as he assisted his hostess to alight, amazed the little crowd around the gate by chaffing the driver in an entirely unknown tongue. The good man had an ear for music, and plumed himself on his ability to pick up any dialect he heard--Scotch, Yorkshire, or Irish brogue. The driver was bewildered, but smiled pleasantly. He realized that the gentleman was a foreigner, and since the meaning of his speech was not clear, it was quite likely that he might be hazy about the value of money and the rates of car hire.

The Duchess of Drummin came in her landau. Like Lady Geoghegan, she marked the national and industrial nature of the occasion in her attire. At much personal inconvenience, for the day was warm, she wore a long cloak of rich brown tweed, adorned with rows of large leather-covered buttons. Lady Josephine Maguire fluttered after her. She had bidden her maid disguise a dress, neither Irish nor homespun, with as much Carrickmacross lace as could be attached to it. Lord Eustace, who represented his father, appeared in all the glory of a silk hat and a frock-coat. He eyed Sir Gerald's baggy trousers and shabby wideawake with contempt, and turned away his eyes from beholding the vanity of obviously bad form when he came face to face with the English priest in his blazer.

A smiling nun took charge of each party as it arrived. Lady Geoghegan plied hers with questions, and received a series of quite uninforming answers. Her husband followed her, bent principally upon escaping from the precincts if he could. Already he was bored, and he knew that speeches from great men were in store for him if he were forced to linger. The Duchess of Drummin eyed each object presented to her notice gravely through long-handled glasses, but gave her attendant nun very little conversational help. Lady Josephine made every effort to be intelligent, and inquired in a dormitory where the looking-glasses were. She was amazed to hear that the nuns did, or failed to do, their hair--the head-dresses concealed the result of their efforts--without mirrors. Lord Eustace was preoccupied. Amid his unaccustomed surroundings he walked uncertain whether to keep his hat on his head or hold it in his hands. The English priest, whose name was Austin, got detached from Lady Geoghegan, and picked up a stray nun for himself. She took him, by his own request, straight to the chapel. He crossed himself with elaborate care on entering, and knelt for a moment before the altar. The nun was delighted.

'So you, too, are a Catholic?'

'Certainly,' he replied briskly--'an English Catholic.'

'Ah! many of our priests go to England. Perhaps you have met Father O'Connell. He is on a London mission.'

'No,' said Mr. Austin, 'I do not happen to have met him. My church is in Yorkshire.'

The nun gazed at him in amazement.

'Your church! Then you are----'

'Yes,' he said, 'I am a priest.'

Her eyes slowly travelled over him. They began at the gray trousers, passed to the blazer, resting a moment on the college arms, which certainly suggested the ecclesiastical, and remained fixed on his collar. After all, why should she, a humble nun, doubt his word when he said he was a priest? Perhaps he might belong to some order of which she had never heard. Eccentricities of costume might be forced on the English clergy by Protestant intolerance. She smothered her uncertainty, and took him at his word. They went together into the garden. Mr. Austin took off his hat before the tarnished Madonna, and crossed himself again. The nun's doubts vanished.

'I think,' he said, 'that I should like to buy some of this tweed. Is it for sale?'

'Oh, certainly. Sister Aloysia will sell it to you. We are so glad, so very glad, when anyone will buy what our poor workers make. It is all a help to the good cause.'

'Now this,' said Mr. Austin, fingering a bright-green cloth, 'would make a nice lady's dress. Don't you think so?'

The nun cast down her eyes.

'I do not know, Father, about dresses. Sister Aloysia, the Reverend Father wants to buy tweed to make a dress for '--she hesitated; perhaps it was his niece, but he looked young to have a full-grown niece--'for his sister.'

Sister Aloysia looked round her, puzzled. She saw no Reverend Father.

'This,' said the other, 'is Father--Father----'

'Austin,' he helped her out.

'Father Austin,' added the nun.

'And you wish,' said Sister Aloysia, 'to buy a dress for your sister?'

'Not for my sister,' said Mr. Austin--'for my wife.'

Both nuns started back as if he had tried to strike them.

'Your wife! Your wife! Then you are a Protestant.'

'Certainly not,' he said. 'I detest all Protestants. I am a Catholic--an Anglo-Catholic.'

Neither of the nuns had ever heard of an Anglo-Catholic before. What manner of religion such people might profess was doubtful and unimportant. One thing was clear--this was not a priest in any sense of the word which they could

recognise. They distrusted him, as a wolf, not certainly in the clothing, but using the language, of a sheep. The situation became embarrassing. Mr. Austin prepared to bow himself away.

'I think,' he said, 'I shall ask Lady Geoghegan'--he rolled the title out emphatically; it formed a salve to his wounded dignity--'I shall ask Lady Geoghegan to purchase the tweed for me. I must be on the look-out for a friend who promised to meet me here this afternoon--a young man whom I contemplate engaging as my curate. I am most particular in the choice of a curate, and should, of course, prefer a public school and 'Varsity man. I need scarcely say that I refer only to Oxford and Cambridge as the Universities. As a rule, I do not care for Irishmen, but on the recommendation of my friend Dr. Henry, I am willing to consider this Mr. Conneally.'

It seemed to Mr. Austin that a preference for the English Universities, the friendship of a distinguished professor, a contempt for the mere Irishman, and a titled hostess ought to restore the respect he had forfeited by the mention of his wife. Curiously enough, and this shows the disadvantage of a monastic seclusion from the world, the nuns remained unimpressed. The conception of a married priest was too much for them. As he walked away Mr. Austin heard Sister Aloysia murmur:

'How very indecent!'

Meanwhile, the train from Dublin had arrived, and Mr. Austin, when he returned after his interview with Hyacinth, found that even the two nuns he had victimized had forgotten him in the excitement of gazing at more important visitors. Mr. Justice Saunders, a tall, stout man with a florid face, made a tour of the factory under the charge of one of the senior Sisters. He took little notice of what he was shown, being mainly bent on explaining to his escort how he came to be known in legal circles as 'Satan Saunders.' Afterwards he added a tale of how he had once bluffed a crowd in an out-of-the-way country town into giving three cheers for the Queen.

'You're all loyal here,' he said. 'I saw the Union Jack flying over the gate as I came in.'

The nun smiled, a slow, enigmatic smile, and the Judge, watching her, was struck by her innocence and simplicity.'

'Surely,' she said, 'the Church must always be loyal.'

'Well, I'm not so sure of that. I've met a few firebrands of priests in my time.'

'Oh, those!' she said with a shrug of her shoulders. 'You must not think of them. It will always be easy to keep them in order when the time comes. They spring from the cabins. What can you expect of them? But the Church---- Can the Church fail of respect for the Sovereign?'

Mr. Clifford and Mr. Davis followed Judge Saunders. They were members of the Congested Districts Board, and it was clear from the manner of the nun who escorted them that they were guests of very considerable importance in her estimation. Mr. Clifford was an Englishman who had been imported to assist in governing Ireland because he was married to the sister of the Chief Secretary's wife. He was otherwise qualified for the task by possessing a fair knowledge of the points of a horse. He believed that he knew Ireland and the Irish people thoroughly.

His colleague, Mr. Davis, was a man of quite a different stamp. The son of a Presbyterian farmer in County Tyrone, he had joined the Irish Parliamentary party, and made himself particularly objectionable in Westminster. He had devoted his talents to discovering and publishing the principles upon which appointments to lucrative posts are made by the officials in Dublin Castle. It was found convenient at last to provide him with a salary and a seat on the Congested Districts Board. Thus he found himself engaged in ameliorating the lot of the Connaught peasants. Mr. Clifford used to describe him as 'a bit of a boulder--in fact, a complete outsider--but no fool.' His estimate of Mr. Clifford was perhaps less complimentary.

'Every business,' he used to say, 'must have at least one gentleman in it to do the entertaining and the dining out. We have Mr. Clifford. He's a first-rate man at one of the Lord Lieutenant's balls.'

A professor from Trinity College was one of the two guests conducted by the Reverend Mother herself. Nominally this learned gentleman existed for the purpose of impressing upon the world the beauties of Latin poetry, but he was best known to fame as an orator on the platforms of the Primrose League, and a writer of magazine articles on Irish questions. He was a man who owed his success in life largely to his faculty for always keeping beside the most important person present. The Lord Lieutenant, being slightly indisposed, had been unable to make an early start, so the most honourable stranger was Mr. Chesney, the Chief Secretary. To him Professor Cairns attached himself, and received a share of the Reverend Mother's blandishments.

Mr. Chesney himself was dapper and smiling as usual. Even the early hour at which he had been obliged to leave home had neither ruffled his temper nor withered the flower in his buttonhole. He spent his money generously at the various stalls in the garden, addressed friendly remarks to the women in the factory, and asked the questions with which Mr. Davis had primed him in the train.

Quite a crowd of minor people followed the great statesman. There were barristers who hoped to become County Court Judges, and ladies who enjoyed a novel kind of occasion for displaying their clothes, hoping to see their names afterwards in the newspaper accounts of the proceedings. There were a few foremen from leading Dublin shops, who foresaw the possibility of a fashionable boom in Robeen tweeds and flannels. There were also reporters from the

Dublin papers, and a representative--Miss O'Dwyer--of a syndicate which supplied ladies' journals with accounts of the clothes worn at fashionable functions.

The supreme moment of the day arrived when the company assembled to listen to words of wisdom from the orators selected to address them. Seats had been provided by carting in forms from the neighbouring national schools. A handsomely-carved chair of ecclesiastical design awaited Mr. Chesney.

He opened his speech by assuring his audience that there was no occasion for him to address them at all, a truth which struck home to the heart of Sir Gerald, who was trying to arrange himself comfortably at a desk designed for a class of infants.

'Facts,' Mr. Chesney explained himself, 'are more eloquent than words. You have seen what I could never have described to you--the contented workers in this factory and the artistic designs of the fabrics they weave. Many of you remember what Robeen was a few years ago--a howling wilderness. We are told on high authority that even the wilderness shall blossom as a rose.'

He bowed in the direction of the Reverend Mother, possibly with a feeling that it was suitable to acknowledge her presence when quoting Holy Writ, possibly with a vague idea that she might consider herself a spiritual descendant of the Prophet Isaiah. 'You see it now a hive of happy industry.'

He observed with pleasure that the reporters were busy with their note-books, and he knew that these editors of public utterance might be relied on to unravel a tangled metaphor before publishing a speech. He went on light-heartedly, confident that in the next day's papers his wilderness would blossom into something else, and that the hive, if it appeared at all, would be arrived at by some other process than blossoming. The habit of rolling out agreeable platitudes to audiences forced to listen is one which grows on public men as dram-drinking does on the common herd. Mr. Chesney was evidently enjoying himself, and there seemed no reason why he should ever stop. He could, and perhaps would, have gone on for hours but for the offensive way in which Judge Saunders snapped the case of his watch at the end of every period. There was really no hurry, for the special train which was to bring them back to Dublin would certainly wait until they were ready for it. Mr. Chesney felt aggrieved at the repeated interruption, and closed his speech without giving the audience the benefit of his peroration.

The Judge came next, and began with reminding his hearers that he was known as 'Satan Saunders.' An account of the origin of the name followed, and was enjoyed even by those who had listened to the Judge's oratory before, and therefore knew the story. There was something piquant, almost *risque*, in the constant repetition of a really wicked word like 'Satan' in the halls of a nunnery. The audience laughed reassuringly, and the Judge went on to supply fresh pabulum for mirth by suggesting that the Reverend Mother should clothe her nuns in their own tweeds. He was probably right in supposing that the new costumes would add a gaiety to the religious life. Other jests followed, and he sat down amid a flutter of applause after promising that when he next presided over the Winter Assizes in a draughty court-house he would send for a Robeen blanket and wrap his legs in it.

Mr. Clifford, who followed the Judge, began by wondering whether anyone present had ever been in Lancashire. After a pause, during which no one owned to having crossed the Channel, he said that Lancashire was the home of the modern factory. There every man and woman earned good wages, wore excellent clothes, and lived in a house fitted with hot and cold water taps and a gas-meter. It was his hope to see Mayo turned into another Lancashire. When ladies of undoubted commercial ability, like the Lady Abbess who presided over the Robeen convent--Lady Abbess sounded well, and Mr. Clifford was not strong on ecclesiastical titles--took the matter up, success was assured. All that was required for the development of the factory system in Mayo was capital, and that 'we, the Congested Districts Board, are in a position to supply.' With the help of some prompting from Mr. Davis, he proceeded to lay before the audience a few figures purporting to explain the Board's expenditure.

Professor Cairns was evidently anxious to follow Mr. Clifford, if only in the humble capacity of the proposer of a vote of thanks. But his name was not on the programme, and Mr. Chesney was already engaged in a whispered conversation with the Reverend Mother. Ignoring the professor, almost rudely, he announced that the company in general was invited to tea in the dining-room.

The refreshments provided, if not substantial, were admirable in quality. There happened just then to be a young lady engaged, at the expense of the County Council, in teaching cookery in a neighbouring convent. She was sent over to Robeen for the occasion, and made a number of delightful cakes at extremely small expense. The workers in the factory had given the butter she required as a thank-offering, and the necessary eggs came from another convent where the nuns, with financial assistance from the Congested Districts Board, kept a poultry-farm. The Reverend Mother dispensed her hospitality with the same air of generosity with which Mr. Clifford had spoken of providing capital for the future ecclesiastical factories.

CHAPTER XXIII

The Reverend Mother bowed out the last of her guests, and retired to her own room well satisfied. She was assured of further support from the Congested Districts Board, and certain debts which had grown uncomfortably during her struggle with Mr. Quinn need trouble her no longer. Her goods would be extensively advertised next morning in the daily press. Her house would obtain a celebrity likely to attract the most eligible novices--those, that is to say, who would bring the largest sums of money as their dowries. There arose before her mind a vision of almost unbounded wealth and all that might be done with it. What statues of saints might not Italy supply! French painters and German organ-builders would compete for the privilege of furnishing the chapel of her house. Already she foresaw pavements of gorgeous mosaic, windows radiant with Munich glass, and store of vestments to make her sacristy famous. Grandiose plans suggested themselves of founding daughter houses in Melbourne, in Auckland, in Capetown, in Natal. All things were possible to a well-filled purse. She saw how her Order might open schools in English towns, where girls could be taught French, Italian, Latin, music, all the accomplishments dear to middle-class parents, at ridiculously low fees, or without fees at all. She stirred involuntarily at the splendour of her visions. The day's weariness dropped off from her. She rose from her chair and went into the chapel. She prostrated herself before the altar, and lay passive in a glow of warm emotion. For God, for the Mother of God, for the Catholic Church, she had laboured and suffered and dared. Now she was well within sight of the end, the golden reward, the fulfilment of hopes that had never been altogether selfish.

Her thoughts, sanctified now by the Presence on the altar, drifted out again on to the shining sea of the future. What she, a humble nun, had done others would do. A countless army of missionary men and women marching from the Irish shore would conquer the world's conquerors, regain for the Church the Anglo-Saxon race. Once in the far past Irish men and women had Christianized Europe, and Ireland had won her glorious title, 'Island of Saints.' Now the great day was to dawn again, the great race to be reborn. For this end had Ireland been kept faithful and pure for centuries, just that she might be at last the witness to the spiritual in a materialized world. For this end had the Church in Ireland gone through the storm of persecution, suffered the blight of the world's contempt, that she might emerge in the end entirely fitted for the bloodless warfare.

'And I am one of the race, a daughter of Ireland. And I am a worker--nay, one who has accomplished something--in the vineyard of the Church. Ah, God!'

She was swept forward on a wave of emotion. Thought ceased, expiring in the ecstasy of a communion which transcended thought. Then suddenly, sharp as an unexpected pain, an accusation shot across her soul, shattering the coloured glory of the trance in an instant.

'Who am I that I should boast?'

The long years of introspection, the discipline of hundreds of heart-searching confessions, the hardly-learned lesson of self-distrust, made it possible for her to recognise the vain-glory even with the halo of devotion shining round it. She abased herself in penitence.

'Give me the work, my Lord; give others the glory and the fruit of it. Let me toil, but withhold the reward from me. May my eyes not see it, lest I be lifted up! Nay, give me not even work to do, lest I should be praised or learn to praise myself. "Nunc dimittis servam tuam, Domine, secundum verbum tuum in pace."'

There stole over her a sense of peace--numb, silent peace--wholly unlike the satisfaction which had flooded her in her own room or during the earlier ecstasy before the altar. She raised her eyes slowly till they rested on the shrine where the body of the sacrifice reposed.

'Quia viderunt oculi mei salutare tuum.'

At last she rose. The lines of care and age gathered again upon her face. Her eyes gleamed with keen intelligence. She braced herself with the thought of all that might still lie before her. The advice of Iago, strangely sanctified, clamoured in her heart--'Put money in thy purse.'

CHAPTER XXIV

The Reverend Mother was not the only person well satisfied with the day. The Right Hon. T. J. Chesney leant back in his saloon-carriage, and puffed contentedly at his cigar. It might be his part occasionally--indeed, frequently--to talk like a fool, but the man was shrewd enough. It really seemed that he had hit on the true method of governing Ireland. Nationalist members of Parliament could be muzzled, not by the foolish old methods of coercion, but by winning the goodwill of the Bishops. No Irish member, dared open his mouth when a priest bid him keep it shut, or give a vote contrary to the wishes of the hierarchy. And the Bishops were reasonable men. They looked at things from a point of view intelligible to Englishmen. There was no ridiculous sentimentality about their demands. For so much money they would silence the clamour of the Parliamentary party; for so much more they would preach a modified loyalty, would assert before the world that the Irish people were faithful servants of the Sovereign; for a good lump sum down they would undertake to play 'God Save the King' or 'Rule, Britannia' on the organ at Maynooth. Of course, the money must be paid: Mr. Chesney was beginning to understand that, and felt the drawback. It would have been much pleasanter and simpler if the Bishops would have been content with promises. There was a certain difficulty in obtaining the necessary funds without announcing precisely what they-were for. But, after all, a man cannot be called a great statesman without doing something to deserve the title, and British statesmanship is the art of hoodwinking the taxpayer. That is all--not too difficult a task for a clever man. Mr. Chesney reckoned on no power in Ireland likely to be seriously troublesome. The upper classes were either helpless and sulking, or helpless and smiling artificially. They might grumble in private or try to make themselves popular by joining the chorus of the Church's flatterers. Either way their influence was inconsiderable. Was there anyone else worth considering? The Orangemen were still a noisy faction, but their organization appeared to be breaking up. They were more bent on devouring their own leaders than interfering with him. There were a number of people anxious to revive the Irish language, who at one time had caused him some little uneasiness. He had found it quite impossible to understand the Gaelic League, and, being an Englishman, arrived gradually at the comfortable conclusion that what he could not understand must be foolish. Now, he had great hopes that the Bishops might capture the movement.

If once it was safely under the patronage of the Church, he had nothing more to fear from it. No doubt, resolutions would be passed, but resolutions----- Mr. Chesney smiled. There were, of course, the impossible people connected with the *Croppy*. Mr. Chesney did not like them, and in the bottom of his heart was a little nervous about them. They seemed to be very little afraid of the authority of the Church, and he doubted if the authority of the state would frighten them at all. Still, there were very few of them, and their abominable spirit of independence was spreading slowly, if at all.

'They won't,' he said to himself, 'be of any importance for some years to come, at all events, and five years hence----'

In five years Mr. Chesney hoped to be Prime Minister, or perhaps to have migrated to the House of Lords. At least, he expected to be out of Ireland. Meanwhile, he lighted a fresh cigar. The condition of the country was extremely satisfactory, and his policy was working out better than he had hoped.

The other travellers by the special train were equally well pleased, Ireland, so they understood Mr. Chesney, was to be made happy and contented, peaceful and prosperous. It followed that there must be Boards under the control of Dublin Castle--more and more Boards, an endless procession of them. There is no way devised by the wit of man for securing prosperity and contentment except the creation of Boards. If Boards, then necessarily officials--officials with salaries and travelling allowances. Nice gentlemanly men, with villas at Dalkey and Killiney, would perform duties not too arduous in connection with the Boards, and carry out the benevolent policy of the Government. There was not a man in the train, except the newspaper reporters, who did not believe in the regeneration of Ireland by Boards, and everyone hoped to take a share in the good work, with the prospect of a retiring pension afterwards.

The local magnates--with the exception of Sir Gerald Geoghegan, whose temper had been bad from the first--also went home content. The minds of great ladies work somewhat confusedly, for Providence, no doubt wisely, has denied to most of them the faculty of reason. It was enough for them to feel that the nuns were 'sweet women,' and that in some way not very clear Mr. Chesney was getting the better of 'those wretched agitators.'

Only one of all whom the special train had brought down failed to return in it. Mary O'Dwyer slipped out of the convent before the speeches began, and wandered away towards the desolate stony hill where the stream which turns the factory mill took its rise. It grieved her to miss the cup of tea which a friendly nun had led her to expect; but even tea might be too dearly purchased, and Miss O'Dwyer had a strong dislike to listening to what Augusta Goold described as the 'sugared hypocrisies of professional liars.' Besides, she had her cigarette-case in her pocket, and a smoke, unattainable for her in the convent or the train, was much to be desired. She left the road at the foot of the hill, and picked her way along the rough bohireen which led upwards along the course of the stream. After awhile even this track disappeared. The stream tumbled noisily over rocks and stones, the bog-stained water glowing auburn-coloured in the sunlight. The ling and heather were springy under her feet, and the air was sweet with the scent of the bog-myrtle. She spied round her for a rock which cast a shade upon the kind of heathery bed she had set her heart to find. Her eyes lit upon a little party--a young man and two girls--encamped with a kettle, a spirit-stove, and a store of bread-

and-butter. Her renunciation of the convent tea had not been made without a pang. She looked longingly at the steam which already spouted from the kettle. The young man said a few words to the girls, then stood up, raised his hat to her, and beckoned. She approached him, wondering.

'Surely it can't be--I really believe it is----'

'Yes, Miss O'Dwyer, it really is myself, Hyacinth Conneally.'

'My dear boy, you are the last person I expected to meet, though of course I knew you were somewhere down in these parts.'

'Come and have some tea,' said Hyacinth. 'And let me introduce you to Miss Beecher and Miss Elsie Beecher.'

Miss O'Dwyer took stock of the two girls. 'They make their own clothes,' she thought, 'and apparently only see last year's fashion-plates. The eldest isn't bad-looking. How is it all West of Ireland girls have such glorious complexions? Her figure wouldn't be bad if her mother bought her a decent pair of stays. I wonder who they are, and what they are doing here with Hyacinth. They can't be his sisters.'

While they drank their tea certain glances and smiles gave her an inkling of the truth. 'I suppose Hyacinth is engaged to the elder one,' she concluded. 'That kind of girl wouldn't dare to make eyes at a man unless she had some kind of right to him.'

After tea she produced her cigarette-case.

'I hope you don't mind,' she said to Marion. 'I know it's very shocking, but I've had a tiring day and an excellent tea, and oh, this heather is delicious to lie on!' She stretched herself at full length as she spoke. 'I really must smoke, just to arrive at perfect felicity for once in my life. How happy you people ought to be who always have in a place like this!'

'Oh,' said Marion, 'it sometimes rains, you know.'

'Ah! and then these sweet spots get boggy, I suppose, and you have to wear thick, clumping boots.'

Her own were very neat and small, and she knew that they must obtrude themselves on the eye while she lay prone. Elsie, whose shoes were patched as well as thick-soled, made an ineffectual attempt to cover them with her skirt.

'Now,' said Hyacinth, 'tell us what you are doing down here. They haven't made you an inspectress of boarded-out workhouse children, have they? or sent you down to improve the breed of hens?'

'No,' said Miss O'Dwyer; 'I have spent the afternoon helping to govern Ireland.'

Marion and Elsie gazed at her in wonder. A lady who smoked cigarettes and bore the cares of State upon her shoulders was a novelty to them.

'I have sat in the seats of the mighty,' she said; 'I have breathed the same air as Mr. Chesney and two members of the C.D.B. Think of that! Moreover, I might, if I liked, have drunk tea with a Duchess.'

'Oh,' said Hyacinth, 'you were at the convent function, I suppose. I wonder I didn't see you.'

'What on earth were *you* doing there? I thought you hated the nuns and all their ways.'

'Go on about yourself,' said Hyacinth. 'You are not employed by the Government to inspect infant industries, are you?'

'Oh no; I was one of the representatives of the press. I have notes here of all the beautiful clothes worn by the wives and daughters of the West British aristocracy. Listen to this: "Lady Geoghegan was gowned in an important creation of saffron tweed, the product of the convent looms. We are much mistaken if this fabric in just this shade is not destined to play a part in robing the *elegantes* who will shed a lustre on our house-parties during the autumn." And this--you must just listen to this.'

'I won't,' said Hyacinth; 'you can if you like, Marion. I'll shut my ears.'

'Very well,' said Miss O'Dwyer; 'I'll talk seriously. When are you coming up to Dublin? You know my brother has taken over the editorship of the *Croppy*. We are going to make it a great power in the country. We are coming out with a policy which will sweep the old set of political talkers out of existence, and dear the country of Mr. Chesney and the likes of him.' She waved her hand towards the convent. 'Oh, it is going to be great. It is great already. Why don't you come and help us?'

Hyacinth looked at her. She had half risen and leaned upon her elbow. Her face was flushed and her eyes sparkled. There was no doubt about the genuineness of her enthusiasm. The words of her poem, long since, he supposed, blotted from his memory, suddenly returned to him:

'O, desolate mother, O, Erin,
When shall the pulse of thy life which but flutters in Connacht
Throb through thy meadows and boglands and mountains and cities?'

Had it come at last, this revival of the nation's vitality? Had it come just too late for him to share it?

'I shall not help you,' he said sadly; 'I do not suppose that I ever could have helped you much, but now I shall not even try.'

She looked at him quickly with a startled expression in her eyes. Then she turned to Marion.

'Are you preventing him?' she said.

'No,' said Hyacinth; 'it is not Marion. But I am going away--going to England. I am going to be ordained, to become an English curate. Do you understand? I came here to-day to see the man who is to be my Rector, and to make final arrangements with him.'

'Oh, Hyacinth!'

For some minutes she said no more. He saw in her face a wondering sorrow, a pathetic submissive-ness to an unexpected disappointment, like the look in the face of a dog struck suddenly by the hand of a friend. He felt that he could have borne her anger better. No doubt if he had made his confession to Augusta Gould he would have been overwhelmed with passionate wrath or withered by a superb contemptuous stare. Then he could have worked himself to anger in return. But this!

'You will never speak to any of us again,' she went on. You will be ashamed even to read the *Croppy*. You will wear a long black coat and gray gloves. You will learn to talk about the "Irish Problem" and the inestimable advantages of belonging to a world-wide Empire, and about the great heart of the English people. I see it all--all that will happen to you. Your hair will get quite smooth and sleek. Then you will become a Vicar of a parish. You will live in a beautiful house, with Virginia creeper growing over it and plum-trees in the garden. You will have a nice clean village for a parish, with old women who drop curtsies to you, and men--such men! stupid as bullocks! I know it all. And you will be ashamed to call yourself an Irishman. Oh, Hyacinth!'

Miss O'Dwyer's catalogue of catastrophes was curiously mixed. Perhaps the comedy in it tended to obscure the utter degradation of the ruin she described. But the freakish incongruity of the speech did not strike Hyacinth. He found in it only two notes--pity that such a fate awaited him, and contempt for the man who submitted to it.

'I cannot help myself. Will you not make an effort to understand? I am trying to; do what is right.'

She shook her head.

'No,' he said, 'I know it is no use. You could not understand even if I told you all I felt.'

Her eyes filled suddenly with tears. He heard her sob. Then she turned without a word and left them. He stood watching her till she reached the road and started on her walk to the railway-station. Then he took Marion's two hands in his, and held them fast.

'Will *you* understand?' he asked her.

She looked up at him. Her face was all tenderness. Love shone on him--trusting, unquestioning, adoring love, love that would be loyal to the uttermost; but her eyes were full of a dumb wonder.

CHAPTER XXV

One morning near the end of September the *Irish Times* published a list of Irish graduates ordained in England on the previous Sunday. Among other names appeared:

'Hyacinth Conneally, B.A., T.C.D., deacon, by the Bishop of Ripon, for the curacy of Kirby-Stowell.'

Shortly afterwards the *Croppy* printed the following verses, signed 'M.O'D.':

'EIRE TO H. C.

'Bight across the low, flat curragh from the sea,
Drifting, driving sweeps the rain,
Where the bogborn, bent, brown rushes grow for me,
Barren grass instead of grain.

'Out across the sad, soaked curragh towards the sea,
Striding, striving go the men,
With their spades and forks and barrows toil for me
That my corn may grow again

'Ah I but safe from blast of wind and bitter sea,
You who loved me---Tusa fein--
Live and feel and work for others, not for me,
Never coming back again.

'Yes, while all across the curragh from the West
Drifts the sea-rain off the sea,
You have chosen. Have you chosen what is best
For yourself, O son, and me?'

Hyacinth read the verses, cut them out of the *Croppy*, and locked them in the box in which he stored the few papers of interest he possessed. The sorrowful judgment pronounced on his conduct affected him, but only in a dull way, like an additional blow upon a limb already bruised to numbness. He accepted his new duties and performed them without any feeling of enthusiasm, and after a little while without any definite hope of doing any good. He got no further in understanding the people he had to deal with, and he was aware that even those of them who came most frequently into contact with him regarded him as a stranger. A young doctor whose wife took a fancy to Marion tried to make friends with him. The result was unsatisfactory, owing to Hyacinth's irresponsiveness. He could not, without yawning piteously, spend an evening discussing the performances of the local cricket club; nor did his conduct improve when the two ladies suspended their talk and sacrificed an hour to playing four-handed halma with their husbands. An unmarried solicitor, attracted by Marion's beauty and friendliness, adopted the habit of calling at Hyacinth's little house about nine or ten o'clock in the evening. He was a man full of anecdote and simple mirth, and he often stayed, quite happily, till midnight. Every week he brought an illustrated paper as an offering to Marion, and recommended the short stories in it; to her notice. He often asked Hyacinth's advice and help in solving the conundrums set by the prize editor. He took a mild interest in politics, and retailed gossip picked up at the Conservative Club. After a while he gave up coming to the house. Hyacinth blamed himself for being cold and unfriendly to the man.

Mr. Austin treated Hyacinth with kindness and some consideration, much as a wise master treats an upper servant. He was anxious that his curate should perform many and complicated ceremonies in church, was seriously intent on the wearing of correctly-coloured stoles, and 'ran,' as he expressed it himself, a very large number of different organizations, of each of which the objective appeared to be a tea-party in the parochial hall. Hyacinth accepted his tuition, bowed low at the times when Mr. Austin liked to bow, watched for the seasons when stoles bloomed white and gold, changed to green, or faded down to violet. He tried to make himself agreeable to the 'united mothers' and the rest when they assembled for tea-drinking. Mr. Austin asserted that these were the methods by which the English people were being taught the Catholic faith. Hyacinth did not doubt it, nor did he permit himself to wonder whether it was worth while teaching them.

To Marion the new life was full of many delights. The surpliced choir-boys gratified her aesthetic sense, and she entered herself as one of a band of volunteers who scrubbed the chancel tiles and polished a brass cross. She smiled, kissed, and petted Hyacinth out of the fits of depression which came on him, managed his small income with wonderful skill, and wrote immensely long letters home to Ballymoy.

CHAPTER XXVI

It is very hard for a poor man to travel from one side of England to the other side of Ireland, because railway companies, even when, to allure the public, they advertise extraordinary excursions, charge a great deal for their tickets. The journey becomes still more difficult of accomplishment when the poor man is married. Then there are two tickets to be bought, and very likely most of the money which might have bought them has been spent securing the safe arrival of a baby--a third person who in due time will also require a railway-ticket. This was Hyacinth's case. For two summers he had no holiday at all, and it was only by the most fortunate of chances that he found himself during the third summer in a position to go to Ballymoy. He sublet his house to a freshly-arrived supervisor of Inland Revenue, who wanted six weeks to look about for a suitable residence. With the nine pounds paid in advance by this gentleman, Hyacinth and Marion, having with them their baby, a perambulator, and much other luggage, set off for Ballymoy.

The journey is not a very pleasant one, because it is made over the lines of three English railway companies, whose trains refuse to connect with each other at junctions, and because St. George's Channel is generally rough. The discomfort of third-class carriages is more acutely felt when the Irish shore is reached, but the misery of having to feed and tend a year-old child lasts the whole journey through. Therefore, Marion arrived in Dublin dishevelled, weary, and, for all her natural placidness, inclined to be cross. The steamer came to port at an hour which left them just the faint hope of catching the earliest train to Ballymoy. Disappointment followed the nervous strain of a rush across Dublin. Two long hours intervened before the next train started, and the people who keep the refreshment-room in Broadstone Station are not early risers. Marion, without tea or courage, settled herself and the baby in the draughty waiting-room.

Hyacinth was also dishevelled, dirty, and tired, having borne his full share of strife with the child's worst moods. But the sight of Ireland from the steamer's deck filled him with a strange sense of exultation. He wished to shout with gladness when the gray dome of the Custom House rose to view, immense above the low blanket of mist. Even the incredibly hideous iron grating of the railway viaduct set his pulse beating joyfully. He drew deep breaths, inhaling various abominable smells delightedly. The voices of the sleepy porters on the quay roused in him a craving for the gentle slovenliness of Irish speech. He fussed and hustled Marion beyond the limits of her endurance, pretending eagerness to catch the early train, caring in reality not at all whether any train were caught or missed, filled only with a kind of frenzy to keep moving somehow further into Ireland. In the cab he gave utterance to ridiculous pleasantries. He seized the child from Marion, and held him, wailing piteously, half out of the window, that his eyes might rest on the great gilt characters which adorn the offices of the Gaelic League. It was with rapture that he read Irish names, written and spelt in Irish, above the shops, and saw a banner proclaiming the annual festival of Irish Ireland hanging over the door of the Rotunda. The city had grown more Irish since he left it. There was no possibility now, even in the early morning, with few people but scavengers and milkmen in the streets, of mistaking for an English town.

While Marion sat torpid in the waiting-room, he paced the platform eagerly from end to end. He saw the train pushed slowly into position beside the platform, watched porters sweep the accumulated debris of yesterday's traffic from the floors of the carriages, and rub with filthy rags the brass doorhandles. Little groups of passengers began to arrive--first a company of cattle-jobbers, four of them, red-faced men with keen, crafty eyes, bound for some Western fair; then a laughing party of tourists, women in short skirts and exaggeratedly protective veils, men with fierce tweed knickerbockers dragging stuffed hold-alls and yellow bags. These were evidently English. Their clear high-pitched voices proclaimed contempt for their surroundings, and left no doubt of their nationality. One of them addressed a bewildered porter in cheerful song:

*'Are you right there,
Michael? are you right?
Have you got the parcel there for Mrs. White?'*

He felt, and his companions sympathized, that he was entering into the spirit of Irish life. Then, heralded by an obsequious guard, came a great man, proconsular in mien and gait. Bags and rugs were wheeled beside him. In his hand was a despatch-box bearing the tremendous initials of the Local Government Board. He took complete possession of a first-class smoking carriage, scribbled a telegram, perhaps of international importance, handed it to the guard for instant despatch, and lit a finely-odorous cigar. Hyacinth, humbled by the mere view of this incarnation of the Imperial spirit, went meekly to the waiting-room to fetch Marion and his child. He led them across the now crowded platform towards a third-class carriage.

'I will not go with you in your first-class carriage, Father Lavelle; so that's flat. Nor I won't split the difference and go second either, if that's what you're going to propose to me. Is it spend what would keep the family of a poor man in bread and tea for a week, for the sake of easing my back with a cushion? Get away with you. The plain deal board's good enough for me. And, moreover, I doubt very much if I've the money to do it, if I were ever so willing. I'm afraid to look into my purse to count the few coppers that's left in it after paying that murdering bill in the hotel you took me to. Gresham, indeed! A place where they're not ashamed to charge a poor old priest three and sixpence for his breakfast, and me not able to eat the half of what they put before me.'

Hyacinth turned quickly. Two priests stood together near the bookstall. The one, a young man, handsome and well-dressed, he did not know. The other he recognised at once. It seemed to be the same familiarly shabby black coat which he wore, the same many-stained waistcoat, the identical silk hat, ruffled and rain-spotted. The same pads of flesh hung flaccid from his jaws; the red, cracked knuckles of his hands, well remembered, were enormous still. Only the furrows on the face seemed to be ploughed deeper and wider, and a few more stiff hairs curled over the general bushiness of the grizzled eyebrows.

'Father Moran!' cried Hyacinth.

'I am Father Moran. You're right there. But who *you* are or how you come to know me is more than I can tell. But wait a minute. I've a sort of recollection of your voice. Will you speak to me again, and maybe I'll be able to put a name on you.'

Hyacinth said a few words rapidly in Irish.

'I have you now,' said the priest. 'You're Hyacinth Conneally, the boy that went out to fight for the Boers. Father Lavelle, this is a friend of mine that I've known ever since he was born, and I haven't laid eyes on him these six years or more. You're going West, Mr. Conneally? But of course you are. Where else would you be going? We'll travel together and talk. If it's second-class you're going, Father Lavelle will have to lend me the money to pay the extra on my ticket, so as I can go with you. Seemingly it's a Protestant minister you've grown into. Well now, who'd have thought it? And you so set on fighting the battle of Armageddon and all. It's a come-down for you, so it is. But never mind. You might have got yourself killed in it. There's many a one killed or maimed for life in smaller fights than it. It's better to be a minister any day than a corpse or a cripple. And as you are a minister, it's likely to be third-class you're travelling. Times are changed since I was young. It was the priests travelled third-class then, if they travelled at all, and the ministers were cocked up on the cushions, looking down on the likes of us out of the windows with the little red curtains half-drawn across them. Now it'll be Father Lavelle there, with his grand new coat that he says is Irish manufacture--but I don't believe him--who'll be doing the gentleman. But come along, Mr. Conneally--come along, and tell me all the battles you fought and the Generals you made prisoners of, and how it was you took to preaching afterwards.'

Hyacinth, somewhat shyly, introduced the priest to Marion. Then a ticket-collector drove them into their carriage and locked the door.

Father Moran began to catechize Hyacinth before the train started, and drew from him, as they went westwards, the story of his disappointments, doubts, hopes, veerings, and final despair. Hyacinth spoke unwillingly at first, giving no more than necessary answers to the questions. Then, because he found that reticence called down on him fresh and more detailed inquiries, and also because the priest's evident and sympathetic interest redeemed a prying curiosity from offensiveness, he told his tale more freely. Very soon there was no more need of questioning, and Father Moran's share in the talk took the form of comments interrupting a narrative.

Of Captain Albert Quinn he said:

'I've heard of him, and a nice kind of a boy he seems to have been. I suppose he fought when he got there. He's just the sort that would be splendid at the fighting. Well, God is good, and I suppose it's to do the fighting for the rest of us that He makes the likes of Captain Quinn. Did you hear that they wanted to make him a member of Parliament? Well, they did. Nothing less would please them. But what good would that be, when he couldn't set foot in the country for fear of being arrested?'

Later on he was moved to laughter.

'To think of your going on the road with a bag full of blankets and shawls! I never heard of such a thing, and all the grand notions your head was full of! Why didn't you come my way? I'd have made Rafferty give you an order. I'd have bought the makings of a frieze coat from you myself--I would, indeed.'

Afterwards he became grave again.

'I won't let you say the hard word about the nuns, Mr. Conneally. Don't do it, now. There's plenty of good convents up and down through the country--more than ever you'll know of, being the black Protestant you are. And the ones that ruined your business--supposing they did ruin it, and I've only your word for that--what right have you to be blaming them? They were trying to turn an honest penny by an honest trade, and that's just what you and your friend Mr. Quinn were doing yourselves.'

Hyacinth, conscious of a failure in good taste, shifted his ground, only to be interrupted again.

'Oh, you may abuse the Congested Districts Board to your heart's content. I never could see what the Government made all the Boards for unless it was to keep the people out of mischief. As long as there is a Board of any kind about the country every blackguard will be so busy throwing stones at it that he won't have time nor inclination left to annoy decent people. And I'll say this for the Congested Districts Board: they mean well. Indeed they do; not a doubt of it. There's one good thing they did, anyway, if there isn't another, and that's when they came to Carrowkeel and bought the big Curragh Farm that never supported a Christian, but two herds and some bullocks ever since the famine clearances. They fetched the people down off the mountains and put them on it. Wasn't that a good thing, now? Sure,

all Government Boards do more wrong than right. It's the nature of that sort of confederation. But it's all the more thankful we ought to be when once in a while they do something useful.'

Hyacinth came to tell of the choice which Canon Beecher offered him, and dwelt with tragic emphasis on his own decision. The priest listened, a smile on his lips, a look of pity which belied the smile in his eyes.

'So you thought Ireland would be lost altogether unless you wrote articles for Miss Goold in the *Croppy*? It's no small opinion you have of yourself, Hyacinth Conneally. And you thought you'd save your soul by going to preach the Gospel to the English people? Was that it, now?'

'It was not,' said Hyacinth, 'and you know it wasn't.'

'Of course it wasn't. What was I thinking of to forget the young lady that was in it? A fine wife you've got, any way. God bless her, and make you a good husband to her! By the looks of her she's better than you deserve. I suppose it was to get money you went to England, so as to buy her pretty dresses and a beautiful house to live in? Did you think you'd grow rich over there?'

'Indeed I did not,' said Hyacinth bitterly. 'I knew we'd never be rich.'

'Well, then, couldn't you as well have been poor in Ireland? And better, for everybody's poor here. But there, I know well enough it wasn't money you were after. Don't be getting angry with me, now. It wasn't for the sake of saving your soul you went, nor to get your nice wife, though a man might go a long way for the likes of her. I don't know why you went, and it's my belief you don't know yourself. But you made a mistake, whatever you did it for, going off on that English mission. Is it a mission you call it when you're a Protestant? I don't think it is, but it doesn't matter. You made a mistake. Why don't you come back again?'

'God knows I would if I could. It's hungry I am to get back--just sick with hunger and the great desire that is on me to be back again in Ireland.'

'Well, what's to hinder you? Let me tell you this: There's been four men in your father's place since he died. Never a one of the first three would stay. They tell me the pay's small, and the place is desolate to them for the want of Protestants, there being none, you may say, but the coastguards. After the third of them left it was long enough before they got the fourth. I hear they went scouring and scraping round the four coasts of the country with a trawl-net trying to get a man. And now they've got him he's all for going away. He says there's no work to do, and no people to preach to. But you'd find work, if you were there. I'd find you work myself--work for the people you knew since you were born, that's in the way at last of getting to be the men and women they were meant to be, and that wants all the help can be got for them. Why don't you come back?'

'Indeed, Father Moran, I would if I could.' 'If you could! What's the use of talking? Isn't your wife's father a Canon? And wouldn't that professor in the college that you used to tell me of do something for you? What's the good of having fine friends like that if they won't get you sent to a place like Carrowkeel, that never another minister but yourself would as much as cat his dinner in twice if he could help it?'

Hyacinth glanced doubtfully at Marion. The child lay quiet in her arms. She slept uncomfortably. It was clear that she had not cared to listen to the conversation of the two men.

THE END