

FICTION

George A Birmingham

The Northern Iron

A PUBLIC DOMAIN BOOK

A PUBLIC DOMAIN BOOK



eBookTakeAway

FICTION

THE NORTHERN IRON

By George A. Birmingham

Dublin: Maunsel & Co., Limited

1907

TO FRANCIS JOSEPH BIGGER,

ARDRIGH, BELFAST.

My Dear Bigger,

This story, as you have already guessed, is the fruit of a recent holiday spent in County Antrim. The writing of it has been a great pleasure, for almost every place mentioned in it recalls the goodness of the friends who received me and made my holiday a happy one. I think of kind people when I write of Dunseveric and Ballintoy--of hours spent in their company among the Runkerry cliffs, the sandhills, the Skerries, and of the morning on which I swam, like Neal and Una, into the Rock Pigeons' Cave, I remember a time--full of interest and delight--spent with you when I mention Donegore, Antrim, and Temple-Patrick. My mind dwells on an older, a very dear friend and relative, when I tell of Neal's visit to Belfast. And the book is more than the recollection of a summer holiday. I go back in it to my own country--to places familiar to me in boyhood as the mountains and bays of Mayo are now; to days very long ago, when I caught cuddings and lithe off the Black Rock or Rackle Roy and learned to swim in the Blue Pool at Port Ballintrae. Yet I know that I could not, for all that I remembered of my boyhood or learned during my holiday, have written this story without your help. You told me what I wanted to know, you corrected, patiently, my manuscript, and you have helped me to enter into the spirit of the time. For all this I owe you many thanks, and if I have succeeded in writing a story which interests my readers they, too, will owe you thanks.

I have tried to be faithful to the facts of history and to represent the thoughts and feelings of the men who took part in the

*"Out, unhappy far off things
And battles long ago,"*

of which I chose to write. Most of my characters are purely imaginary. Of the men who really lived and acted in 1798 only one--James Hope--appears prominently in my story. In his case I have taken pains to understand what manner of man he was before I wrote of him, and I believe that, feeble though my presentation of his character may be, you will not find it actually untruthful.

I am your friend,

GEORGE A. BIRMINGHAM.

CONTENTS

[THE NORTHERN IRON](#)

[CHAPTER I](#)

[CHAPTER II](#)

[CHAPTER III](#)

[CHAPTER IV](#)

[CHAPTER V](#)

[CHAPTER VI](#)

[CHAPTER VII](#)

[CHAPTER VIII](#)

[CHAPTER IX](#)

[CHAPTER X](#)

[CHAPTER XI](#)

[CHAPTER XII](#)

[CHAPTER XIII](#)

[CHAPTER XIV](#)

[CHAPTER XV](#)

[CHAPTER XVI](#)

[CHAPTER XVII](#)

[CHAPTER XVIII](#)

[CHAPTER XIX](#)

[CHAPTER XX](#)

THE NORTHERN IRON

CHAPTER I

The road which connects Portrush with Ballycastle skirts, so far as any road can and dare, the sea coast. Sometimes it is driven inland a mile or so by the impossibility of crossing tracts of sandhills. The mounds and hollows of these dunes are for ever shifting and changing. The loose sand is blown into new fantastic heights and valleys by the winter gales. No road could be built on such insecure foundation. Elsewhere the road shrinks back among the shelterless fields for fear of mighty cliffs by which this northern Antrim coast is defended from the Atlantic. No engineer in the eighteenth century, when the road was made, dared lay his metal close to the Causeway cliffs or the awful precipice of Pleaskin Head. Still, now and then, in places where there are no sandhills and the cliffs are not appalling, the road ventures, for a mile or two, to run within a few hundred yards of the sea, before it is swept, like a cord bent by the wind, further inland. Thus, after passing the ruins of Dunseveric Castle, the traveller sees close beneath him the white limestone rocks and broad yellow stretch of Ballintoy Strand. Here, when northerly gales are blowing, he may, if he is not swept off his feet, cling desperately to his garments and watch the great waves curl their feathered crests as they rush shorewards. He may listen, awestruck, to the ocean's roar of amazement when it batters in vain the hard north coast, the rocks and sand which defy even the strength of the Atlantic.

A quarter of a mile back from this piece of road there stood, in 1798, the meeting-house of the Presbyterians and their minister's manse. The house stands on the site of a bare, shelterless hill. It is three storeys high--a narrow, gaunt building, grey walled, black-slatted. Its only entrance is at the back, and on the shoreward side. This house has disdained the shelter which might have been found further inland or among its fellow-houses in the street of Ballintoy. It faces due north, preferring an outlook upon the sea to the warmth and light of a southern aspect. It is bare of all architectural ornament. Its windows are few and small. The rooms within are gloomy, even in early summer. Its architect seems to have feared this gloominess, for he planned great bay windows for three rooms, one above the other. He built the bay. It juts out for the whole height of the house, breaking the flatness of the northern wall. But his heart failed him in the end. He dared not put such a window in the house. He walled up the whole flat front of the bay. Only in its sides did he place windows. Through these there is a side view of the sea and a side view of the main wall of the house. They are comparatively safe. The full force of the tempest does not strike them fair.

In one of the gloomy rooms on a bright morning in the middle of May sat the Reverend Micah Ward, the minister. The sun shone outside on the yellow sand, the green water, and the white rocks; but neither sun nor sea had tempted Micah Ward from his books. Great leather-covered folios lay at his elbow on the table. Before him were an open Hebrew Bible, a Septuagint with queer, contracted lettering, and an old yellow-leaved Vulgate. The subject of his studies was the Book of Amos, who was the ruggedest, the fiercest, and the most democratic of the Hebrew prophets. Micah Ward's face was clean-shaved and marked with heavy lines. Thick, bushy brows hung over eyes which were keen and bright in spite of all his studying. Looking at his face, a man might judge him to be hard, narrow, strong--perhaps fanatical. Near the window--one of the slanting windows through which it is tantalising to look--sat a young man, tall beyond the common, well knit, strong--Neal Ward, the minister's son. He had grown hardy in the keen sea air and firm of will under his father's rigid discipline. He had never known a mother's care, for Margaret Ward, a bright-faced woman, ill-mated, so they said, with the minister, never recovered strength after her son's birth. She lingered for a year, and then died. They laid her body in Templeastra Graveyard, near the sea. Over her grave her husband set a stone with an austere worded inscription to keep her name in memory:--"The burying-ground of Micah Ward. Margaret Neal, his wife, 1778." Such inscriptions are to be found in scores in the graveyards of Antrim. The hard, brave men who chose to mark thus the resting-places of their dead disdained parade of their affliction and their heart-break, and held their creed so firmly that they felt no need of any text to remind them of the resurrection of the dead.

Neal Ward, like his father, had books and papers before him, but his attention was not fixed on them. Now and then, with spasmodic energy, he copied a passage from the page before him. Then, with a sigh, he laid his pen down and gazed out of the window. His father took no notice of the young man's want of application. No words passed between the two. Then suddenly the silence was broken by a cry from the field below the house--

"Hello! Neal! Neal Ward! Hello! Are you there?"

The young man started to his feet and made a step to the window. Then turning, he looked at his father. The frown on Micah Ward's brow deepened slightly. Otherwise he made no sign of having heard the cry. He went on writing in his careful, deliberate manner. The voice from outside reached the room again.

"Neal! Neal Ward! Come out. What right has a man to shut himself indoors on a day like this?"

Neal stood irresolute, looking at his father. At last he spoke.

"Can I go out, father? I have almost finished the transcription of the passage which you set me."

Micah Ward laid down his pen, sprinkled sand on his paper, and looked up. He gazed steadily at his son. The young man's eyes dropped. He repeated his question in a voice that was nearly trembling.

"Can I go out, father?"

"Who is it calls you, Neal?"

"It is Maurice St. Clair."

"Maurice St. Clair," repeated Micah Ward. Then, with a note of deep scorn in his voice, "The Hon. Maurice St. Clair, the son of Lord Dun-severic. Are you to do his bidding, to run like a dog when he calls you?"

"He is my friend, father."

"Is he a fit friend for you? Have I not told you that his people and our people are enemies the one to the other? That the oppression wherewith they oppress us--but there. Go, since you want to go. You do not understand as yet. Some day you will understand."

Neal left the room without haste, closing the door quietly. Once free of his father's presence he seized a cap and ran from the house. Half-way between him and the high road, knee deep in meadow grass, stood Maurice St. Clair.

"Come along, come along quick," he shouted. "I had nearly given up hope of getting you out. We're off for a day's fishing to Rackle Roy. We'll bag a pigeon or two at the mouth of the cave before we land. Brown-Eyes is down on the road waiting for us with rods and guns. We've all day before us. My lord is off to Ballymoney, and can't be back till supper-time."

"What takes Lord Dunseveric to Ballymoney to-day?" asked Neal. "There's no magistrates' meeting, is there?"

"No. He's gone to meet our aunt, Madame de Tourneville. She's been coming these five years, ever since she ran away from Paris at the time of the Terror; but it's only now she has succeeded in arriving."

Together the two young men crossed the field and vaulted the wall which separated the manse land from the road. The girl whom her brother called Brown-Eyes waited for them. The name suited her well, and came naturally from Maurice. He was tall and fair, yellow-haired, blue-eyed, large limbed, a fine type of Antrim Irishman, the heir of the form and face of generations of St. Clairs of Dunseveric. The girl, Una St. Clair, belonged to a different race--came of her mother's people. She was small, brown-skinned, brown-eyed, dark-haired. She grew as the years went on more and more like what her mother had been. Lord Dunseveric, watching his daughter pass from childhood to womanhood, saw in her the very image of Marie Dillon, the French-Irish girl who had won his heart a quarter of a century before in Paris.

"Take the guns, Neal. Here, Brown-Eyes, give me the rods and the basket. There's no need for you to break your little back carrying them."

"Why should I when I've two big men to carry them for me? Indeed, I'm not sure but one of you ought to carry me, too. You're big enough and strong enough."

She smiled gaily at Neal as he shouldered the guns. They had built sand castles together when they were little children, and tempted the waves to chase them up the sand, flying barefoot from the pursuing lip of foam. They had climbed and fallen, explored rocky bays, penetrated to the depths of caves as they grew older. Always Una St. Clair had queened it over the boys, teased them, petted them, scolded them. Now, grown to womanhood, she discovered new powers in herself which made Neal at least more than ever her slave.

They reached the little bay where the boat lay pulled up among the rocks. Maurice and Neal lifted her stern on to a roller and dragged her towards the sea. Una, running before them, laid other rollers on the pathway of slippery rock till the boat floated. Then she climbed the gunwale and settled herself on the stern seat among the rods and guns. The two young men shoved off into deep water, springing into the boat with dripping feet as she slid out clear of the shore. They placed the heavy oars between the wooden thole pins and steadied the boat while Una shipped the rudder. The wind was off shore and the sea, save for the long heave of the Atlantic, was still. The brown sail was hoisted and stretched with the sprit. Then, sailing and rowing, they swept past Carrighdubh, the Black Rock, which guarded the entrance of the little bay, and passed into the shadow of the mighty cliffs.

A silence fell on them. The laughter and gay talk ceased. The sense of holiday joyfulness was overwhelmed by a vague awe of the ocean's greatness, the oppression of its strength, and the black towering rocks which hung over the boat, casting a gloom across the sea. The feeling of this solemnity abides through life with the men and women who have been bred as children on this north Antrim coast. If they live their lives out among its rugged harbours and stern ways they become, as the fishermen are, people of slow thoughts, long memories, and simple outlook upon life. The fear of the Lord is over their lives. If they wander elsewhere, making homes for themselves among the southern or western Irish, or, further still, to England or America, they may learn to be in appearance as other men are--may lose the harsh northern intonation from their talk, but down in the bottom of their hearts will be an awful affection for their sea, which is like no other sea, and the dark overwhelming cliffs whose shadow never wholly leaves their souls. In times of stress and hours of bitterness they will fall back upon the stark, rigid strength of those who, seeing the mightiest of His works, have learned to fear the Lord.

The boat lay off the entrance of the Pigeon Cave. The sportsman's sense awoke in Maurice. He gave a brief order to Neal, laid his oar across the boat, stood up and took in the sprit, letting the sail hang in loose folds. He unstepped the mast and sat down again.

"You may unship the rudder, Brown-Eyes, You had better leave the boat to Neal and me to bring up to the cave. Pass

the gun forward to me and the powder horn."

He loaded, ramming the charge down and pressing down the wad. Neal and the girl sat silent. The solemn enchantment of the scene was on them still. Then the two men took the oars again. Very cautiously they rowed along the narrow channel which led to the opening of the cave. The rocks lay low at first on each side of them; brown tangles of weed swayed slowly to and fro with the onward sweep and eddy of the ocean swell. Then, as the boat advanced, the rocks rose higher on each side, sheer shining walls, whose reflection made the clear water almost black. The huge arch of the cave's entrance faced them. Behind was the dark channel, and beyond it the sunlight on the sea, before them the impenetrable gloom of the cave. The noise of the water dropping from its roof into the sea beneath struck their ears sharply. The hollow roar of the sea far off in the utmost recesses of the cave came to them. The girl leaned forward from her seat and laid her hand on Neal's arm. He looked at her. Her eyes, the homes of laughter and quick inconsequences, were wide with dread. Neal knew what she felt. It was not fear of any definite danger or any evil actually threatening.

It was awe, the feeling of mariners of other days who penetrated to unknown seas, of men in primitive times who knew that fairy powers dwelt in dark lakes and precipitous mountain sides.

The bow of the boat touched the huge boulders which formed a bar across the mouth of the cave. Maurice leaped out, gun in hand, and stood knee deep in the water, feeling with his feet for a secure resting-place.

"Keep the boat off, Neal, and take your shot if you get a chance."

He shouted--"Hello-lo-oh."

The rocky sides and roof of the cave echoed back his cry a hundred times. Again he shouted, and again, until shouts and echoes meeting clashed with each other, and it seemed as if the tremendous laughter of gleeful giants mocked the solemn booming of the sea. There was a rush of many wings, and a flock of terrified rock pigeons flew from the cave. Maurice fired one barrel after another in quick succession, and two birds dropped dead into the water. Neal, shaking the girl's hand from his arm, fired, too. From his seat in the swaying boat it was difficult to aim well. He missed once, but killed with his second shot. The boat was borne forward and bumped sharply on the boulders at the cave's mouth. The laughter of the echo died away. Instead of it came, like angry threats, the repetition of their four shots, multiplied to a fusillade of loud explosions.

"Come back, Maurice," cried Una. "Come back and let us get out of this. I'm frightened. I cannot bear it any longer."

"You shall have all the four wings of my birds to trim your hats with, Brown-Eyes," said Maurice, as he clambered dripping into the boat. "Neal will stuff his bird for you and perch him on a stone. You shall have him to set on the top of your new bureau, the one Aunt Estelle sent you when she escaped from Paris without having her head chopped off."

They pushed the boat cautiously back along the channel, travelling stern first, for there was little room to turn, and even in calm weather men do not willingly lay a boat across the sea in such a place.

"Now for Rackle Roy and a basketful of glashins and lithe," said Maurice.

East a little and out seawards from the mouth of the cave lies a long, flat rock, dry at low water, and even at flood tide in calm weather, swept with desolating surf when the Atlantic swell rolls in or the wind lashes the nearer sea to fury. Right out of the centre of the rock the waves have fashioned a deep bay, curved like a horse-shoe. This is a famous fishing-place. As the tide rises, lithe and glashin, brazers, gurnet, rock codling, and crowds of cuddings come here to feed, and the fisherman, on those rare days, when he can land at all, may count on bringing home with him great bunches of fish strung through the gills.

The rock lay far enough from the cliff to be clear of the shadow. The sun shone on its brown weed-clad sides, glistened on black clusters of mussels, glowed on the red seams of the rock where the iron cropped out, and baked the black basalt of the upper surface. The spirits of the party revived when they landed. Una's gaiety returned to her.

"Have you forgotten the bait, Maurice? I'm sure you have. It would be like you to come for a day's fishing without bait."

"No, then, I haven't. There are three large crabs in the boat, and even if there wasn't one at all we could do nicely with limpets. There's worse bait than a good limpet."

"Well, and if you have the crabs I expect you've forgotten the sheep's wool. What do you think, Neal? Yesterday we were fishing cuddings off the Black Rock and Maurice ran out of wool. The fish simply sucked the bait off our hooks and laughed at us. What did Maurice do but take my hairs. He pulled them out one by one as he wanted them, and wrapped the bait on with them."

"Your wool, Brown-Eyes, doesn't come up to that of the sheep. It's not soft enough. But I shan't want it to-day. I've got my pockets half full of the proper sort."

Neal laughed, but he felt that to use Una's hair as a wrap for the red pulp of a crab's back or the soft, black belly of a limpet was a kind of profanation. He was a keen fisherman, but he would rather have missed the chance of catching the largest lithe that ever swam than lure it with a bait fastened with Una's glossy hair.

They fished till noon, and the tide rose slowly round their rock. Then Una's luncheon basket was fetched from the

boat, the mooring rope was made secure above high water mark, and the three sat down on the sun-baked rock and ate with keen appetites. Maurice stared seawards.

"That brig," he said, "is lying very close inshore. Look at her, Neal."

"I saw her pass the point of the Skerries an hour ago," said Neal. "She must have hauled her wind since then to fetch in so close with the tide running against her."

"I wonder why she's doing it," said Maurice. "She'll have to run off again to clear Benmore."

"She looks a big ship," said Una.

"Maybe she's 250 tons," said Neal. "She's about the size of the brig that sailed from Portrush for Boston last summer year with two hundred emigrants in her."

"She's fetching closer in yet," said Maurice. "See, she's hoisted some flag or other, two flags, no, three, from the peak of her spanker. It's a signal. I wonder what they want. Now they've laid her to. She must want a boat out from the shore. Come on, Neal, come on, Brown-Eyes. We'll go out to her. We'll be first. There's no other boat nearer than those at the Port, and we've got a long start of them. Never mind the fish. Or wait. Fling them in. I dare say the men on the brig will be glad of them. She must be an American."

In a few minutes the boat was pulled clear of the little bay and out of the shelter of Rackle Roy. The mast was stepped and the sail set. The sheet was slacked out and the boat sped seawards before the wind. Maurice was all impatience. He got out his oar.

"It's no use," said Neal, "the breeze has freshened since morning. She'll sail quicker than we could row."

The brig lay little more than a mile from the shore. The boat soon reached her.

"Boat, ahoy," yelled a voice from the deck. "Lower your sail, and come up under my lee."

Maurice and Neal obeyed. The sea was rougher than it had been near the shore. The boat, when Maurice had made fast the rope flung to him, plunged up and down beside the brig, and needed careful handling to prevent her being damaged.

The crew looked over the side with eager curiosity.

"Say, boys," said the captain, "what will you take for your fish? I'll trade with you."

"I don't want to sell them," said Maurice. "I'll give them to you."

His voice and accent, his refusal to barter, betrayed the fact that he was a gentleman.

"I guess," said the captain, "that you're an aristocrat, a British aristocrat, too proud to take the money of the men who whipped you in the States. That's so."

"I'm an Irish gentleman," said Maurice.

"Well, Mr. Irish Gentleman, if you're too darned aristocratic to trade, I'll give you a present of a case of good Virginia, and you may give me a present of your fish. I'd call it a swap, but if that turns your stomach I'll let you call it a mutual present, an expression of international goodwill."

"Fling him up the fish, Neal," said Maurice.

Then another man appeared beside the captain on the quarter-deck. He was not a seafaring man. He was lean and yellow, and had keen grey eyes. His face seemed in some way familiar to Neal, though he could not recollect having ever seen the man before.

"Yon are the Causeway cliffs," he said, "and yon's Pleaskin Head, and the islands we passed are the Skerries?"

"You know this coast," said Neal.

"I knew this coast, young man, before your mother had the dandling of you. I know it now, though it's five and twenty years since I set foot on it. But that's not the question. What I want to know is this. Can you put me ashore? I could do well if you land me at the Causeway. I'd make shift with my bag if you put me out at Port Ballin-trae. I don't want to be going on to Glasgow just for the pleasure of coming back again."

"I'll land you at the Black Rock under Run-kerry," said Maurice, "if you can pull an oar. The wind's rising, and I've no mind to carry idle passengers."

"I can pull an oar," said the stranger.

"I guess he can pull enough to break your back, young man," said the captain. "He's an American citizen, and he's been engaged in whipping your British army. I guess an American citizen can lick a darned aristocrat at pulling an oar same as he did at shooting off guns."

"Shut your damned mouth," said Maurice, suddenly angry, "or I'll leave you to land your passenger yourself and see how you like beating the bottom out of your brig against our rocks. You'll find an Irish rock harder than your Yankee wood."

The passenger fetched a small hand-bag and lowered it into the boat. Under a shower of jibes from the captain,

Maurice and Neal pushed off and started for the row home against the wind.

CHAPTER II

The passenger took his seat in the bow of the boat and stripped off his coat in readiness to pull an oar. But no oar was offered to him. Maurice St. Clair seemed to have entirely forgotten the stranger's presence. The remarks of the American captain had angered him, and his mind worked on the insults hurled at him in parting. Neal was angry, too. They pulled viciously at the oars. From time to time Maurice broke out fiercely--

"An unmannerly brute! I wish I had him somewhere off the deck of his brig. I'd teach him how to speak to a gentleman.

"Is that his filthy tobacco at your feet, Brown-Eyes? Pitch it overboard.

"I suppose he's a specimen of the Republican breed. That's what comes of liberty and equality and French Jacobinism and Tom Paine and the Rights of Man. Damned insolence I call it."

"I'd like to remind you, young man-----." The words came with a quiet drawl from the passenger in the bow.

Maurice stopped rowing, and turned round.

"Well, what do you want to say? More insolence? Better be careful unless you want to try what it feels like to swim ashore."

"I'd like to remind you, young man, that Captain Hercules Getty, of the State of Pennsylvania, who commands the brig 'Saratoga,' belongs to a nation which has fought for liberty and won it."

"What's that got to do with his insolence?"

"I reckon that an Irishman who hasn't fought and hasn't won ought to sing small when he's dealing with a citizen of the United States of America."

Neal turned in his seat. The stranger's reproach struck him as being unjust as well as being in bad taste. Maurice St. Clair was the son of a man who had done something for Ireland.

"You don't know who you're talking to," he said, "or what you're talking about. Lord Dunseveric, the father of the man in front of you, commanded the North Antrim Volunteers, and did his part in winning the independence of our Parliament."

The stranger looked steadily at Neal for sometime. Then he said--

"Is your name Neal Ward?"

"Yes. How do you know me?"

"You're the son of Micah Ward, the Presbyterian minister?"

"Yes."

"Well, I just guessed as much when I took a good look at your face. Will you ask your father when you go home whether the Volunteers won liberty for Irishmen, and what he thinks of the independence of an Irish Parliament filled with placemen and the nominees of a corrupt aristocracy?"

"Who are you?" asked Neal.

"My name's Donald Ward. I'm your father's youngest brother. I'm on my way to your father's house now, or I would be if you two young men would take to your oars again. If you don't I guess the first land we'll touch will be Greenland. We'd fetch Runkerry quicker if you'd pass forward the two thole pins I see at your feet and let me get an oar out in the bow. The young lady in the stern can keep us straight with the helm."

"Give him the thole pins, Neal," said Maurice, "and then pull away."

"Just let me speak a word with you, Mr. St. Clair," said Donald Ward, as he hammered the thole pins into their holes. "You're angry with Captain Hercules Getty, and I don't altogether blame you. The captain's too fond of brag, and that's a fact. He can't hold himself in when he meets a Britisher. He's so almighty proud of the whipping his people gave the scum. But there's no need for you to be angry with me. I'm an Irishman myself, and not a Yankee. I fought in North Carolina, under General Nathaniel Greene, but I fought with Irishmen beside me, men from County Antrim and County Down, and they weren't the worst men in the army either. When I fight again it'll be in Ireland, and not in America. If I riled you I'm sorry for it, for you're an Irishman as well as myself."

Maurice's anger was shortlived.

"That's all right," he said. "Here, I say, you needn't pull that oar. Neal and I will put you ashore. We'll show that much hospitality to a County Antrim man from over the sea."

"Thank you," said Donald Ward. "Thank you. You mean well, and I take your words in the spirit you speak them; but when I sit in a boat I like to pull my own weight in her."

He shoved out his oar as he spoke, and fell into time with the long, steady stroke which Neal set.

Una leaned forward and spoke in a low voice to Neal, timing her words so that they reached him as he bent forward

at the beginning of each stroke.

"Isn't it curious, Neal, that Maurice and I are going back to welcome an aunt whom we have never seen, and that you are taking an unknown uncle home with you?"

Then, after a pause, she spoke again.

"It's like a kind of fate, Neal, one of the things which happen to people, and alter all their lives, and they can't do anything to help themselves. I wonder will we ever have good times together again, now that this aunt of mine and this uncle of yours have come?"

"Why shouldn't we?" said Neal.

"Oh, I don't know. But your uncle seems to be one of the people who make a great clatter about liberty and equality and the rights of man. And you know Aunt Estelle belonged to the old aristocracy in France. They wanted to guillotine her in the Terror. I don't think she will love Republicans."

"I suppose not," said Neal, gravely.

"But that won't prevent our being friends, Neal?"

"Una, my father is always talking about the struggle that's coming in Ireland. I don't know much about politics. I think I hate the whole thing. But if there is trouble I suppose that I shall be on one side and you on the other."

"Don't look so sad, Neal."

Then, as his spirits grew depressed, hers seemed to rise buoyantly. She raised her voice so that she could be heard in the bow of the boat.

"Mr. Donald Ward! Mr. Donald Ward! Your nephew, Neal, is telling me that when we have a reign of terror in Ireland you will make him cut off my head. Please promise me you won't."

Donald rested on his oar and gazed at the girl as she sat smiling at him in the stern of the boat.

"Young lady," he said, "don't trouble yourself. We didn't hurt woman or girl in America. No woman shall die a violent death in Ireland at the hands of the people."

"And no man, either?" cried Una. "Say it again, Mr. Donald Ward. Say 'And no man, either.' Can't we settle everything without killing men?"

"Men are different," said Donald. "It's right for men to die fighting, or die on the scaffold if need be."

A silence followed Donald Ward's words. In 1798 talk of death in battle or death on a scaffold moved even the youngest and most careless to serious thought. The world was full then of the kind of ideas for which men are well content to die, for the sake of which also they did not hesitate to shed blood. The Americans had set mankind a headline to copy in their Declaration of Independence. The French wrote Liberty with huge red flourishes which set the heart of Europe beating high. Italians were proclaiming a foreign army the liberators of their country, while Jacobins growled fiercely against the Pope. Kosciusko, in Poland, organised a futile revolution, and fell in the cause of national freedom. Even phlegmatic Englishmen caught the spirit of the times, hated intensely or worshipped enthusiastically that liberty which some saw as an imperial goddess for the sake of whose bare limbs and pale, noble face death might be gladly met; while others beheld in her a blood-spattered strumpet whirling in abandoned dance round gallows-altars which reeked with human sacrifice.

Ireland in those days was intellectually and spiritually alive. Men were quick to feel the influence of world-wide ideas, and in Ireland the love of liberty glowed brightly; nowhere more brightly than among the farmers and lower middle classes of the north-eastern counties. The position was a strange one. The landed gentry, who themselves, a few years before, claimed and won from England the independence of their Parliament, grew frightened and drew back from the path of reform on which alone lay security for what they had got. The wealthier merchants and manufacturers, satisfied with the trade freedom which brought them prosperity, were averse to further change. The Presbyterians and the lower classes generally were eager to press forward. They had conceived the idea of a real Irish nation, of Gael and Gall united, of Churchman, Roman Catholic and Dissenter working together for their country's good under a free constitution. But it soon became apparent that the reforms they demanded would not be won by peaceful means. The natural terror of the classes whose ascendancy or prosperity seemed to be threatened, the bribes and cajoleries of British statesmen, turned the hearts of those who ought to have been leaders from Ireland to England. The relentless logic, the clear-sighted grasp of the inevitable trend of events, and the restless energy of men like Wolfe Tone, changed a party of constitutional reformers into a society of determined revolutionaries. Threats of repression were answered by the formation of secret societies. Acts of tyranny, condoned or approved by terror-stricken magistrates, were silently endured by men filled with a grim hope that the day of reckoning was near at hand. Far-seeing English statesmen hoped to fish out of the troubled waters an act of national surrender from the Irish Parliament, and were not ill-pleased to see the sky grow darker. Everyone else, every Irishman, looked with dread at the gathering storm. One thing only was clear to them. There was coming a period of horror, of outrage and burning, of fighting and hanging, the sowing of an evil crop of fratricidal hatred whose gathering would last for many years.

The boat reached the little bay under the Black Rock. There was no need to drag her far up the beach now, for the tide was full. Working in silence, the three men laid her beside the broad-bottomed cobbles used for working the salmon-net, and pushed her bow up against the coarse grass which fringed the edge of the rocks. They carried the oars and sails into a fisherman's shelter perched on a rock beside the bay. Then Donald Ward turned to Maurice and said--

"I am going to my brother's house. I shall walk by the path along the cliffs, and my nephew will go with me. Your way home, unless I have entirely forgotten the roads, is not our way. We part here, therefore. I bid you good night, and thank you heartily."

"We had intended," said Maurice, "to walk home with Neal. We have time enough."

His sister, quicker than he to take a hint, pulled him by the arm, and whispered to him. Then she spoke aloud.

"Good night, Mr. Donald Ward. Good night, Neal. Perhaps we shall see you to-morrow."

The uncle and nephew climbed the hill which led to the top of the cliffs together. For a time neither of them spoke. The elder man seemed to be absorbed in picking out the landmarks which had once been very familiar to him. At last he spoke to Neal.

"Does your father wish you to have Lord Dun-severic's son and daughter for your friends?"

Neal hesitated for a moment, and then answered.

"He knows that they are my friends."

"It would be better if they were not your friends. I have heard of Lord Dunseveric, a strong man and an able man, a good friend of his own class, not a good friend of the people."

He paused. Neal wished to speak, to say some good of Lord Dunseveric; to declare the strength of his friendship for Maurice. He could not speak as he wished to speak. An unfamiliar feeling of oppression tied his tongue. His uncle's will dominated his.

"What is the girl's name?" asked Donald.

"Una."

"Yes, and what did her brother call her?"

"Brown-Eyes." Neal felt as if the words were dragged from him.

"Are you the lover of this Una Brown-Eyes?"

Neal flushed. "You have no right to ask any such question," he said, "and I shall not answer it. I will just say this to you. Do you suppose that Lord Dunseveric would accept me, a penniless man, the son of a Presbyterian minister, a member of a Church he despises, and connected with a party he hates--do you suppose he would accept me as a suitor for his daughter's hand?"

"You have answered my question, though you said you would not answer it. You have told me that you love the girl. I have watched her smile at you, and seen her eyes while she talked to you, and I can tell you something more, something that perhaps you do not know--the girl loves you."

Again Neal flushed. His uncle had put into words what he had never yet dared to think. He loved Una. His uncle had assured him of something else, something so glorious as to be incredible. Una loved him. Then he became conscious that Donald Ward's eyes were on him--cold, impassive, un pitying; that Donald Ward was waiting till the throbs of joy and excitement calmed in him, waiting to speak again.

"Put the thought of the girl from you. She is not for you, nor you for her. Forget her. It will be better for you and for her. You shall have work to do soon. Work is for men. Seeing babies in brown eyes is only for boys."

They left the path which skirted the tops of the cliffs, crossed a field or two, and joined the road which led to Micah Ward's manse. The sound of the sea died away, though the smell of it and the feeling of its neighbourhood were still with them. The savage grandeur of ocean and cliff no longer oppressed their spirits. It seemed natural to talk of common things and to leave high themes behind them in the lonely places they had left. Donald Ward gazed with interest at the white-walled thatched cottages on the roadside. He commented on the disappearance of some homestead he remembered, or the building of a new one where none had been before. It was evident that, in spite of his twenty-five years' absence, he cherished a clear and accurate recollection of the district he was passing through. He inquired after the families who had lived in the different houses, naming them. He learned how one or another had disappeared, how old men were gone, and sons reigned in their stead. He even supplied Neal with information now and then about some young man or girl who had gone to America.

They arrived at the manse. Neal led his uncle through the yard, meaning to enter as usual by the kitchen door. On the threshold the housekeeper met him.

"Is that you, Master Neal? You're queer and late. You've had a brave time gadding with your fine friends and never thinking how you were leaving your old father to eat his dinner his lone. And who's this you have with you? What sort of behaviour is this, to be coming here bringing a stranger with you to a decent, quiet house, and he maybe----"

"Whisht, now, Hannah. Will you hold your whisht (tongue?)?" said Neal. "It's my uncle I have with me. You ought to be able to remember him."

The old woman came forward to the place where Donald Ward stood, and peered at his face.

"Aye, I mind you well, Donald Ward. I mind you well. You hadna' just too much of the grace of God about you when you went across the sea, and I'm doubting by the looks of you now that you've done more fighting than praying where you were."

"Hannah Keady," said Donald Ward.

"Hannah Macaulay," said the housekeeper, "and forbye the old minister and Master Neal here, they call me Mistress Macaulay that have any talk with me. I'm married and widowed since you crossed the sea."

"Mistress Hannah Macaulay," said Donald, "you were a slip of a girl with a sharp tongue when I mind you first, and a woman with a sharp tongue when I said good-bye to you. You have lost your bonny looks and your shining red hair; you've lost a husband, so you tell me, but you haven't lost your tongue."

The old woman smiled. The compliment pleased her.

"Come in," she said, "come in. The minister'll be queer and glad to see you. You know that fine. But have done with your old work. We've no more call for Hearts of Oak boys, nor Hearts of Steel boys, nor for burning ricks, nor firing guns."

She led the way through the kitchen, up a narrow flight of stone stairs, and opened the door of the room where the minister sat over his bodes.

"Here's Master Neal home again," she said, "and he's brought your brother Donald Ward along with him."

Micah Ward rose to his feet and met his brother with outstretched hands.

"Is it you, Donald? Is it you, indeed? I've been thinking long for you this many a time, my brother, and wearying for you. We want you, Donald, we need you sore, sore indeed."

"Why, Micah," said Donald, "you've grown into an old man."

The contrast between the two brothers was striking, more striking than the likeness of their faces, though that was obvious. Micah was stooped and pallid. He walked feebly. His limbs were shrunken. His hair was thin and white. Donald stood upright, a well-knit, vigorous man. The point of his beard and the hair over his ears were touched with iron grey, but no one looking at him would have doubted his energy and capacity for physical endurance.

"Grey hairs are here and there upon us, and we know it not--Hosea, 7th and 9th," said the minister. "But there's fifteen years atween us, Donald. It makes a difference. Fifteen years age a man, but I'm supple and hearty yet."

"Will I cook the salmon for your supper?" said the housekeeper. "You'll not be contenting yourselves with the stirabout now that you have your brother back again with you."

"Cook the salmon, Hannah; plenty of it, and some of the ham and the eggs. And, Neal, do you take the key of the cellar and get us a bottle of wine and the whisky that old Maconchy brought in from Rathlin last summer. It's not often I take the like, Donald, but it is meet that we should make merry and be glad."

Mistress Hannah Macaulay was a competent cook and housekeeper. It is noticeable that women with sharp tongues are generally more efficient than their gentler sisters. Solomon, who knew a good many things, seems also to have known this. He was of opinion that a peaceful dinner of herbs is better than a stalled ox and contention therewith. He knew that he could not have both. It is the shrew who succeeds in giving the males dependent on her stalled oxen and such like dainties to eat.

The caressing wife and the sweet-tempered cook accomplish no more than dinners of herbs, and generally even they are not particularly appetising. The fact is, that the management of domestic affairs is the most trying of all occupations. Cooking, washing, cleaning, and generally doing for men in a house means continuous irritation and worry. A woman, however sweet-natured originally, who is condemned to such work must either lose her temper over it, in which case she may cook stalled oxen, but will certainly serve them with sauce of contention, or she may give up the struggle and preserve her gentleness. Then she will accomplish no more than dinners of herbs, boiled cabbages, from which tepid water exudes, and dishes of pallid turnips, supposed to be mashed but full of lumps. Solomon preferred, or said he preferred, kisses and cauliflowers. On questions of taste there is no use disputing.

Mistress Hannah Macaulay's salmon steaks came to the table with an appetising steam rising from their dish. Her slices of fried ham formed an attractive nest for the white-skinned poached eggs. She had plates of curly oatcake and powdery farles. She had yellow butter in saucers. She brought the porridge to table in well-scoured wooden bowls with horn spoons in them.

"The stirabout is good," she said. "I thought you'd like to sup them before you ate the meat."

Neal poured the wine into an old cut-glass decanter, and set Maconchy's bottle of whisky, distilled, no doubt, by Maconchy himself among the Rathlin Hills, beside his father's plate.

Micah Ward said a long grace, in which he thanked the Almighty for the fish, the ham, the eggs, the porridge, and his brother's return from America. As a kind of supplement, he added a prayer for the peace of his household, in which Hannah Macaulay, appropriately enough under the circumstances, was especially named.

After supper the two brothers drew their chairs to the fire. It was late in May, but the air was still chilly in the evenings. Hannah took down from the mantel-piece two well-polished brass candlesticks, fitted them with tall dipt candles, and set them on the table she had cleared of plates and dishes. Donald took a tobacco-box from his pocket, and filled a pipe.

"Neal," said his father, "you may go to your own room and complete the transcription of the passages of Josephus which you left unfinished this morning."

"Let the lad stay," said Donald.

"Neal knows nothing of the matters about which we must talk, brother, nor do I think it well that he should know; not yet, at least."

"Let the lad stay," repeated Donald. "I've seen younger men than he is doing good work. Neal ought to be working, too. We cannot do anything without the young men."

Micah Ward yielded to his brother.

"Draw your chair to the fire, Neal," he said. "You may stay and listen to us."

At first the talk was of old days. An hour went by. Donald filled his pipe more than once, and finished his tumbler of punch. Story followed story of the doings of the Hearts of Steel and Hearts of Oak. Donald, as a boy, had taken his part--and that a daring part--in the fierce struggle by which the northern tenant-farmers gained fuller security and a chance of prospering a whole century before their brethren in the south and west, with the aid of the English Parliament, won the same privileges. Then Donald, speaking oftener and smoking less, told of his own share in the American War of Independence. Neal, listening, was thrilled with the stories of unequal battles between citizen soldiers and trained troops. He glowed with excitement as he came to understand the indomitable courage which faced reverse after reverse and snatched complete victory in the end. Donald dwelt much on the part which Irishmen had taken in the struggle, especially on the work of Ulster men, Antrim men, men of the hard northern breed, of the Presbyterian faith.

"There's no breaking our people, Micah; men of iron, men of steel."

"Shall iron break the northern iron, and the steel?" quoted Micah Ward, and then, with that wonderful Puritan accuracy of reference to the Bible, gave chapter and verse for the words--Jeremiah the 15th and 12th.

"And the spirit's not dead in you at home, is it, Micah? The breed is pure still."

It was Micah's turn to speak. Neal sat in astonishment while his father told of the wrongs which the northern Presbyterians and the southern Roman Catholics suffered. Never before had he heard his father speak with such passion and fierceness. There was a pause at last, and Donald rose to his feet. He re-filled his glass from the punch-bowl, raised it aloft, and said:--

"I give you a toast. Fill your glass, brother. No, that will not do. Fill it full, and fill a glass for Neal. Stand now. I will have this toast drunk standing. 'Here's to America and here's to France, the pioneers of human liberty, and may Ireland soon be as they are now!'"

"Amen," said Micah Ward solemnly.

"Drink, Neal, drink. Drain your glass, boy. I will have it," said Donald.

"The northern iron, the northern iron, and the steel," muttered Micah.

Then the brothers drew their chairs closer together, and Micah, speaking low, as if he dreaded the presence of some unseen listener, began to tell of the plans of the United Irishmen. He mentioned the names of one leader and another; told how the Government, vigilant and alert, had already struck at the organisation; of the general dread of spies and informers. He entered into details; told how the cannon, once given by the Government to the Volunteers, were hidden in one place, how muskets were stored in another, how the smiths in every village were fashioning pike heads, how many men in each locality were sworn, how every male inhabitant of Rathlin Island had taken the oath. Donald interrupted him now and then with sharp questions. The talk went on and on. The tones of the speakers grew lower still. Neal lost much of what was said. His interest slackened. His eyes closed at last, and he fell fast asleep.

It was late, close on midnight, when his uncle shook him into consciousness again. The candles were burned down. The fire was out. The atmosphere of the room was heavy with tobacco smoke. The punch-bowl was empty, and the two bottles, empty also, stood beside it. It seemed to Neal that his uncle spoke thickly in bidding him good night, and walked unsteadily across the room. But Micah Ward's voice was clear and his steps were firm. Only, as Neal thought, his eyes shone more brightly than usual, and he held himself upright. The stoop was gone from his shoulders, and the peering, peaked look from his eyes.

CHAPTER III

The Lords of Dunseveric once lived in a castle perched on the edge of a cliff, a place inferior to the neighbouring Dunluce as a stronghold, but equally uncomfortable as a residence. The walls were thick, the rooms little larger than prison cells, and the windows very small and narrow, but they were wide enough to let the wind whistle through them and the rain trickle over their sills to the stone floors inside. The doctor of a modern sanatorium for consumptive people would have been well satisfied with the ventilation of Dunseveric Castle. On stormy days in winter it must have been most unsafe to venture out of doors. The worst winds, fortunately, always blow inwards from the sea, but there are eddies round buildings, and with precipices on three sides of him, the ancient lord of Dunseveric had need to walk cautiously and provide himself, when possible, with something to hold on to. Some time at the end of the seventeenth century the reigning lord, giving up in despair the attempt to render habitable a home more suited to a seagull than a nobleman, being also less in dread than his ancestors of sea pirates and land marauders, determined to build himself a house in which he could live comfortably. He selected a site about a mile inland from the original castle, and laid the foundations of Dunseveric House. Then, despairing perhaps of living to complete his architect's grandiose plans, he gave up the idea of building and hired a house near Dublin. During the early part of the eighteenth century he interested himself in Irish politics, and succeeded, as influential politicians did in those days, in providing comfortably for outlying members of his family from the public purse. His son, when it came to his turn to reign, ignored the foundations which his father had laid, and erected a mansion such as Irish gentlemen delighted in at the time--a Square block of grey masonry with small windows to light large rooms, a huge basement storey, and an impressive flight of stone steps leading up to the front door. He also enclosed several acres of land with a stone wall, called the space a garden and planted it with some fruit trees which did not flourish.

His son, the Lord Dunseveric of 1798, having little left him to do in the way of building, devoted his early years to planting and laying out pleasure grounds round the new house. His wife, a French woman of Irish extraction, brought a cultivated taste to his aid. No doubt her ideas and her husband's energy would in the end have created a beautiful and satisfying demesne round Dunseveric House if it had not been for the north wind and the sea spray. These were hard enemies for a landscape gardener to fight, and when Lady Dunseveric died her husband gave up the struggle, having nothing better to show for his time and money than some fringes of dejected-looking alders and a few groves of stunted Scotch firs. He even neglected the glass houses which his wife had built. Irish politics became extremely interesting just after Lady Dunseveric died, and an Irish gentleman might well be forgiven for neglecting the culture of his demesne when his time was occupied with drilling Volunteers, passing Grand Jury resolutions in support of the use of Irish manufactured goods, and subsequently preparing schemes for the internal development of Ireland.

Thus Dunseveric House was by no means an attractive place to Estelle, Comtesse de Tour-neville, when she first visited it. Accustomed to the scenery round her dead husband's chateau in the valley of the Loire, and attached to the life of the French Court, the appearance of Dunseveric House struck her as utterly dismal. She had every reason beforehand to suppose that it would be dismal, and was quite convinced that it would not suit her as a place of residence. Forced to flee from France in 1793, she put off taking refuge in her brother-in-law's house as long as possible, and only arrived there after spending three years among hospitable friends in England.

"The poor Marie, my poor sister," she said, when Lord Dunseveric, at the end of the long drive from Ballymoney, turned the horses up the bare avenue.

To her maid, in the privacy of her bedroom, she opened her grief more fully.

"I remember very well when my sister married, though I was but a little girl at the time, eight or perhaps nine years old. I remember that all the world talked of her handsome Irish husband. He was a fine man then. He is a fine man still, and has the grand manner. Oh, yes, he is very well. And my nephew. He is well made, big and strong like all the men of his race and blood. But he has no manner--none. If only my sister had lived she might have formed him. But--poor Marie!"

She sighed. The maid hazarded a suggestion that Lady Dunseveric had found life *triste*, too *triste* to be endurable.

"You are right," said the Comtesse, "she must have died of sheer dulness. She had two children. That was occupation for a while, no doubt. But, *mon dieu*, a lady cannot go on having children every year like a woman of the *bourgeoisie*. It would be too tedious. She died. She was right. And now I am here in her place. I am here with my lord, who has good manners but does not care about me, wishes me anywhere but in his house; a nephew who has no manners and a great deal of stupidity, and a niece who is much too old to be my niece, and who is too like me in face and figure for us to get on well together. Otherwise, truly, she is not like me. She is content to spend all day in a boat on the sea catching fish. Conceive it yourself, Susanne, she was catching fish, and her companion was the son of the *cure*, a man of some altogether impossible Protestant sect."

But the Comtesse had the good manners or the good sense not to grumble about her surroundings to anyone except her maid. She so far understood the philosophy of a happy life as to know that pleasure awaits those only who

succeed in making themselves pleasant.

She came down the morning after she arrived in time for breakfast, although the English breakfast was a meal she had learned to detest, and the North of Ireland families have made an even more serious business of it. She expressed a delight which she cannot be supposed to have felt at the sight of salmon, fried, cold, kippered; ham, eggs, fowl, farles of home-made bread, oat-cake, honey, jam, butter. To the secret amusement of Lord Dun-severic she even accepted a bowl of porridge which her nephew offered her, and then, to the astonishment of Maurice, asked if she might eat honey with it. She was delightfully optimistic about the prospects of amusement for the day.

"Where are you going to take me, Una? There are so many things that I want to see. I recall the letters which Marie, your mother, used to write to me about wonderful cliffs and gloomy caves and white rocks and long strands. Of course you have all the business of the house to attend to. I quite understand. I will wait. But afterwards, where will you take me?"

Una glanced out of the window. The south wind of the day before had brought, as south winds usually do in County Antrim, abundant rain. Maurice, appealed to, gave it as his opinion that there was no chance of the weather improving until three o'clock, and that there wasn't much chance of sunshine even then.

"But, at least," said the Comtesse, "I shall be able to see your old castle? I have heard so much about the castle. Could we not even go there?"

"We might," said Una dubiously, "but you will have to walk across two fields, and the grass is long at this time of year. I don't mind getting wet, of course, but you----"

"I think, Estelle," said Lord Dunseveric, "that you had better give up the idea of any expedition out of doors. Una will have a good fire lighted for you in the morning-room, and you must make yourself as comfortable as you can."

When breakfast was over, Lord Dunseveric himself conducted his sister to the morning-room. He selected a chair for her. He placed a small table beside her. He stirred the fire into a fair blaze. He even fetched some books for her from the library. But the Comtesse was not content.

"Please sit down," she said, "and talk with me."

The prospect of a long morning spent sitting on a chair talking to a woman was not one which pleased Lord Dunseveric very greatly, but his manners were, as his sister-in-law had observed, excellent. He had letters to write and an important communication from the general in command of the troops in Belfast to consider. But he sat down beside his sister-in-law as if he were really pleased at having the chance of a long chat with her, as if she did him a favour in granting him the privilege of keeping her company.

"What shall we talk about?" she said. "About dear Marie? About old times? That would be too sad. About Maurice and Una? What is Maurice to do? Have you obtained for him--how do you say it?--a commission in the army? There is nothing better for a young man than to spend a short time in the army. He sees the world. He learns manners and how to bear himself and speak to a woman. And Una? We must have Una presented at Court. Will you take her to Dublin this year? I think that you ought to. It is not good for a girl to grow up all alone here."

"I fear it will hardly be possible for me to go to Dublin either this year or next."

"But why? Surely you would be well received? Or is it not so? I suppose that you are one of the *grands seigneurs* of Ireland, one of the leaders of your aristocracy. Besides, *mon frere*, your appearance, your manner----. There cannot be many of your Irish gentry----."

She paused and smiled on him most pleasantly. Lord Dunseveric was sufficiently a man of the world to understand that this pretty lady was flattering him. He even thought that she was not doing it very well, that her methods were too obvious to be really artistic. Nevertheless, he liked it. We most of us enjoy being flattered very much, especially by pretty women, though we take a great deal of trouble to persuade ourselves that we despise the flatterer and her ways. The Comtesse would have said similar things to any man whom she wanted to please, and Lord Dunseveric was quite aware of the fact. Still he was pleased. It was a long time since a woman in a pretty dress, a woman who knew how to assume a graceful attitude, had taken the trouble to flatter him. He smiled response to her smile.

"I've no doubt that I should be, as you put it, well received. I'm not afraid that His Excellency would show me the cold shoulder, but the present condition of the country is critical. I think it my duty to stay at home. I am afraid that we are on the brink of an attempt at revolution."

"*Mon dieu!* And have you Jacobins, too? I thought there were no such things in Ireland. Tell me about your Jacobins."

Again Lord Dunseveric was conscious that the Comtesse was trying to please him, was displaying an interest, which did not seem wholly natural, in a subject on which he would like to talk.

"I'm afraid, Estelle, that an account of our Irish politics would weary you. Politics are dull. You would send me away if I talked about politics."

"I assure you, no," she said. "In France we found politics most exciting. The poor Comte, my husband, found them

altogether too exciting. Do tell me about your Irish Jacobins. Are they also *sans-culottes*?"

"They are mostly Presbyterians, dour, pigheaded, fanatical Republicans, who want to get an army of your French friends over to help them."

"Presbyterians! How droll! I thought Presbyterians were---But is not Maurice's friend, the young man who goes out fishing in the sea with Una, is not he a Presbyterian? I think they said last night that he was the son of a *cure*."

"Yes, he is. His father has the reputation of being one of the most fanatical of the whole lot. But the young fellow is all right, so far as I know."

The Comtesse was silent for a minute or two. She appeared to be considering Lord Dunseveric's last remark. When she spoke again it was evident that her thoughts had wandered from Neal Ward's politics to another subject.

"Is it right, do you think, that this young man should be so intimate with Una? She is a very attractive girl, and at a very dangerous age."

"Oh, they've played together since they were children. Young Ward is a nice boy and a good sportsman."

"Still, he would not be suitable. Am I right?"

"If you mean that he wouldn't do as a husband for Una, you are right, but I don't think for a moment that any such nonsensical idea ever crossed their minds. I like Neal. He's a fine, straightforward boy, and a good sportsman."

"I should like to see this model young man. Perhaps you English--pardon me, my dear brother, you Irish--are differently made; but with us the nicer a young man is the more dangerous we reckon him."

"There's no difficulty about your meeting him. I'll ask him to dinner to-day if you like. I'm sure Maurice will be pleased to ride over with the invitation."

"Charming," said the Comtesse. "Then I shall judge for myself."

Neal Ward accepted the invitation when he received it. Perhaps he would not have been able to do so had he been obliged to submit it to his father and his uncle; but they had gone out together early in the day. Neal understood that his uncle was to be introduced to several people of importance, members of his father's congregation, men who were deeply involved in the plans of the United Irishmen. He was left alone with a task to perform. He was not now transcribing passages from Josephus. His uncle had decided that he was to be trusted, and, as a proof of confidence, he was set to compile from various papers a list of those in the neighbourhood who could be relied on to take up arms when the day of the contemplated outbreak arrived. The work interested Neal greatly. He knew most of the men whose names he copied. Some of them he knew intimately. Now and then he was surprised to find that some well-to-do and apparently well contented farmer was a member of the society. Once he paused and hesitated about going on with his work. He came to a statement of the fact that one, James Finlay, had been enrolled as a United Irishman and admitted to the councils of the local committee. Neal knew James Finlay, and disliked him. Once he had caught him at night in the act of netting salmon in the river. Neal had threatened to hand him over to Lord Dunseveric. The poacher blustered, threatened, and even attempted an attack upon Neal. He got the worst of the encounter, and after vague threats of future vengeance, relapsed into whining supplication. Neal spared him, considering that the man had been well thrashed, and having the dislike, common to all generous-minded Irishmen, of bringing to justice a delinquent of any kind. But he disliked and distrusted James Finlay, and he did not understand how his father and the others came to trust such a man. He wrote the name, reflecting that Finlay had left the neighbourhood some weeks before in order to seek employment in Belfast. Shortly afterwards he completed his task. Maurice St. Clair arrived with Lord Dunseveric's invitation. Neal locked up his papers, changed his clothes, and went through the rain to Dunseveric House. He was not comfortable or easy in his mind. Yesterday it was natural and pleasant to spend the day with Maurice and Una. To-day he knew things of which he had been entirely ignorant before. He knew that he himself was committed to a share in a desperate struggle, in what might well become a civil war, and that he would be fighting against Lord Dunseveric and against his friend Maurice. It did not seem to him to be a fair and honourable thing to eat the bread of unsuspecting enemies. Twice, as he tramped through the rain to Dunseveric House, he stopped and almost decided to turn back. Twice he succeeded in silencing his scruples and quieting the complaints of his conscience. Each time it was the thought of Una which decided him. There was in him a hunger to see the girl, to be near her, to touch her hand, to hear her voice. Since his uncle had spoken to him about her on the evening of his arrival Neal had become acutely and painfully conscious of his love for her. Long ago he had loved her. Looking back he thought that he had always loved her. Now he knew that he loved her. That made a great difference.

He was welcomed when he arrived by Lord Dunseveric with friendly courtesy--by Una shyly. Her manner was not as it had been the day before. The frank friendliness was gone. There was something else in its place, something which thrilled Neal with hope and fear. Perhaps the girl felt instinctively the change in Neal. Perhaps she was conscious of her aunt's keen laughing eyes. Who can tell how a girl first becomes conscious of the fact that a young man loves her? The Comtesse also welcomed Neal. She set herself to please and flatter him. At dinner she talked brightly and amusingly. It seemed to Neal that she talked brilliantly. She told stories of the old French life. She related her recent experiences of English society. She rallied Lord Dunseveric on his grave dignity of manner. She drew laughter again and again from

Una and Maurice. But she addressed herself most to Neal. He was intoxicated with her vivacity, the swift gleams of her wit, her delicate beauty, her exquisite dress. He had never seen, never even imagined, the existence of such a woman. Lord Dunseveric watched her and listened to her with quiet amusement. It seemed to him that his sister-in-law meant not only to rescue Una from an undesirable lover; but to attach a handsome, gauche youth to herself. He understood that a woman like Estelle de Tourneville might find the attentions of Neal Ward vastly diverting in a place like Dunseveric, where nothing better in the way of a flirtation was to be looked for.

The wine and fruit were placed on the table and the servants withdrew. The Comtesse, with her wine-glass in her hand, stood up.

"It is not at all the fashion," she said, "for a lady to make a speech. I shall shock you, my lord, but you will forgive me, for you know the world. I shall shock my sweet Una, but she will forgive me because her heart has no room in it for unkind thoughts of anyone. I shall shock my nephew and the solemn Mr. Neal Ward, and they will not forgive me because they are young and, therefore, have very strict ideas of how a woman ought to behave herself. Nevertheless, I am going to make a speech and propose a toast. I am Irish. Long ago my fathers lived in Ireland and were *grands seigneurs* as my good brother, Lord Dunseveric, is to-day. They left Ireland for the sake of their faith and their king. They went to France; but I am not, therefore, French. I am Irish. Now that the French people have turned against us, have even wished to cut off my head, which I think is much more ornamental on my shoulders than it would be anywhere else--now I have returned to Ireland, I ask you all to drink my toast with me. I propose--'Ireland.' I, who am loyal to the old faith and the memory of the legitimate king, I will drink it. My lord, who is of another faith and loyal to another king, will drink it also. Mr. Neal, who has a third kind of faith, and is, I understand, not loyal to any king, will, no doubt, drink it. My friends--'Ireland.'"

She raised her glass to her lips and sipped the wine. All the four listeners stood and raised their glasses.

"'Ireland,'" said Lord Dunseveric gravely. "I drink to Ireland."

Then, with the glass at his lips, he paused. There was a noise of horse hoofs on the gravel outside. A horseman, in military uniform, cantered by. He was followed by another, a trooper. The little company in the diningroom stood still and silent. The bell at the door of the house was rung violently. Its sound reached them. A vague uneasiness came upon them. One by one they sat down and laid their glasses--the wine untasted--on the table before them. A servant entered the room.

"Captain Twinely, my lord, of the Killulta Company of Yeomanry, wishes to see your lordship on important business."

"Ask him to come in here," said Lord Dunseveric.

Una rose as if to leave the room.

"No," said Lord Dunseveric, "stay where you are, and do you stay, too, Estelle. This Captain Twinely must drink a glass of wine with us. He passes for a gentleman. Then if he has business with me I shall take him away. I must not break up our little party. It is not every day that we have the pleasure of listening to such charming speeches as your's, Estelle."

Captain Twinely entered the room with a swagger. He made a great noise with his heavy boots and with his spurs as he crossed the polished floor.

"I ask your pardon, my lord. I ask the ladies' pardon. I am not fit for your company. I have ridden far today, and the roads are bad, damned bad. I rode on the king's business."

"The ladies," said Lord Dunseveric, "will be pleased if you will drink a glass of wine with them. Are you alone?"

"I left my troop in Ballintoy. The sergeant will see that they obtain refreshment. My servant holds my horse outside."

"I shall send him some refreshment," said Lord Dunseveric. "And your horses must be stabled here till you have told me how I can serve you."

Captain Twinely drank his wine, bowed to the ladies, and then said--

"I come at an inconvenient hour, my lord. You have just dined and you have pleasant company, but I must crave your attention for a letter which I bring you. The king's business, my lord."

Lord Dunseveric rose, and led the way to the library.

"I don't doubt," said Captain Twinely, "no one could be such a fool as to doubt the loyalty of every member of your lordship's household and of every guest in your lordship's house; but in deliver-ing my letter and my message I prefer to be where there is no chance of eavesdropping. Will you allow me to make sure that we are not overheard?"

Lord Dunseveric himself shut the door of the room and drew a bolt across it. Captain Twinely took a sealed packet from his breast. Lord Dunseveric looked carefully at the address, broke the seal, and read the contents of the paper within.

"Do you know the contents of this paper, Captain Twinely?"

"My orders are to solicit your lordship's assistance, as a Justice of the Peace for the county, in arresting certain persons and taking possession of some arms concealed in the neighbourhood. I do not know the names of the persons or the place where the arms are concealed. I have not been treated with confidence. I'm a loyal man, but I'm only a plain gentleman. I may say that I feel aggrieved. I deserved more confidence."

Lord Dunseveric read the letter again before he answered.

"I am directed here to arrest, with your assistance, five persons. All of them are men who are well known and respected in this neighbourhood. I know nothing of the evidence against them, beyond the mere fact, stated here, that from information received they are believed to be engaged in a plot for an armed rebellion. Captain Twinely, I have not a very high opinion of the men from whom the Government receives information, and I have reason to believe that the information is not always trustworthy. There have been recently--- but I need not go into that. I am a loyal man. I am willing to assist the Government in any way in my power, but my loyalty has limits. Two of the persons named in this letter I shall not arrest. One of them I believe to be innocent of all designs against the Government; the other is a very feeble old man, who will not in any case be dangerous as a rebel, and whom I have private reasons for not wishing to arrest. I am willing to go with you to the houses of the other three and arrest them. As for the concealed arms--cannon it is stated here--I do not believe they exist, but I shall take you to the place named, and let you see for yourself. Will this satisfy you?"

"Your lordship has to consider whether it will satisfy my commanding officer. I should have thought it better, more advisable, more prudent, for your lordship to obey the orders you have received exactly."

The man's words were perfectly civil, but his manner and tone suggested a threat. Lord Dunseveric stiffened suddenly.

"I shall consider your commanding officer," he said, "when I am shown that he has any right to command me."

"Your loyalty---," began Captain Twinely.

"My loyalty to the king and the Irish constitution is not to be suspected or impugned by Mr. Twinely, of Killulta."

"My lord, I consider that an unhandsome speech. I am only a plain gentleman, but I am loyal. We county gentlemen ought to stand together. I expected more consideration from you, my lord. I do not like your sneering tone. By God, if it were not that I am on the king's busi--"

"Yes, if you were not on the king's business----"

But Captain Twinely did not finish his speech.

"I shall have some refreshment brought in here to you, Captain Twinely," said Lord Dunseveric. "I shall, with your permission, order a servant to ride to Ballintoy and bring your troop here. When they arrive I shall be ready to go with you. In the meanwhile, I beg you to excuse my leaving you. I have some private matters to arrange before we start."

He walked to the door, drew back the bolt, bowed, and left the room.

CHAPTER IV

Lord Dunseveric returned to the dining-room. He found the Comtesse seated on a chair which had been placed on the table to give dignity to her position. On the floor, beneath this lofty throne, knelt Neal Ward, his hands tied behind him with a dinner napkin. Maurice, with a carving-knife in his hand, stood on guard over the prisoner. Una, her eyes shining with laughter, was making a speech.

"Please, don't interrupt," said the Comtesse, "we are holding a courtmartial on Mr. Neal. Una is acting as prosecutor; I am the judge. In a few minutes, when I have delivered my sentence, Maurice will flog the prisoner, and afterwards hang him with one of the bell ropes."

"I want to speak to you, Neal," said Lord Dunseveric, gravely.

Neal pulled his hands from their bandage, and rose, blinking and uncomfortable, to his feet.

"How solemn you are!" said the Comtesse. "What has that very boorish Captain Twinely been telling you? Has a rebellion broken out? Is there going to be a battle? Have they come to arrest Mr. Neal in real earnest? I believe they have. Never mind, Mr. Neal, we will organise a rescue party. They are not real soldiers, you know--only--only--what do you call them?--ah, yes, yeomen. We will fall upon these yeomen after dark and carry you off to safety."

"Maurice," said Lord Dunseveric, "have two horses saddled, and get on your boots. I shall want you to ride along with me. Come, Neal."

The three men left the room.

"Una," said the Comtesse, "come quick and change your dress. We will go and see what is happening. Oh, this is most exciting, and the day has been so dull and long. Come, Una, come; we will not let anyone see us. We will take the most delightful short cuts. We will lie hidden in ditches while they pass. We must see everything. Come, come, come."

"But--my father--"

"Oh, you dear dutiful child! Just for once don't mind about your father. I am sure something thrilling is going to happen. Haven't you a duty of obedience towards your aunt? I cannot go without you, for I should certainly lose my way."

The arrival of Captain Twinely, Lord Dunseveric's grave face, and his summons to Neal had filled Una's mind with an undefined dread of some threatening evil. She was nearly as anxious as her aunt to know what was to happen. The prospect of a scamper across country through the rain daunted her very little. She had no doubt of her ability to keep in touch with the horsemen without being discovered. They would keep to the high road. To her every short cut was known, every hill for observation, and every possible hiding-place were as familiar to her as the lawn of Dunseveric House.

Lord Dunseveric led the way to his own dressing-room, beckoning Neal to follow him.

"Sit down, Neal," he said, "and listen. I must talk while I boot and change my coat. This Twinely, who takes rank as a captain of yeomen, and has, as I suppose, a following of blackguards, brings me orders which I cannot disobey--at least which I mean to disobey in only one particular. I am bidden to search your father's meeting-house for cannon supposed to be concealed there. I am going to search, and search thoroughly. Your answer will make no difference to my action; but I should like you to tell me, are the cannon there?"

"I do not believe there are any cannon," said Neal; "I never heard of them, or had any reason to suspect their existence."

Lord Dunseveric watched him keenly as he replied. Then he said--

"I believe what you say, of course. If there are cannon there you know nothing of it. Now, another question. I am to arrest several persons whose names have been sent to me; your name stands second on the list. Are you a United Irishman? Have you sworn the oath?"

"No," said Neal, without hesitation. "I have not sworn. I have not been enrolled as one of the society."

"I may take it that the Government has acted on false information in ordering your arrest?"

"Yes. The man who gave that information certainly lied. I knew nothing of the plans of the United Irishmen yesterday, but it is right that I should tell you--"

"It is not right that you should tell me anything more. You have answered my two questions. I have your word for it that you are not a United Irishman, and I have your word that the information received by the Government is false. I want to hear no more on that subject. I shall take the responsibility of refusing to arrest you. I am also bidden to arrest your father. I ask you no questions about him. I simply inform you that I am not going to arrest him either. I do not believe in his innocence. I think it likely that he is implicated in the conspiracy, but I am not going to arrest him. He is too old to fight, and when the other three men on my list are in prison he will have ceased to be dangerous. Further, your father, in his writings, has attacked, and, in my opinion, slandered me personally."

"You mean in the *Northern Star*?"

"Yes. In the series of articles called '*Letters of a Democrat*,' which are attributed, I think rightly, to your father."

Lord Dunseveric paused. Neal remained silent. He had not read the articles, but he believed his father had attacked the landlord aristocracy with great bitterness, and he thought it likely that Lord Dunseveric had cause for complaint.

"I do not choose," said Lord Dunseveric, "to take part in the arrest of a man who may be regarded as my personal enemy. You may tell your father this, and you may tell him further that if he is a wise man he will leave the country at once. The next magistrate charged with his arrest may not have my scruples or my reasons for hesitating. Now, listen to me, Neal, before I leave you, and mark what I say. I admit, and I always have admitted, the justice of the claims which your people make. There ought to be equality, full and complete, for you and the Catholics. There ought to be an end to the tyranny under which you suffer, but you are going the wrong way about getting your wrongs righted. Your rebellion, if there is to be a rebellion, can't succeed. You will be crushed. And Neal, lad, that crushing will be an evil business. It will be evil for you and your friends, but that's not all. It will be made an excuse for taking away the hard won liberty of Ireland. Keep out of it, Neal. Take my advice, and keep out of it, for your own sake and for Ireland's."

He took the young man's hand, wrung it, and then turned and left the room. Neal stood for a while dazed and bewildered. He had known before that his father was a supporter of the United Irishmen. He had guessed, though until that morning he had not actually known, how deeply he was versed in the secrets of the society. He had never imagined that the doings and sayings of an obscure Presbyterian minister were being watched and noted by Government spies. He found it hard to realise that the eyes of remote authorities, of secretaries of state, of generals of armies, were fixed on the wind-swept, desolate, northern parish, on the gaunt, grey manse he called his home. Yet the evidence of this incredible surveillance was plain and unmistakable. Men of his father's congregation, men whom he supposed he knew personally, were to be seized and marched off, to be flogged perhaps as others had been, to be imprisoned certainly, to be hanged very likely, in the end. His father was a marked man, with the choice before him of exile or imprisonment, perhaps death. He himself was suspected, had been informed against, lied about, by someone. His mind flew back to the list of names he had copied out that morning, to the one name which had arrested his attention especially. He remembered that James Finlay owed him a grudge, desired revenge; he felt sure that James Finlay was the informer. Others might have betrayed the secrets of the society. James Finlay alone, so far as he could recollect, had any motive for incriminating him, an entirely innocent man.

He was roused from his thoughts by the sound of horses trampling on the gravel sweep outside. The yeomen, summoned from Ballintoy, had arrived at Dunseveric House. They were laughing, talking, and singing as they rode, a disorderly mob of horsemen rather than a troop of soldiers. After a few minutes they rode past the window again. Captain Twinely was at their head. Ten or twelve yards in front of him, as if disdainful of his company, rode Lord Dunseveric and Maurice.

They were wrapped in long horsemen's cloaks, for the rain beat down on them. The wind was rising, and blew in strong gusts. The sun had set and the evening was beginning to darken. Neal ran down to the hall, seized his coat and stick, and went out. The horsemen moved along the avenue at a steady trot. Neal saw them turn to the right and go along the road which led to the manse and the meeting-house. He started to run across the fields. He hoped to reach the manse and warn his father before the soldiers arrived at the meeting-house. He ran fast, choosing the shortest and easiest way, avoiding boggy patches of ground which would have checked his progress. After a while, from a point of vantage, he was able to catch a glimpse of the road. He noted that he was level with the yeomen, and he knew that from the point where he saw them the road took a wide curve inland. He calculated that by running fast he would be able to cross it in front of the troop, and by keeping along the cliffs would be able to reach the manse before the soldiers did. He sped forward. Suddenly, as he descended the hill to the road, he became aware of two figures crouching behind the bank which divided the road from the field. He was dimly aware that they were women. He did not look carefully at them. His eyes were fixed on the horsemen against whom he was racing. He gained the edge of the field and sprang upon the bank. He heard his name called softly.

"Neal, Neal, Neal Ward."

Then somewhat louder by another voice.

"Mr. Neal, come and help us."

He recognised Una's voice and then that of the Comtesse. He had no time to think what they wanted or how they came to be crouching in a damp ditch in the rain while the evening darkened over them. He leaped from the bank, crossed the road, and raced off again towards his father's house.

He arrived at the door, breathless, but sure that he was in good time. He burst into the sitting-room and found his father and uncle, their lamp already lighted, bending over a pile of papers which lay before them on the table.

"The soldiers, the yeomen, are on their way here," he gasped.

Micah Ward started to his feet.

"What do you say?"

"The yeomen are on their way to the meetinghouse. They are going to search for arms, for cannon, which they say are concealed there."

Micah Ward stood stock still. His body seemed to have become suddenly rigid. His face grew quite white. Donald, leaning back in his chair, smiled slightly.

"So," he said, "they have begun. Are there cannon there, brother?"

"Yes, there are," said Micah, slowly. "Four six-pounders. They belonged to the Volunteers. We kept them. We thought they might be useful some day."

"Ah," said Donald, "it's a pity. We shall have the trouble of re-capturing them. Come, let us go down to the meeting-house. I should like to see these terrible yeomen."

"Some one has given them information," said Micah. He was silent for a minute. Then he muttered as if to himself--

"Some one has informed against us. Some one has brought this evil upon us. Who has done this thing? Who is our secret enemy?"

"Come," said Donald, "don't stand muttering there."

But Micah did not heed him. Raising both hands above his head, and looking upward, he spoke slowly, clearly--

"May the curse of the Lord God of Israel light on the man who has informed against us. May he be smitten with madness and blindness and astonishment of heart. May he grope at the noonday as the blind gropeth in the darkness. May his life hang in doubt before him. May he fear day and night, and have none assurance of his life. May he say in the morning--'Would God it were even! And at even--'Would God it were morning!' for the fear of his heart wherewith he shall fear and the sight of his eyes which he shall see."

"That," said Donald, "is a mighty fine curse. I'm darned if I ever heard a more comprehensive kind of curse. We had a God-forsaken half-breed in our company, under General Greene, who could curse quite a bit, and he never came near that curse. But I reckon that a good deal of it will have to be wasted. There isn't a man living who could stand it for long. Still, if you name the man for us, I'll do the best I can with him. I may not be able to work the blindness and the groping just as you'd wish, but I'll undertake that his life hangs in doubt before him for a bit."

Micah Ward, without seeming to hear his brother's speech, stalked bare-headed from the room and led the way to the meeting-house.

The yeomen were marching up the hill from the main road. They sang a song with a ribald chorus, such as men sing in a tavern when they have drunk deep. Lord Dunseveric and Maurice had already reached the door of the meeting-house, and sat silent on their horses.

"Mr. Ward," said Lord Dunseveric, "will you give me the keys and save me from the necessity of breaking open the door? I see Neal with you. I suppose he has told you what we have come to do?"

"I shall never render the keys to you," said Micah Ward. "Do the work of scorn and oppression that you intend, but do not ask me to aid you."

The yeomen, still singing, straggled up while Lord Dunseveric and Micah Ward spoke. Suddenly their song ceased, and they listened in a silence of sheer amazement while Donald Ward addressed their captain.

"Say"--his voice was cold, clear, and contemptuous--"do you call yourself a captain? And is this your notion of discipline? I guess, young fellow, if we'd had you with General Greene in Carolina we'd have combed you out and flogged the drunken ragamuffins you're supposed to be commanding. But I reckon you're just the meanest kind of Britisher there is, that kind that swaggers and runs away."

"Seize that man," said Captain Twinely. "Tie him up. Flog him. Cut the life out of him."

Lord Dunseveric touched his horse with the spur and rode forward. "Captain Twinely, I told you I should have no flogging here. I mean to be obeyed. And you, sir, you are a stranger here. Who are you?"

"This," said Micah Ward, laying his hand on his brother's arm, "is my brother."

"Captain Twinely, dismount two of your men. Let them conduct Mr. Ward and his brother back to the manse and mount guard at the door. Maurice, tie your horse to the tree yonder, and go with them. See that no incivility is used. When they are safe in the manse you can return here."

Neal walked to the rear of the troop, and stood at the side of the road near the wall, while his father and uncle were marched away under charge of two troopers and Maurice St. Clair.

"Sergeant," said Captain Twinely, "take four men and force this door."

Neal heard his name called in a low voice by some one near him.

"Neal, Neal, Neal Ward."

It was Una's voice. His father and uncle had passed down the road. The yeomen were eagerly watching their comrades' attempts to force the door.

Neal stepped over the low stone wall. He felt a hand grasp his and heard Una speak again.

"Neal, stay with us. I'm frightened."

A low musical laugh followed, and then the voice of the Comtesse--

"You are a most ungallant cavalier, Mr. Neal. You left us alone in one ditch this evening already. You really must not leave us in another."

The effort to force the door of the meeting-house was unsuccessful.

"Put a musket to the key-hole," said Captain Twinely, "and blow off the lock."

There was an explosion. The woodwork was splintered and shattered. A single push opened the door.

"Now," said Captain Twinely, "come in and search."

The little meeting-house was scantily furnished. A high, octangular wooden pulpit with a precentor's pew in front of it stood at the far end. The place was bare of hanging or cupboard which could have been used as a hiding-place. The men tramped about, upsetting the benches and cursing as they tripped upon them.

"It's as dark as hell," said Captain Twinely. "Send a man down to the minister's house and let him fetch up a bundle of bogwood to serve us for torches. I must have light."

One of the men departed on the errand. The sergeant, mounted on the pulpit, rapped on the desk in front of him to secure silence, and said in a high-pitched, drawling voice--

"Beloved! Brands snatched from the burning! Sanctified vessels! Let us, in this hour of trial and tribulation, when the ungodly triumph and prosper in their way, let us sing the Ould Hunderd to the comfort of our souls."

At the sound of his voice the troopers who remained outside crowded into the building, leaving two or three of their number to take care of the horses. Well satisfied with his congregation, the sergeant sang to the tune sanctified by two centuries of Puritan worship:--

*"There was a Presbyterian cat
Who loved her neighbour's cream to sup;
She sanctified her theft with prayer
Before she dared to lap it up."*

A burst of applause greeted the performance of this ribald parody. There were calls for more such psalmody. "Give us another verse, Sergeant." "Tune up again, Dick." "Goon, goon." Lord Dunseveric, who had remained outside, dismounted and stalked through the door. He had caught the tune, though not the words of the sergeant's song. He guessed at some ribald irreverence within. His face was white with anger.

"Silence," he cried.

The sergeant, half drunk, looked at him with an insolent grin.

"Your lordship will like the second verse better--

"There was a Presbyterian wife--"

Lord Dunseveric forced his way through the soldiers who stood between him and the singer, and approached the pulpit with clenched fists and lips pressed close together.

*"Who found her husband growing old;
She sanctified-----"*

sang the sergeant, leering at Lord Dunseveric, but before he got any further a woman's shriek rang through the building. The sergeant stopped abruptly. The men crowded through the door, eager for some new excitement. Lord Dunseveric and Captain Twinely followed as quickly as they could. There was another shriek, a sound of blows and cursing. Then men's voices rose above the tumult. "Down with the damned croppy." "Throttle him." "Knife him." "Hold him now you've got him." "Take a belt for his arms." "Ah, here's Tam with the torches." "Strike a light, one of you." "There's two of them, two wenches, by God, and young ones." "Fetch them into the meeting-house and make them dance." "Ay, by God, we'll tie their petticoats round their necks and then make them dance."

There was a rush of men to the door of the meeting-house. Lord Dunseveric and Captain Twinely were borne back before they could see what was going on. Some one struck a light and illuminated a branch of bogwood which he held above his head as a torch.

"Drag in the prisoner," yelled a voice. "We'll give him a place in the front and let him see his wenches dance."

Lord Dunseveric, unable to make his voice heard above the tumult, saw Neal Ward, his arms bound to his sides by a belt strapped round him, dragged into the meeting-house. His face was cut and bleeding slightly. His coat was rent from collar to skirt.

"Make way, make way, for the ladies."

A trooper entered with two women. He had an arm clasped round each. Lord Dunseveric recognised with amazement

and horror his daughter and sister-in-law. Una made no resistance. She was terrified into a state of helplessness. The Comtesse struggled desperately, tearing with her hands at the trooper's face. Captain Twinely recognised the ladies almost immediately, and strove to reach them. Before he could make his way Lord Dun-severic's voice rang out above the tumult.

"Maurice, are you there? Come in here at once."

There was something in his voice, a tone of authority, a note of grim determination, which cowed the rabble of men for an instant. Maurice St. Clair pushed his way through the door in silence.

"Maurice," said Lord Dunseveric, this time in quiet, even tones, "take that scoundrel by the throat, and if he offers any resistance choke him."

The man loosed his hold of the two women, and his hand flew to his sword hilt, but before he could draw it, Maurice bounded upon him and flung him to the ground. Once, twice, thrice, as the trooper strove to raise himself, his head was dashed down on the hard earthen floor of the meeting-house.

After the third time he lay still. Maurice rose and stood over him.

"Captain Twinely," said Lord Dunseveric, "loose the belt from your prisoner's arms at once."

The order was obeyed, and Neal stood free. "Bid your men leave the meeting-house, all but the man who holds the torch and the one who lies there on the floor."

The men, cowed and sullen, went out.

"Now," said Lord Dunseveric, "I will have this matter cleared up and I will have justice done." He turned to Neal.

"How came you here with my daughter and the Comtesse de Tourneville?"

Neal stood silent.

"It was my fault," said the Comtesse. "I brought Una. I wanted to see what was going on. Mr. Neal had nothing to do with it. He tried to save us when, when that man"--she pointed to the soldier on the floor--"found us."

"Is that so?" asked Lord Dunseveric of Neal.

"It is."

"Maurice," said Lord Dunseveric, "take your sister and your aunt home, and when you get them there see that they do not leave the house again. Stay. Take Neal with you. Those ruffians outside will scarcely venture to molest you, but, in case any of them are drunk enough to try, you will be the better of having Neal beside you. Captain Twinely, you will kindly give orders to your men that my son and his party are to be allowed to pass."

Lord Dunseveric was left alone in the meeting-house save for the man who held the torch and the trooper who lay unconscious on the floor.

"Give me the light," he said, "and go you over to your comrade. Loose his tunic and feel if his heart still beats."

The man did as he was bidden, and reported that the trooper whom Maurice had stunned was still alive. Lord Dunseveric walked to the door of the meeting-house and said--

"Captain Twinely, you will now be so good as to take the man who lies here on the floor and hang him at once. We are not well off for trees in this country, but there is at least one at the back of the meeting-house tall enough for the purpose."

There was a threatening growl from the men outside. They drew together. Their hands were on their swords. Captain Twinely stood a little apart from them. His eyes were fixed on the ground. He made no motion, and showed no sign of obeying the orders he was given. Lord Dunseveric looked first at him and then at the group of angry troopers. He stepped out of the meeting-house and faced them. He took out his watch and looked at it.

"I give you ten minutes," he said, "in which to obey my order. If that man is not hanged in ten minutes I shall march you back to Dunseveric House, where there are trees enough, and hang every one of you there."

They could have killed him easily as he stood there. They probably would have killed him if he had shown the smallest sign of fear. They knew perfectly well that he could not have marched them to Dunseveric House or anywhere else if they had chosen to resist. Nevertheless, they obeyed him. A rope was fetched from the saddle of one of the troopers. In those days the yeomen carried ropes fit for hanging men as they went through the country. The unconscious man was carried from the meeting-house and hung up on the only tree large enough to bear his weight. Lord Dunseveric, with his watch in his hand, saw the thing done with a quiet smile. Then he spoke again to Captain Twinely.

"You had better proceed with your search for the cannon. It is getting late, and you have already wasted a great deal of time."

More torches were lit. The men, now thoroughly cowed, dragged down the pulpit and the precentor's pew. The earth under them was not beaten hard as was the earth of the rest of the floor. Captain Twinely took a torch and peered at it.

"Fetch a spade," he said.

They shovelled the earth into a heap against the wall and uncovered four cannons. They were wrapped in oily rags, and well preserved, in spite of their damp hiding-place. Lord Dunseveric looked at them carefully.

"Ah," he said. "Four of the six-pounders which I bought for my company of volunteer artillery in 1778. I often wondered what had become of them. Now, Captain Twinely, you have got the cannon, you had better go on to arrest your prisoners. I shall go with you, and remember I shall permit no violence unless resistance is offered. I have given your men one lesson to-night already. I am quite prepared to give them another if necessary."

The rain had ceased when Maurice and Neal, with their charge, left the meeting-house. The direction of the wind had changed since sunset. It blew in from the north and was sweeping the clouds away. The moon, then in its first quarter, seemed to be racing across the sky among the torn fragments of black cloud. Now and then it reached an open space and shed a pale, white light over the landscape. Again, it was hidden and the night was very dark. Already the wind had aroused the sea to its old warfare against the rocks and strands. Its hollow roaring was borne far inland. For a time the little party walked in silence. The Comtesse was the first to speak.

"If that is the way your loyal troops behave, Maurice, I think that I prefer the *sans culottes*. Ugh! my clothes are half torn off my back. I shall never be able to wear this dress again. It will smell, positively smell, of the grimy hands of that drunken wretch."

"What brought you out?" asked Maurice. "If you had stayed at home nothing would have happened to you."

"Now," said the Comtesse, "if you begin to lecture me, to preach sermons to me, I shall sit down and cry. I could scream and kick at this moment with the greatest ease and pleasure. Then what would you do, my nephew?"

"Maurice," said Una, "let us go home across the fields. Don't let us go by the road. I'm afraid of meeting those men again. They will be coming after us."

"Nonsense, Una," said the Comtesse, "we have climbed walls enough to-night; we have lain in ditches enough. For my part, if there is a road I shall go along it. Come, Maurice."

She walked quickly on, and Maurice, puzzled and uncomfortable, followed her. Then Neal laid his hand on Una's arm.

"This way," he said. "I will take you home by the fields."

He sprang across the ditch and stretched out his hand to the girl. Without a word she took it and followed him. They walked in silence over the rough ground. They crossed a wall, and then another, and each time Neal thrilled at the touch of her hand as he turned to help her.

"You were very brave, Neal," she said.

"It's not much to be brave for you, Una. Oh, I wish I could have saved you."

He had her hand in his again, and this time it seemed as if it lingered in his clasp.

"Una," he said. "Una."

But her face was turned away from him, and she made no answer. The tone of his voice set her pulses beating with a strong excitement, so that she could not look at him or speak. He was silent again. They reached the high wall which bounded the demesne of Dunseveric House. Once more, as they climbed, her hand was in his.

This time he held it fast. It seemed to him that he was doing something that would call down on him swift rebuke and angry reproach. He expected to have the hand snatched from him. Then, with wonder and a glow of rapturous delight, he felt it lie passive in his. He realised that he was being swept beyond his self-control; that his desire for the girl beside him was stronger than his reason. He yielded to an impulse of sheer passion, clasped Una in his arms, and kissed her face. Again and again he kissed her. He felt her arms tighten round him, knew that she was clinging to him. Then suddenly he let her go and stood back from her, terror-stricken.

"Oh, Una, what have I done? I am mad."

She stood before him, her face covered with her hands.

"Una, speak to me. Can you ever forgive me? My love made me mad."

She raised her face and looked at him. In the dim moonlight he saw in her eyes a look of wonderful tenderness. He realised without a word from her that she loved him, too.

"Una--I ought never--I was wrong. But I love you more than my life. Una, you are too far above me. You are a great man's daughter. How did I dare?"

She came close to him and spoke.

"There is no above or below, Neal, when we love each other. How can I be far above the man who loves me?"

"But there is no hope for us, none at all anywhere. Even to-morrow I may have to go--Una, I may have to fight--"

"Whatever comes, Neal, I know that you will be brave and good. Be brave and good, dear Neal, and then God will give us our hearts' desire. I am not afraid of the future. Why should you be afraid? If you do what is right and honourable what is there to fear? God is good."

They walked together to the house. Then Neal turned and went home. The future, so far as he could see into it, was dark enough. His love seemed utterly hopeless, yet his heart was full of unspeakable joy. He knew, beyond all possibility of doubt, that Una loved him and would love him whatever happened. Her strangely simple faith seemed to make all things plain before him. Una loved him and God was good. It was enough.

CHAPTER V

When Neal arrived at the Manse he found that the sentries who had stood on guard at the door were gone. The yeomen had disappeared from before the meeting-house. The broken door, the fragments of the wrecked pulpit, and the figure of the dead trooper swinging from the branch on which he had been hanged were left as witnesses of the Government's methods of keeping the peace in Ireland.

Inside the house Micah Ward paced restlessly up and down the floor of his study. Donald, his pipe in his mouth, sat on a chair tilted back till its front legs were six inches off the floor, and watched his brother. His attitude was precarious, but he seemed comfortable. Micah paused in his rapid walking as Neal entered the room.

"What have you been doing, Neal?" he said. "Your face is cut, your clothes are torn; you look strangely excited."

"I have been fighting," said Neal. He did not think it necessary to add that he had also been love-making, though it was the interview with Una, far more than the struggle with the yeoman, which was accountable for the gleaming eyes and exalted expression which his father noticed.

"I trust you were victorious," said his father, "that your foot has been dipped in the blood of your enemies, that you have broken their bonds asunder, and cast away their cords from you."

"I was beaten," said Neal, smiling. It did not just then seem to matter in the least whether he got the better or the worse in any fight.

"You take it easily," said Donald. "That's right. You're blooded now, my boy. You'll fight all the better in the future for tasting your own blood to-night. I'm glad you are back with us. Your father has been giving out the most terrific curses against Lord Dunseveric for having brought the yeomen down on us and taken away his little cannons. I tell him he ought to be thankful they went into the meeting-house instead of coming here. They'd have made a fine haul if they'd walked in and taken the papers he and I had before us when you came here. They'd have had the name of every United Irishman in the district, and could have picked them out and hanged them one by one just as they wanted them."

"They've got as much information, pretty near, as they want," said Neal. "They are going to arrest three men to-night."

"God's curse on Eustace St. Clair, him whom men call the Lord of Dunseveric," said Micah Ward.

"Spare your curse," said Neal. "It wasn't Lord Dunseveric who brought the yeomen on us, and what's more, only for Lord Dunseveric you'd be arrested yourself along with the others."

"What's that you are saying, Neal?"

"I'm saying that the yeomen brought orders from Belfast to arrest you, and me, too, and that Lord Dunseveric refused to execute them."

"And so I owe my liberty to him! I must thank him for sparing me. I must fawn on him as my benefactor, I suppose. But I will not. I refuse his mercy. I scorn it. I cast it from me. I shall go out and offer myself to the yeomen. They are to take my friends, my people, and spare me. I will not be spared. Am I the hireling who fleeth when the wolf cometh? I go to deliver myself into their hands."

"You'll be a bigger fool than I take you for if you do," said Donald. "Listen to me now. From what Neal has told us it's evident that you're wrong about Lord Dunseveric. It wasn't he who brought the yeomen on us. There is someone else giving information, and it's someone who knows a good deal. Come now, brother Micah, cudgel your brains; think, man, think, who is it?"

Micah sat down at his writing-table and passed his hand over his forehead.

"I cannot think," he said. "I cannot, I will not believe that any of our people are traitors."

"These orders which Neal speaks of came from Belfast," said Donald. "Who has lately left this place and gone to Belfast?"

"I can tell you," said Neal. "James Finlay. And James Finlay had a grudge against me. The others whom he denounced were United Irishmen, perhaps, I was not. Why was I marked down, unless it was out of private revenge? And there is nobody, nobody in the world, I believe, who has cause to wish for vengeance on me but only James Finlay."

"I cannot believe it of him," said Micah. "He came to me himself and asked to be sworn. He was a member of the committee."

"If you ask me," said Donald, "I think the case looks pretty black against James Finlay. I think, if things are to go on as they ought to, it will be better to cut the throat of James Finlay. I don't know him myself. Perhaps you do, Neal."

"Yes," said Neal, "I know him."

"And he is in Belfast," said Donald. "Now, what was his reason for going to Belfast?"

"He went to obtain employment there," said Micah. "He took letters from me to some of our leaders. He went as my agent, properly accredited. My God! If he is a traitor!"

"I think, Neal," said Donald, slowly, "that you and I will take a little trip to Belfast. I should like to see Belfast. They tell me it's a rising town. I should also very much like to see our friend, James Finlay. I suppose we shall be able to get horses to-morrow. Oh, yes, I've money to pay for them. I didn't come over here with an empty purse. Anyway, I think Belfast would suit me better than this place. Your people, Micah, don't seem very fond of fighting."

"You are wrong, brother. They will lay down their lives right willingly when the hour comes."

Donald shrugged his shoulders. "Their meeting-house has been sacked, their minister has been insulted, three of their members are to be arrested, and they haven't offered to strike a blow. If they had the courage of doe rabbits they'd have chopped up those yeomen into little bits and then scattered them for dung over the fields. I reckon that unless the Belfast people are better than these men of yours I'd be better back in the States. We knew how to fight for our liberty there."

"You don't understand, Donald. Believe me, you do not understand. We must wait for orders before we strike."

"Oh, orders. Waiting for orders. I know the meaning of that. It means waiting till the English have picked off your leaders one by one. I know, I know."

Donald knocked the ashes out of his pipe, filled it, and lit it again, and puffed slowly. Micah sat at the table, his head resting in his hands. Neal sat down and waited. There was silence in the room for a long time. Donald's pipe was smoked out and lit again before he spoke. Then he said--

"I'm sorry, brother, that I spoke as I did. I don't doubt but that your men are brave enough. They would have fought if they had known what was going on."

"No, no," said Micah. "You were right. I ought to have fought if there were no one else. I ought to have died. I would to God that I had died before our meeting-house was pillaged, before my people, the men who trusted me, were taken captive. I was a coward. I am a coward."

"Then I am a coward, too," said Donald, "and no man ever called me that before. But I'm not, and you're not. We were two unarmed men against fifty. I'm fond enough of fighting, and I take on a job with long odds against me, but not such long odds as that. Rouse yourself, brother. Neal and I are going to Belfast. We shall want letters from you. We must be accredited like Mr. James Finlay, whom we hope to meet. Stir yourself now and write for us."

"I will, I will. Neal, there is no ink here. I remember that I used all my ink yesterday. Neal, fetch me ink from the shelf beside the window."

In a few minutes Micah's pen was travelling slowly over the paper. Neal could hear its spluttering and scratching. Suddenly, there was a noise of loud knocking at the door of the house. Donald started and laid down his pipe. Neal rose to his feet, and stood waiting for some order from his father. Micah stopped writing, and turned in his chair. All trace of nervousness and agitation had vanished from his face. His expression was gentle and joyous. He smiled.

"They have come to take me also," he said. "I am right glad. I shall not be indebted to the oppressor for my liberty. I shall be where a shepherd ought to be--with the sheep whom the wolf attacks."

Again came the noise of knocking, heavy, authoritative, threatening.

"Be quick, my son, and open the door. Bid those who enter welcome."

Neal went to the door, and opened it. Lord Dunseveric stood outside, the reins of his horse's bridle thrown over his arm, his riding whip in his hand.

"I suppose your father is within, Neal. I want to speak to him. Will you ask him if I may enter?"

"He bid me say that you were welcome," said Neal.

Lord Dunseveric stared at him in surprise. "How did he know who was at the door? But it does not matter. Show me where to tie my horse, Neal, and I will enter."

Neal led the way into the room where his father and his uncle sat. Lord Dunseveric bowed to Micah Ward, and then, with a glance at Donald, said--

"The matter on which I wish to speak to you, sir, is somewhat private. Is it your wish that this gentleman be present?"

"It is my brother, Donald Ward," said Micah. "He knows my mind. I have no secrets from him."

Lord Dunseveric bowed again, and said, with a slight smile--

"It is possible that Mr. Donald Ward may find some of your secrets rather embarrassing to keep."

"I can take care of myself, master," said Donald, "or, maybe, I ought to say, my lord. But your lordships and dukeships, and countships and kingships stick somewhat in my throat. I come from America, where we hold one man the equal of another."

"You are a young nation," said Lord Dunseveric. "In time you will perhaps learn courtesy. But I did not come here to--

night to teach manners to vagrant Yankees. I came to tell Mr. Ward that he has been denounced to the Government as a seditious person, and that I received orders to-night to arrest him."

"And why did you not execute them?" said Micah Ward. "Did I ask you to spare me? Have you come here to be thanked for your mercy? I wish to God you had arrested me."

"I assure you," said Lord Dunseveric, "that I expect no thanks, nor do I claim any credit for being merciful. You owe your escape solely to the fact that I happen to be a gentleman. It did not consist with my honour to arrest a man who was my personal enemy."

"Then," said Micah Ward, "what have you come here for now?"

"I have come, Mr. Ward, to warn you, if you will accept my warning, that you are in great danger, that the ramifications of your conspiracy are known to the Government, that your society is honeycombed with treachery, that your roll of membership contains the names of many spies."

"Is that all?" said Micah.

"No, sir, that is not all. I have a regard for your son. He has been the companion of my children. He has grown up at my feet. He has eaten at my table. I like him and I respect him. I beg of you to consider what the consequences will be for him if you drag him into this insane conspiracy. His name was along with yours on the list of seditious persons placed in my hands to-night. He has an hour or two ago incurred the anger--the dangerous anger--of a body of yeomen and their commander. I beg that you will consider his safety, and not take him with you on the way on which you are going."

"Neal," said Micah Ward, "is no more than a boy. He knows nothing about politics. What has my action to do with Neal?"

"His name," said Lord Dunseveric, "stood next to yours on the list of suspected persons which was put into my hands to-night."

"So be it," said Micah, solemnly! "if my son is to suffer, if he is to die, he can die no better than fighting for liberty against oppression."

"And I'm thinking," said Donald, "that you are going a bit too fast with your talk about dying. I've fought just such a fight as my brother is thinking of. I'm through with it now, and I'm not dead. By God, we saw to it that it was the other men who died. We won, sir. Mark my words, we won. It was the people that carried the day in America. They carried the day in France. What's to hinder us from carrying the day in Ireland, too?"

Lord Dunseveric looked at Donald during this speech and kept his eyes fixed upon him for some minutes afterwards. He was considering whether it was worth while replying to this boastful American Irishman. At last he turned again to Micah Ward.

"I have still one more appeal to make to you, Mr. Ward. You care for Ireland. Is it not so? I believe you do. Believe, me, I care for Ireland, too."

"Yes," said Micah, "you care for Ireland, but what do you mean by Ireland? You mean a bloodthirsty, supercilious, unprincipled ascendancy, for whom the public exists only as a prey to be destroyed, who keep themselves close and mark men's steps that they may lay in wait for them; who forge chains for their country, who distrust and belie the people, who scoff at the complaints of the poor and needy, and who impudently call themselves Ireland. You have made the sick and the lame to go out of their way. You have eaten the good pastures and trodden down the residue with your feet. You care for Ireland, and you mean by Ireland the powers and privileges of a class. I care for Ireland, but I mean Ireland, not for certain noblemen and gentlemen, but Ireland for the Irish people, for the poor as well as the rich, for the Protestant, Dissenter, and Roman Catholic alike."

"I have never denied, nor do I wish to deny, the need of reform," said Lord Dunseveric, "but I see before all the necessity of loyalty to the constitution."

"Ay, to the constitution which gives the whole power of the country to a few proud aristocrats, which excludes three-fourths of the people from its benefits, which allows eight hundred thousand Northerners to be insulted and trampled on because they speak of emancipation, which uses forced oaths, overflowing Bastilles and foreign troops for extorting the loyalty of the Irish people."

"I will not argue these things with you now," said Lord Dunseveric, "my time is short. I would rather pray you to consider what the end of your conspiracy must be. If you succeed, and I do not believe you can succeed, you will deluge the country in blood. If your best hopes are realised, and you receive the help you hope for from abroad, you will make Ireland the cockpit of a European war. Our commerce and manufactures, reviving under the fostering care of our own Irish Parliament, will be destroyed. Our fields, which none will dare to till, will be fouled with the dead bodies of our sons and daughters. But why should I complete the picture? If you fail--and you must fail--you will fling the country into the arms of England. Our gentry will be terrified, our commons will be cowed. Designing Englishmen will make an easy prey of us. They will take from us even the hard-earned measure of independence we already possess. We shall become, and we shall remain, a contemptible province of their Empire instead of a sovereign and independent

nation. The English are wise enough to see this, though you cannot see it. Man, *they want you to rebel.*"

"Is that all you have to say?" said Micah.

"That is all."

"Then I bid you farewell, Eustace St. Clair, Lord of Dunseveric. You have spoken well and pleaded speciously for yourself and your class. I might listen to you if I had not seen your armed ruffians break into our meeting-houses; if I had not in memory stories of burnt homesteads, outraged women, tortured men; you might persuade me if I did not know that to-night you have taken my friends, that you will drag them before unjust judges, and condemn them on the evidence of perjured informers, as you condemned William Orr. Human endurance can bear no more. Patience is a virtue of the Gospel, but it becomes cowardice in the face of certain wrongs. Go, I have done with you. Go, torture, burn, shed innocent blood, and then, like the adulterous woman, eat and wipe your mouth, and say 'I have done no wickedness.'"

"I came into your house on a mission of friendliness and mercy," said Lord Dunseveric. "I have been met with insults and lies, lies known to be lies to you who speak them. I go, and I pray that we shall meet no more until the day when, in the light of God's judgment, you will be able to see what is in my heart and understand what is in your own."

"Amen," said Micah Ward, "I bide the test."

Lord Dunseveric bowed and walked to the door of the room. Then he paused, turned, and held out his hand to Neal.

"You will stay with your father, Neal," he said. "I do not deny that you are right, but I will not part from you in unfriendliness. God keep you, boy, and remember, for old time's sake, for the sake of the days when you stood by my knee with my own children, you have always--whatever happens--always a friend in me."

Neal's eyes filled with tears. He could not speak. He carried Lord Dunseveric's hand to his lips, and then let it go reluctantly. He heard the door shut, the trampling of the horse's hoofs on the gravel outside. Then, with a sudden sob, which he could not repress, went across the room and sat down beside his father.

Donald alone remained cheerful and unimpressed.

"I know that kind of man," he said. "A fine kind it is. We had some of the same sort in America. They crossed the border afterwards to Canada. I suppose you mean to ship your aristocracy to England, Micah? From all I hear they like lords over there. But now to work. We can't afford to sit still while Master James Finlay is loose about the country with your letters in his pocket. We must get on his trail, Neal, you and I. We must hinder him from doing more mischief. The first thing we want is horses. Micah, where are we to get horses--two strong nags, fit for the road?"

Micah Ward sat silent and absorbed. His eyes were fixed on the wall in front of him. His lips moved, as if he were speaking, but no sound passed them. His hands on the table in front of him twitched. He was a prey to some violent emotion. Donald called him again, and again failed to arouse his attention. Then he turned to Neal.

"There's no use in trying to rouse your father, Neal. He will not hear us. Do you know anyone who will sell or hire us horses?"

"Rab MacClure has horses," said Neal. "He has two, I know. He lives not far from this, about a mile along the road towards Ballintoy."

"Come, then," said Donald, "I suppose the family will be all abed by this time. We must rouse them. There's Scripture warrant for it. 'Friend, lend me three loaves.' We must imitate the man in the Gospel. If he won't give us the horses for the asking we must weary him with importunity."

It was ten o'clock when Donald and his nephew set out. The clouds were blown away, and the sky clear. The moon rode high, and by its light they caught glimpses from the road of the white foam of the sea breaking on the dark strand below them. The roar of the waves came loud to them as they walked. A quarter of an hour's quick walking brought them to their destination.

"There's the house," said Neal.

"They are not in bed," said Donald, "I can see lights in the windows."

Neal led the way across a stile and over a field. Lights moved from one window to another in the house. A sound of wailing rose! and fell, mingling with the monotonous roar of the waves. The door stood wide open. Within, a woman rocked herself to and fro on a low stool. Three children clung to her petticoats and cried piteously. A farm labourer stood, stupidly motionless, beside the dresser. A maid servant, with a light in her hand, flitted restlessly in and out of the kitchen. Her hair hung loose about her shoulders. She was but half dressed, like one aroused suddenly from bed. A rush-light burned in an iron stand on the floor, shedding a feeble light. Donald and Neal stood at the door astonished.

"Our friends the yeomen have been here," said Donald. "I guess they have taken the man of the house away with them. We've another account to settle with James Finlay when we get him."

"Mistress MacClure," said Neal, "I've come to know if you will hire or sell us two horses. We must be travelling to-morrow morn."

"Horses," cried the woman. "Who speaks o' horses? I wouldna care if ye were to rive horse and beast and a' from me

now. My man's gone. Oh, my weans, my weans, who'll care for you now when they've kilt your da? Oh, the bonny man, and the kind!"

"Is it you, Master Neal?" said the farm servant. "Will you no fetch the minister till her?"

"I will, I will," said Neal, conscience-stricken at having mentioned his own need in a home so sorely stricken with grief. He ran from the house back to the manse.

Donald took the labourer outside the door and spoke to him. He explained that he was the minister's brother. He said that he had pressing need of the horses. He offered money. The man shook his head.

"They are no mine, and the mistress is in no way to bargain with you the night."

"I want the horses," said Donald, "to ride after the villain who betrayed your master."

The man's face brightened suddenly.

"Aye, and is that so? Why couldn't ye have tell't me that afore? Keep your money in your pouch. You'll have the horses in the morn. I'll take it on myself to give them to you. I'd like fine to be going along. But there's the mistress and the weans. I darena leave them, and I willna. There's na yin only me and the God that's above us all for her to look to now."

Micah Ward, followed by his son, hastened to the MacClure's house. He stood for a moment on the threshold, lifted his hat solemnly from his head, and invoked a blessing on the building and all in it. Then he went to the woman, took one of her hands in his, and spoke to her with wonderful tenderness.

"Bessie, my poor bairn. Harken to me, Bessie. Quit crying now, quit crying. Do you mind, Bessie, the day I was in with you and Rab away at Ballymoney? Do you mind how you said to me that every day you thanked God for the good husband he had given you? Do you mind that? Ah, woman, you mind it well. And you know rightly what the blessed book says to you--' The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.' Are you to receive good at the Lord's hand, my bairn, and not evil, too?"

He laid his hand upon her head and prayed aloud. The terrified maid stood still, her light in her hand, her hair in tangled strings, half covering her face. The labourer, Donald, and Neal stood together near the door. The children buried their heads in their mother's lap. Micah Ward poured out his very soul in supplication. Very literally it might be said that he wrestled with his God in prayer. It was in some such terms that he himself would have described the spiritual effort which he made. More than once, after a pause in his outpouring he repeated, in tones which were almost fierce in their determination, the words of Jacob to the angel--"I will not let you go until you bless me." For a long time he continued to pray, interrupted by no sound except an occasional bitter cry from Bessie MacClure. One after another the feeble lights flickered, guttered and went out. The room was in darkness. Through the open door came the long roaring of the sea. Within, Micah Ward's voice rose to passionate cries or sank to a tender whisper. Bessie MacClure's grief found utterance now only in half-choked sobs. At last even these ceased. Her hands ceased wandering over the curly heads of the children, asleep now with her lap for their pillow. She felt upwards along Micah Ward's coat. Her fingers crept along his sleeve, found his hand, pulled it down to her, and laid her cheek against it. He ceased to pray. The victory was won. He had, by sheer violence, dragged peace for a stricken soul from the closely-guarded treasury of the Lord of Sabaoth.

CHAPTER VI

Early next morning Donald Ward and Neal set forth on their journey. Rab MacClure's horses served them well. By breakfast time they reached Ballymoney. They sat in the inn kitchen while the woman of the house broiled salmon for them. She was full of excitement, and very ready to talk. The yeomen had ridden through the town the day before. They had stopped at her house to drink. The officer and some of the men had paid their score and ridden on. Ten of them remained behind, and demanded more drink. Tumblers were brought to them as they sat in their saddles. One of them had proposed a toast--"To hell with all Papists and Presbyterians."

"And that was no civil talk to use to me, when all the town knows that my man is an elder in the kirk."

But there was more to follow. The troopers had flung down the tumblers--"the bonny cut glasses that were fetched from Wexford"--and shattered them on the pavement of the courtyard. Then they rode off without paying a penny, and when the mistress cried after them one man came back with his sword drawn in his hand, and she was fain to flee and hide herself. But the story of her own wrongs did not quench the good dame's curiosity. She recognised Neal as the son of the minister in Dunseveric. It was towards Dunseveric that the yeomen had ridden. What did they do there? Had there been hanging work or burning--the like of what went on in other parts? Had they visited the minister's house? Did Neal see them?

Donald Ward was a talkative man, and somewhat given to boasting; but, apart from the fact that the business of the night before gave him little excuse for glorying, he had plenty of sound sense--too much sense to gossip with the mistresses of inns about serious business. He signed to Neal to keep silent, and himself parried the shower of questions so adroitly that his hostess got no information from him. She tired at last, and with a show of disappointed temper, put the salmon on the table.

"There's your fish for you," she said, "and fadge and oaten farles, and if you want more you'd better show some civility to the woman that does for you."

She left the room, and stood, her hands on her hips, staring into the street.

"We're well rid of her tongue," said Donald.

Before the travellers' appetites were half satisfied she was with them again. She ran into the kitchen with every sign of terror in her face.

"They're coming," she said. "I seen them coming round MacCance's corner, and they have men with them and led horses. I seen them plain, and one of them is Rab MacClure, of Ballintoy. Away with you, Neal Ward, away with you. I'm thinking that them that has Rab MacClure and his feet tied under the horse's belly will be no friends of your father's or yours."

Donald Ward rose to his feet and stretched himself.

"The woman's right, Neal." He showed no signs of hurry in his speech. "I'm thinking it will be safer for us to be out of this. Here, mistress, what's the reckoning?"

"Not a penny, not a penny, will I take. Are them murdering devils to drink without paying and me taking money from the son of Micah Ward or any friend of his? But for God's sake get you gone. I'll keep them dandering about the door for a while, and do you get your horses and out by the back way into the field. You can strike the road again lower down."

It was late in the evening when Donald and Neal, with weary horses and wearier limbs, came close to Antrim. Neal was unused to riding long distances, and Donald complained that a voyage across the Atlantic left a man unfit for land travelling. They accosted a stranger on the road and asked his guidance to the best inn. The man answered them in a civil way. He spoke with a northern accent, but his voice was singularly sweet and gentle, and his words were those of a cultured man.

"I am on my way to the Massereene Arms," he said. "I think you will find the accommodation good both for yourselves and your horses."

He walked with them, chatting about the weather and the condition of the roads. He said that he himself had that day walked from Ballymena, and intended to spend the night in Antrim. He asked no questions and seemed in no way concerned with the affairs of his chance acquaintances.

Donald and Neal took their horses to the inn yard and saw them rubbed down, stabled, and fed. Then they entered the public room of the inn, sat down, and ordered their supper. The man who had guided them to the door sat at a corner of the table eating a frugal meal of bread and cheese. Beside his tumbler stood a large jug of buttermilk. In a few minutes he rose from the table and took his seat on a bench near the fire, where the light from a lamp, which hung on the wall, fell on him. He drew a notebook from his pocket, and proceeded to write in it, referring from time to time to scraps of paper, of which he seemed to have a large number. He was a man of middle height, of a spare frame, which showed no sign of great personal strength, but was well knit, and might easily have been capable of great endurance.

His face was thin and narrow. He had very dark hair, and dark, gentle eyes. There was a suggestion about the mouth of the kind of strength which often goes with gentleness.

To Neal the appearance of the man was not very interesting. He watched him in mere idleness while waiting for the girl to bring the supper Donald had ordered. If there had been anyone else in the room Neal would not have wasted a second glance on the unobtrusive stranger. Yet, as he watched the man he became aware of something about him which was attractive. There was a dignity in his movements quite different from Donald Ward's habitual self-assertion, different, too, from the stately confidence of Lord Dunseveric. There was a quiet seriousness in the way he set to work at his writing, and a methodical carefulness in his sorting of the scraps of paper which he drew one by one from his pocket. The maid entered with the wine and food which Donald had ordered.

"You'll be for beds, the night," she said.

"Ay," said Donald, "and do you see that the feathers are well shaken and the beds soft. If you'd ridden all the miles I've ridden to-day, my girl, after not being on the back of a horse for three months, you'd want a soft bed to lie on."

The stranger looked up from his notebook. There was laughter in his dark eyes, but it went no further than his eyes. His lips showed no inclination to smile.

Another man entered the room—a burly, strong man. He wore top boots, as if he had been riding. He looked like a well-to-do farmer. He gave no order to the girl, but walked straight to where the dark-eyed stranger sat. Greetings passed between them, and then talk in a low voice. Both of them looked at Donald and Neal. Then, beckoning to the girl, the stranger asked if he could be accommodated with a private room. The girl nodded, and went to prepare one. Donald Ward finished his supper, rose, stretched himself, yawned, and then drawing a stool near the fire, sat down and filled his pipe. Neal, interested to watch the evening street traffic in a strange town, climbed on to the deep sill of the window and pushed the lattice open. A blind piper sat on a stone bench outside the inn and played a reel for some boys and girls who danced on the road. A horseman—a handsomely-dressed man and well mounted—rode slowly up the street towards Lord Massereene's demesne. One of the dancers crossed his way and caused the horse to shy. The rider cut at the girl with his whip. An angry growl followed the retreating figure. The piper stopped playing for a minute and listened. His face wore that eager look of strained attention which is seen often on the faces of the blind. He began to play again, and this time his tune was the "Ca Ira." It was well-known to his audience and its significance was understood. Several voices began to hum it in unison with the pipes. More voices joined, and in a minute or two the little crowd was shouting the tune. A grave, elderly man, in the dark dress and white bands of a clergyman, stepped out of a house opposite the inn and approached the piper. The dancers and the onlookers stopped singing and saluted him respectfully. He spoke to the piper.

"Don't be playing that tune, Phelim. Play your reel again. There's trouble where those French tunes are played. It was so in Belfast a while ago. We want no riot in Antrim nor dragoons in our streets."

"I'm thinking," said the blind man, "that it's the voice of Mr. Macartney, the Rector of Antrim, that I'm listening to. Well, reverend sir, I'll stop my tune at your bidding. Not because you're a magistrate, nor yet because you're a great man, but just for the sake of the letter you wrote to save William Orr from being hanged."

The pipes gave a long wail and were silent. Then another man came up the street. Neal could not see his face, for his hat was slouched over it, but the sound of his voice reached the open window.

"What's this, boys? What's this? Which of you is it bids the piper stop his tune? It's only cowards and Orangemen that don't like that tune."

The voice struck Neal as one that he had heard before, but he could not recollect where he had heard it. He leaned out of the window to hear better.

The clergyman stepped out into the road and confronted the newcomer.

"It was I who bid the piper stop that tune. What have you to say to me?"

The other approached him swaggering, then hesitated, stood still, took off his hat, and held it in his hand.

"Oh, nothing to you, nothing at all, Mr. Macartney. I did not know you were here. Indeed, you were quite right to stop the man. As for what I said, I beg you to forget it. It was nothing but a joke, a little joke of mine."

He bowed and cringed. He spoke in a deprecating whine, very different from the blustering tone he had used before. Neal's interest in the scene before him became suddenly very acute. He was almost certain now that he recognised the voice. The whining tone brought back to him the night when he had interfered with James Finlay's salmon poaching. The voice was, he felt sure of it, Finlay's voice. He drew back quickly, and from within the window watched Finlay pass through the inn door. He heard his steps in the passage, heard him open the door of the room in which the travellers were gathered. Neal shrank back into the shadow of the window seat and watched.

Finlay swaggered across the floor and then paused and looked at Donald Ward, who smoked his pipe in the chimney corner. Then he turned to the other two.

"I don't know this gentleman," he said. "Is he----?"

He paused, his eyebrows elevated, his face expressing significant interrogation. Neal saw him plainly in the lamp light. He had not been mistaken in the voice. It was James Finlay. The man who had guided them to the inn rose without speaking and led the way to the private room which the maid had prepared for his reception. Neal jumped down from his seat and approached his uncle.

"Uncle Donald," he said, "that was James Finlay, the man we are looking for."

Donald took his pipe out of his mouth and looked hard at Neal.

"Are you quite sure?" he said. "It won't do to be making a mistake in a job of this sort."

"I'm quite sure."

Donald replaced his pipe in his mouth and puffed hard at it for some minutes. Then he said--

"You don't know either of the other two, I suppose? No. Well it can't be helped. It would have been convenient if we had known. They may be honest men or they may be another pair of spies. I think I'll try and find out something about them. Do you stay here, Neal, and watch. Let me know if any of the three of them leave the house. I'll go down the passage to the tap-room. I'll drink a glass or two, and I'll see what information I can pick up. You see, my boy, if the other two are honest men we ought to warn them of our suspicions about Finlay. If they are spies we ought to know their names and warn somebody else. Any way, keep your eye on Finlay, and let me know if he stirs."

A sensation of horror crept over Neal when his uncle left him. He realised that he was hunting a fellow-creature, that the hunt might end at any moment in the taking of human life. In Dunseveric Manse, while the anger which the yeomen's blows and bonds had raised in him was awake, while the enormity of Finlay's treachery was still fresh in his mind, it seemed natural and right that the spy should be killed. Now, when he had seen the man swagger down the street, when he had just watched him cringe and apologize, when he had sat within a few feet of him, it seemed a ghastly and horrible thing to track and pursue him for his life. A cold sweat bathed his limbs. His hands trembled. He sat on the stool near the fire shivering with cold and fear. He listened intently. It was growing late, and the piper had stopped playing in the street. The boys and girls who danced had gone home. There were voices of passers by, but these grew rarer. Now and then there was the trampling of a horse's hoofs on the road as some belated traveller from Belfast pushed fast for home. A murmur of voices came to him from the interior of the inn, he supposed from the tap-room to which his uncle had gone, but he could hear nothing of what was said. Once the girl who had served his supper came in and told him that his bed was ready if he cared to go to it. Neal shook his head. Gradually he became drowsy. His eyes closed. He nodded. Then the very act of nodding awoke him with a start. He blamed himself for having gone near to sleeping at his post, for being neglectful of the very first duty imposed on him. The horror of the watch he was keeping returned on him. He felt that he was like a murderer lurking in the dark for some unsuspecting victim. For Finlay had no thought that he was distrusted, discovered, tracked. Then, to steel himself against pity, he let his mind go back over the events of the previous night. He thought of the scene in the MacClures' cottage, of the heart-broken woman, of her husband riding with the brutal troopers to a trial without justice and a death without pity. He felt with his hand the blood caked on his own cheek, the scab on the cut where the yeoman had struck him. He remembered Una's shriek and the Comtesse's frantic struggles as the soldiers dragged them from their hiding-place. Of his own rush to their rescue he remembered little save the momentary delight of feeling his fists get home on the men's faces.

He had nerved himself now with memories and conquered his qualms. He felt that it would be easy work and pleasant to drag James Finlay to earth and trample the life out of him. The thought of the insults of the brutal men who held Una and his own impotent struggles with the belt which bound him made him fierce enough. But the mood passed. His mind reverted to the subject which had never, all day, been far from his thoughts. He recalled each detail of his walk back to Dun-severic with Una, her words of praise for his bravery, the resting of her hand in his as they crossed stiles and ditches, the times when it rested in his hand longer than it need have rested, the great moment when he had ventured to clasp and keep it fast. He thrilled as he recollected holding her in his arms, the telling of his love, and Una's wonderful reply to him. Emotion flooded him. Una loved him as he loved her. The future was impossible, unthinkable. At the best of times he could not hope that proud Lord Dunseveric would consent to let him marry Una; and now, of all times, now, when he was engaged in a dangerous conspiracy, pledged to a fight which he felt already to be hopeless; when he had the hangman's ladder to look forward to, or, at best, the life of a hunted outlaw and exile to some foreign land; what could he expect now to come of his love for Una? His mind refused to dwell on such thoughts for long. It went back to the simple fact, the glorious, incredible thing which he had learned. Una loved him. That was sufficient for him then. He was happy.

The door of a room somewhere within the house closed noisily. There were footsteps on the stairs and then in the passage. Neal was alert. He quenched the light which hung on the wall and stood in the darkness looking out of the door. He saw three men pass him--James Finlay and the other two. They stood at the street door speaking last words in low voices. Neal sped down the passage to the tap-room. His uncle sat in a cloud of tobacco smoke, with a tumbler in his hand. Round him was gathered a knot of admirers, most of them somewhat tipsy. Donald was telling them stories of the American war. At the sight of Neal he rose quickly and laid down his tumbler. It was evident that he, at least, had

drunk no more than he could stand.

"Well, has he moved?" he whispered.

"Yes," said Neal. "He and the second man are going. They had their hats on and were bidding good night to the first, the man who brought us here."

Donald left the tap-room quickly. The street door closed, and in the passage he found himself face to face with the gentle-mannered traveller whom he had accosted in the street.

"I think," said Donald, "that I have the honour of addressing Mr. Hope."

"James Hope," said the other, "or Jemmy Hope. I am but a weaver, a simple man. I take no pride in the titles men give each other."

"James Hope," said Donald, "I've heard of you, and I've heard of you as an honest man. I reckon there's no title higher than that one. I think, sir, that you have a room at your disposal in this house. May I speak with you there? I have matters of some importance."

James Hope turned without a word and led the way upstairs to a small room. Three candles stood on the table. There were also tumblers and an empty whisky bottle. It was noticeable that there were only two tumblers. James Hope had not been drinking. Donald walked over to the table and blew out one of the candles.

"I'm not more superstitious than other men," he said, "but I won't sit in the room with three candles burning. It's damned unlucky."

Again, as earlier in the public room, Neal thought that James Hope was going to laugh. But again the laughter got no further than his eyes.

"Now," said Donald, "if you've no objection, I'll have a fresh bottle on the table and some clean glasses. You know this inn, James Hope, what's their best drink?"

"I have but a poor head," said Hope. "I drink nothing but water. But I believe that the whisky is good enough."

"Neal, my boy," said Donald, "the wench that bought us our supper is gone to bed, and the landlord's too drunk to carry anything upstairs. You go and fill the jug there with hot water in the kitchen, and I'll get some whisky from the taproom."

Donald filled himself a glass with a generous proportion of spirit, and lit his pipe again.

"I've a letter here, addressed to you," he said.

He fumbled in his breast pocket, drew forth a leather case, and took from it one of the letters which Micah Ward had written. James Hope read it carefully.

"You are," he said, "the Donald Ward mentioned in this letter, and you are Neal Ward, the son of a man whom we all respect and admire. I bid you welcome."

He held out his hand, first to Donald, who shook it heartily, and then to Neal. He fixed his dark eyes on the young man's face, and looked long and steadily at him. Neal's eyes wavered and dropped before this earnest scrutiny, which seemed to read his very thoughts.

"God bless you and keep you, my boy," said James Hope. "You are the son of a brave man. I doubt not that you will be a brave man, too, brave in a good cause."

Donald Ward seemed a little impatient at this long scrutiny of Neal and the speech which followed. He took several gulps of whisky and water and blew clouds of tobacco smoke. He cleared his throat noisily and said.

"You'll be satisfied, James Hope, by the letter I've given you that we are men to be trusted?"

"God forbid else," said Hope. "Whom should we trust if not the brother and son of Micah Ward?"

"Then I'll come straight to the point," said Donald. "Who were the two men that were with you just now?"

"The one of them," said Hope, "was Aeneas Moylin, a Catholic, and a friend of Charlie Teeling. He's a man that has done much to bring the Defender boys from County Down and Armagh into the society. He has a good farm of land near by Donegore."

"And the other?"

"The other you ought to know, Neal Ward. He's from Dunseveric. His name's James Finlay."

"I do know him," said Neal, "but I don't trust him."

"He came to me," said Hope, "with a letter from your father, like the letter you bring yourself. I have trusted him a great deal."

"Trust him no more, then," said Donald, "the man's a spy. My brother was deceived in him."

"These are grave words you speak," said Hope. "Can you make them good?"

Donald told the story of the raid on the Dunseveric meeting-house. He dwelt on the fact that only five or six people knew of the buried cannon, that of these, only one, James Finlay, had left Dunseveric, that Neal Ward's name had

appeared on the list of suspected persons, though Neal had hitherto taken no part and had no knowledge of the doings of the United Irishmen; that his name must have been given to the authorities by some one who had a private spite against him; that James Finlay, and he alone of the people of Dunseveric, had any cause to seek revenge on Neal.

"It's a case of suspicion," said James Hope, "of heavy suspicion, but you've not proven that the man's a traitor."

"No," said Donald, "it's not proven. I know that well, but the man ought to be trusted no more until his character is cleared. He ought to be tried and given a chance of defending himself."

James Hope sat silent. His fingers pushed back the lock of dark hair which hung over his forehead. His face grew stern, and there was a look of determination in his dark eyes. A frown gathered in deep wrinkles on his forehead. At last he spoke.

"You are on your way to Belfast. I shall give you a letter to Felix Matier, who keeps the inn with the sign of Dumouriez in North Street. You will find him easily. His house is a common meeting-place for members of the society. I shall tell him to have a careful watch kept on Finlay, and to communicate with you."

"I'll deal with the man," said Donald, "as soon as I have anything more than suspicion to go on."

"Deal uprightly, deal justly," said Hope. "Ours is a sacred cause. It may be God's will that we are to be victorious, or it may be written in His book that we shall fail. He alone knows the issue. But, either way, our hands must not be stained with crime. We must do justly, aye, and love mercy when mercy can be shown without imperilling the lives of innocent men."

"Traitors must be dealt with as traitors are in all civilised States," said Donald.

"Ay, truly, when we are sure that they are traitors."

"I shall make sure," said Donald, "and then----"

"Then-----," Hope sighed deeply. "Then---- you are right. There is no help for it. But remember, Donald Ward, that you and I must answer for our actions before the judgment seat of God. Remember, also, that our names and our deeds will be judged by posterity. We must not shrink from stern necessities laid upon us. But let us not give the enemy an excuse to brand us as assassins in the time to come."

"God damn it, man, you speak to me as if you thought me a hired murderer. I take such language from no man living, and from you no more than another, James Hope. You shall answer for your words and your insinuations."

Donald stood up as he spoke. His face was deeply flushed. He had drunk heavily during the evening. Even the best men, the leaders of every class and section of society drank heavily in those days. He was an exceptional man who always went to bed in full possession of his senses. Donald Ward was no worse than his fellows. But the man whom he challenged was one of the few for whom the wine bottle had no attractions. He was also one of those--rare in any age--who had learnt the mastery of self, whom no words, even insulting words, can drive beyond the limits of their patience.

"If I have spoken anything which hurts or vexes you, Donald Ward, I am sorry for it. I had no wish to do so. Comrades in a great enterprise must not quarrel with each other. I offer you my hand in token that I do not think of you as anything but an honourable man."

"Spoken like a gentleman," said Donald, grasping the outstretched hand. "Enough said, you have satisfied me that you meant no insult. A gentleman can do no more."

"I am not what they call a gentleman," said James Hope, "I am only a poor weaver with no claim to any such title."

CHAPTER VII

At breakfast the next morning James Hope spoke again about Finlay.

"The man went home last night with Aeneas Moylin. I think that I ought to go to Donegore to-day and tell Aeneas of our suspicions. I had intended to go straight to Templepatrick, and I might have had your company so far, but it will certainly be better for me to go round by Donegore."

Donald Ward nodded.

"I shall not see Finlay himself," said Hope. "He was to leave early this morning for Belfast. You must ride fast to be there before him."

He paused. Then, after a moment's thought, he said:

"I should like to have Neal with me, if you can spare him, Donald Ward, if you do not object to riding alone."

"I am sure," said Donald, "that Neal will benefit much more by your company than mine. He can join me in Belfast this evening."

This was Donald's apology, his confession of contrition for the rough language of the night before; his confession that in James Hope he had met a man who was his superior.

"So be it," said Hope. "I shall not propose to you, Neal, that we ride and tie as the custom of the country is for travellers who have only one horse between them. You shall lead the horse, and so we shall be able to talk to each other."

Neal agreed to the plan gladly. He was greatly attracted by James Hope, and glad to spend some hours with him.

The girl came running into the room, her face flushed with excitement.

"Come, come," she cried, "the soldiers are riding down the street in their braw red coats. Oh, the bonny men and the bonny horses!"

The three travellers went to the door of the inn. Four companies of dragoons were passing through the town at a trot. It was Neal's first view of any considerable body of troops. He stared at them, fascinated by the jingling and clattering of their accoutrements. These were very different from the yeomen he had seen at Dunseveric. Everything about them, the uniformity of their appearance, the condition of their arms and horses, the regularity of their march, expressed the fact that they were highly disciplined men. Donald Ward smiled grimly as he watched them.

"There are the men we've got to beat," he said. "Fine fellows, eh, Neal? They look as if they could sweep you and me and Jemmy Hope here, and a crowd like us, out of their way; but I've seen men in those same pretty clothes glad enough to turn their backs on troops no better organised nor drilled than ours will be."

"Poor fellows!" said Hope "poor fellows! Paid to fight and die in quarrels which are not their own. To fight for their masters, that their masters may grow rich and great. And yet they are of the people, too. It is just starvation, or the fear of it, that led them to enlist."

"Where are they going now?" asked Neal.

"To Belfast," said Hope. "I heard that the garrison there was deemed insufficient and that a fresh regiment of dragoons had been ordered in from Derry."

"Look at them well, Neal," said Donald. "Look at them so that you'll know them when you next see them. You'll meet them again before long."

James Hope and Neal started on their walk soon after the dragoons had passed. Just outside the town they turned aside to view the round tower, the most famous of the buildings of its kind in the north.

"None knows," said Hope, "who built these towers, or why, but it seems certain to me that they were built by men with lofty thoughts, by men who looked upward rather than to the earth. Some say that it was to other gods they looked up and not to the true God. What does it matter? Their hearts, like their towers, rose clear of earthly hamperings and reached towards heaven."

He asked Neal many questions about his way of life and education, about the books he had read, and the periods of history he found specially interesting.

"I had no such opportunities when a boy," said Hope, "as you have had. I am a self-educated man. I never had but fifteen months of schooling in my life. What little knowledge I have I gained with great difficulty."

This surprised Neal, for it seemed to him that he had never talked to anyone who possessed more of that sweetness and wide reasonableness of outlook upon life which ought to be the end of education. He tried to express something of what he felt, but Hope stopped him and turned the talk into other channels.

At Farranshane Hope bade him stand still and look at a farmhouse which stood a little back from the road.

"It was there," he said, "that William Orr lived. His widow and weans are there now. You know the story, Neal?"

"I know it; yes, I know the outlines of it. Do you tell it to me again."

Hope repeated the story, which in those days hardly needed telling among the Antrim peasants, of the man whose name had become a watchword; so that men, seeking to revive failing enthusiasms, said to each other--"Remember Orr." It was a pitiful tale; a man marked down as odious by a powerful faction, spied upon, informed against, tried by prejudiced judges, condemned on the word of false witnesses, hanged. The same tale might have been told of many another then, but William Orr came first on the list of such martyrs, and even now his name is not wholly forgotten.

They reached Donegore. Moylin's house--a comfortable, two-storeyed building, built of large blocks of stone--stood on the side of the steep hill, near the old church and the graveyard. Hope, bidding Neal wait for him on the roadside, entered the house. In about a quarter of an hour he returned.

"It is as I thought," he said. "Finlay left early this morning after arranging for a meeting of the United Irishmen here next week. Well, there is no more to be done for the present. I have warned Moylin to be careful. Come and let me show you the ancient fort from which the parish takes its name and the view from it."

"This," said Hope, when they stood at last on the top of the great rath, "is my Pisgah. From this I have looked many a time over the land. See, west, south, east of you, how it spreads, rich, beautiful, from the shores of Lough Neagh to the shores of Belfast Lough and the sea of Moyle. Here great men, warriors of the past, had their hill-top burial, and it may be fixed their fortress home. From this they looked over the country which they took and held by strength of arm and courage of soul. Are we a meaner race, men of a poorer spirit? Shall we not enter in and possess the land in our turn? All over the world the voice of liberty is heard now, clear and strong, bidding the people assert themselves and claim right and justice. Are our ears alone deaf to the high call? Has the pursuit of riches dulled our souls? Is the clink of gold and silver so loud in our ears that we can hear nothing else?"

They descended the grassy sides of the old fort, walked down the steep lane from Moylin's house, and joined the road again. Turning to the right, they went under the shade of fine trees which reached their branches over the road from the demesne in which they grew.

"The big house in there," said Hope, "belongs to one of the landlord families of this county. It has been their's for generations. On the lawn in front of that house a company of Volunteers used to meet for drill. The owner of the house, the lord of the soil, was their captain. In those days we had all Ireland united--the landlords, the merchants, and the farming people. Now it is not so. Our landlords won then what they wanted--freedom and power. They have ruled Ireland since 1782. The merchants and manufacturers also won what they chiefly wanted--the opportunity of fair and free trade. They have grown rich, and are every year growing richer. They bid fair to make Ireland a great commercial nation--what she ought to be, the link between the Old World and the New. But both the landlords and the traders have been selfish. Having gained the object of their desires, they are unwilling to share either power or riches with the people. They have refused to consider reasonable measures of reform. They have goaded and harried us until----"

He ceased speaking and sighed.

"But," he went on, "they will not be able to keep either their power or their riches. In refusing to trust the people they are ensuring their own doom. They forget that there is a power greater than theirs--that England is continually on the watch to win back again her sovereignty over Ireland. Our upper class and our middle class are too jealous of their privileges to share them with us. They will give England the opportunity she wants. Then Ireland will be brought into the old subjection, and her advance towards prosperity will be checked again as it was checked before. She will become a country of haughty squireens--the most contemptible class of all, men of blackened honour and broken faith, men proud, but with nothing to be proud of--and of ruined traders; a land of ill-cultivated fields and ruined mills; a nation crushed by her conqueror."

Neal listened attentively. It was curious that the fear to which James Hope gave expression was the very same which he had heard from Lord Dun-severic. Each dreaded England. Each saw that out of the turmoil of contemporary politics would come the restoration of the English power over Ireland. But Lord Dunseveric blamed the schemes of the United Irishmen. James Hope blamed the selfishness of the upper classes. Neal tried to explain to his companion what he understood of Lord Dunseveric's opinions.

James Hope broke in on him, interrupting him.

"But the people are slaves, actually slaves, not a whit better. Are nine-tenths of the people to be slaves to one-tenth? The thing is unendurable. Look at the Catholics in the south, men without representation, without power, without direct influence; men marked with a brand of inferiority because of their religion. Look at the men of our own faith here in the north. Our case is not wholly so bad, but it is bad enough. We have asked, petitioned, begged, implored, for the removal of our grievances. If we are men we must do more--we must strike for them. Else we confess ourselves unworthy of the freedom which we claim. They alone are fit for liberty who dare to fight for liberty. Think of it, Neal Ward, think. It is we, the people, digging in the fields, toiling at the looms, it is we who make the riches, who win the good fruit from the hard ground, who weave the thread into the precious fabric. And we are denied a share in what we create. It is from us in the last resort that the power of the governing classes comes. If we had not taken arms in our hands at their bidding, if we had not stood by them, no English Minister would ever have yielded to their demands, and

given them the power which they enjoy. And they will not give us the smallest part of what we won for them. 'What inheritance have we in Judah? Now see to thine own house, David. To your tents, O Israel!'"

James Hope's voice rose. His eyes flashed. His whole face was enlightened with enthusiasm as he spoke. Neal listened, awed. Here was the devotion to the cause of suffering and oppressed men, the spirit which had produced revolution, which had begotten from the womb of humanity pure and noble men, which had, in the violence of its self-assertion, deluged cities with blood and defiled a great cause with dreadful deeds. He had no answer to make, and for a long while they walked in silence.

Reaching Templepatrick, Hope took Neal to the house of John Birnie, a hand-loom weaver, a cousin of his own. They were welcomed by the woman of the house and given a share of a meal which even to Neal, brought up as he had been without luxury in his father's manse, seemed poor and meagre. But no thought of the hardness of their fare seemed to trouble the mind of the weaver and his wife. Theirs was the kind of hospitality which disdains apology or pretence. They gave of their best. There was no more that they could do. Also, it was evident that the tickling of the palate with food, or the filling of the belly with delicate things was not a matter of much importance to these people. Living hard and toilsome lives, they had the constant companionship of lofty thoughts. They felt as James Hope did, and spoke like him.

Neal lingered so long in the company of these new friends that it was far on in the afternoon when he started on his ride, and late in the evening when he arrived in the outskirts of Belfast. It was his first visit to the town, and he approached it with feelings of interest and curiosity. Riding down the long hill by which the road from Templepatrick approaches Greencastle on the way to the town, he was able to gaze over the waters of the lough which lay stretched beneath him on his left. In the Carrickfergus roads several ships lay at anchor, among them a frigate of the English navy. Pinnaces and small craft plied between them and the shore, or headed for the entrance of Belfast Harbour by the tortuous channel worn through mud and sand by the Lagan. Below him, by the sea, were the handsome houses which the richer class of merchants were already beginning to build for themselves on the shores of the lough. Between Cammoney and Belfast he passed the bleach greens of the linen weavers, where the long webs of the cloth, for which Belfast was afterwards to become famous, lay white or yellow on the grass. On his right rose the rugged sides of the Cave Hill. High above its rocks towered MacArt's fort, where Wolfe Tone, M'Cracken, Samuel Neilson, and his new friend, James Hope, with others, had sworn the oath of the United Irishmen. They had separated far from each other since the day of their swearing, but each in his own way--Tone among the intrigues of Continental politics, M'Cracken in Belfast, Neilson and Hope among the Antrim peasantry--had kept the oath and would keep it until the end.

Entering the town, he passed the recently-erected poorhouse and infirmary, a building designed with a curious spacious generosity, as were the buildings in Dublin and elsewhere which Irishmen erected during the short day of their national independence. In Donegall Street he saw the new church--Ann's Church, as the people called it--thinking rather of the lady of Lord Donegall, who interested herself in its building, than the Mother of the Virgin in whose honour good Protestants were little likely to build a church. But the classic portico and tall tower did not hold his attention long. He could not but notice that there was an air of anxious excitement in the demeanour of the citizens who passed him in the street. They were all hurrying one way, making from one direction or another for the side street whose entrance faced the church. Neal accosted one or two, but received either no answer or words uttered so hurriedly that he could not catch their import. Determined at length to get some intelligible reply to his questions, he pulled his horse across the path of an elderly gentleman of respectable appearance.

"Will you tell me," he said, "the way to North Street? I am a stranger in your town."

"And if you are a stranger you will do well to keep out of North Street the night."

"But I seek a house of entertainment to which I have been directed--Felix Matier's inn at the sign of Dumouriez."

"Who are you, young man, who seek that house? They say----. But let me pass, let me pass. I am the secretary of William Bristow, the sovereign of Belfast, and I must see for myself, I must see for myself what these incarnate devils of dragoons are doing in our streets."

"I will not let you pass," said Neal, "till you give me a civil answer to my question. I think you citizens of Belfast are as uncivil as men say you are, and are all gone mad to-night that you will not direct a stranger on his way."

"A wilful man, a wilful man. Follow me. Or, let me lay my hand on your bridle. The crowd gathers fast. It may be that your horse, if I keep by it, will enable me to push my way through. But blame me not if you come by a broken head through your wilfulness."

Neal's guide, the sovereign's pousy and excited secretary, led the horse down the side street, along which the people were hurrying. Suddenly the crowd hesitated, stopped, began to surge back again. Neal, standing up in his stirrups, saw that the end of the narrow street along which he rode was blocked by another crowd, which fled into it from a larger thoroughfare beyond. There was much trampling and pushing and shouting. Neal's guide, clinging desperately to the horse's bridle, was borne back. The horse began to plunge. This was too much for the old gentleman. He loosed his grip.

"Go on," he said, "go on if you can, young man. That's the North Street in front of you."

The reason for the crowd's flight became obvious. A number of dragoons, dismounted, half-clothed, and apparently free from all discipline, came rushing down North Street. As they swept past the entrance of the side street Neal had a clear view of them over the heads of the crowd. In a moment they had passed out of sight again, but the moment was enough. Running with the soldiers, his arm gripped by a dragoon, but running with his own free will, was James Finlay. Neal was stung to fury by the sight of this man. He had no doubt at all now that he had to do with a traitor. He drove his heels against his horse's side, lashed at the creature's flanks with his rod, and fairly forced his way through the cursing, shouting crowd into North Street.

At the far end of the street he saw the dragoons raging and rioting round a house which stood a storey higher than any other near it. The whole length of the street lay almost empty before him. The soldiers had effectually cleared a way for themselves. He rode towards the scene of the riot. He saw that two civilians were defending the front of the house against the soldiers. They fought with sticks, and Neal recognised one of them as his uncle, Donald Ward. Before he could reach them they were forced into the house, and followed indoors by some of the dragoons. James Finlay had disappeared. Neal hesitated and stopped, uncertain what to do. Some of the soldiers placed a ladder against the wall. One of them mounted, with a sledge hammer in his hand, and battered at the iron supports which held a signboard to the wall. The iron bars bent under his blows, the holdfasts were torn from the wall, and the painted board fell into the street. A yell of triumph greeted the fall. The soldiers stamped on the board with their heavy boots and hacked at it with their swords. Then another man mounted the ladder with a splintered fragment in his hand. He whirled it round his head, and flung it far down the street.

"There's for the rebelly sign," he shouted. "There's for Dumouriez! There's the way we treat damned French and Irish croppies."

The crowd, which had gathered courage and followed Neal down the street, answered him with a groan and a volley of stones. The man sprang from the ladder, called to his comrades, and in a moment the dragoons drew together and, their swords in their hands, charged the crowd. Neal's horse, terrified by the shouting, became unmanageable. Neal flung himself to the ground, staggered, was knocked down and trampled on, first by the flying people, then by the soldiers who pursued them. He rose when the rush was over. The street around him was empty again. The fragments of the shattered signboard lay around. The windows of the house that had been attacked were all broken, either by the stones of the people or the blows of the soldiers. There was a sound of fighting within the house. Neal ran towards the door. A woman's shriek reached him, and a moment later a soldier came out of the door dragging a girl with him. He had a wisp of her hair gathered in his hand, and he pulled at it savagely. The girl stumbled on the doorstep, fell, was dragged a pace or two, staggered to her feet, clutched at the soldier's hand and fastened her teeth in his wrist. Neal sprang forward at the man's throat, grasped it, and, by the sheer impetus of his spring, bore the dragoon to the ground. He was conscious of being uppermost in the fall, of the fierce struggling of the man he held, of the girl tearing with her hands and writhing in the effort to free her hair, of shouting near at hand, of a rush of men from the house. Then he received a blow on the head which stunned him. He awoke to consciousness a few minutes later, and heard his uncle's voice.

"Is the girl inside and the man? Have you got him? Then for the door. They'll hardly venture into the house again after the reception we gave them. It was a mighty nice fight while it lasted. Now a light, a light. Let us see if anyone's hurt."

Someone brought a light. Neal tried to rise, but was too giddy. The girl whom the soldier had dragged into the street stood beside him. Her hair--bright red hair--hung about her shoulders. Her dress was in tatters, she was spitting blood, and wiping it off her mouth with the back of her hand.

"Hullo, Meg, Peg, whatever your name is," said Donald Ward, "you're bleeding. Where are you cut? Let me see to it?"

"Thon's no my blood," said the girl. "It's his. I got my teeth intil him. Ay, faith, it's his blood that I'm spitting out of my mouth. I did hear tell that it was black blood was in the likes of him, but I see now it's red enough. I'm glad of it, for I've swallowed a gill of it since I gripped his wrist, and I wouldna' like to swallow poison."

"Well, then, Peg, my wench, since you're not hurt, let's take a look at the man that helped you. He's lying there mighty quiet. I'm afraid there's some harm done to him."

Donald Ward took the light and bent over Neal.

"By God," he said, "it's Neal, and he's hurt or killed."

"It's all right," said Neal, feebly, "I'm only dizzy. I got a bang on the head. I'll be all right in a minute."

"Matier," said Donald, "come and help me with the boy. I must get him to bed. Where can I put him?"

"There's not a room in the house with a whole pane of glass in the window," said Felix Matier, "except my own. It looks out on the back, and the villains never came at it. We'll take him there. I'll lift his shoulders, and go first."

He approached Neal and was about to lift him when the girl pushed him aside and stooped over Neal herself.

"Come now, what's the meaning of this, Peg Macllrea? Are you so daft with your fighting that you hustle your master aside?"

"Master or no master," said Peg, "you'll not carry him. It was for me that he got hurted, and it's me that'll carry him."

She put her arms under Neal and lifted him. He was a big man, but she carried him up a flight of stairs and laid him on her master's bed. The long matted tresses of her red hair hung over his face, and an occasional drop of the blood which still dripped from her fell on him. Donald Ward and Matier followed her.

"Let's have a look at him," said Donald. "Ah! here's a scalp wound and a cut on the head the length of my finger. This must be seen to. Run, Peg, get me linen and a basin of cold water. It must have been a boot did this. A kick from one of the rascally dragoons as they passed over him when we chased them. Now, Neal, are you hurt anywhere else?"

"I'm bruises from head to foot. Half the people in Belfast have trampled over me this night, and when they wear boots they wear mighty heavy ones."

Donald, with wonderful gentleness, took Neal's clothes off him, put on him a night shirt of Felix Matier's, and laid him between cool sheets.

"Sit you here, Peg," he said, when he had bandaged the cut head, "with the jug of water beside you, and keep the bandage wet. The other bruises are nothing, but a broken head needs to be minded. Now, Neal, don't you talk."

Matier fetched a bottle of wine and set it with the light on the table which stood near the window.

"We'll have to sit here," he said, "if we don't disturb your nephew. Every other room in the house is in a state of scatteration. I have set the girls to clean up a bit, and after a while they'll have beds for us to sleep in. It's a devil of a business, but as poor Tone used to say when things went wrong with him--

*'Tis but in vain
For soldiers to complain.'*

"What started the riot?" asked Donald. "The Lord knows. Those dragoons only marched into the town this afternoon. I suppose the devil entered into them, if the devil's ever out of them at all."

"I guess," said Donald, "those were the lads that marched through Antrim this morning."

"The very same."

"They're strangers to the town, then?"

"Ay; I don't suppose one of them ever saw Belfast before."

"Tell me this, then. How did they know what house to attack? They came straight here."

"It was my sign angered them. They couldn't abide the sight of Dumouriez' honest face in a Belfast street."

*"Then let us fight about, Dumouriez;
Then let us fight about, Dumouriez;
Then let us fight about,
Till freedom's spark is out,
Then we'll be damned no doubt--Dumouriez."*

"You miss the point, man; you miss my point. How did they know about your sign or you either, unless someone told them?"

There was a knocking, gentle at first, and then more confident, at the street door. Donald looked inquiringly at his host.

"It's all right," said Matier, "I know that knock. It's James Bigger, a safe man."

He left the room and returned with a young man whom he introduced to Donald Ward.

"We were just talking about the riot," said Donald. "What's your opinion about it, Mr. Bigger?"

"There are five houses wrecked," said Bigger, "and every one of them the house of a man in sympathy with reform and liberty and the Union."

Donald and Matier exchanged glances.

"They were well informed," said Donald. "They knew what they were at, and where to go."

"They say," said Bigger, "that the leaders of the different parties had papers in their hands with directions on them. They were seen looking at them in the streets."

"I'd like to put my hand on one of those papers," said Donald.

"Zipperty, zipperty, zand,"

quoted Matier,

"I wish I'd a bit of that in my hand."

"You know the old rhyme."

Neal lay quiet, but wide awake. The conversation interested him too much to allow him to sleep. Twice he tried to speak, but each time Peg Macllrea, determined now that he was under her care to keep him quiet, put her hand over his mouth. At last he succeeded in asserting himself in spite of her.

"I saw James Finlay," he said, "along with a party of the soldiers going up this street."

The three men at the table turned to him. Donald seemed about to cross-question him when Peg Macllrea spoke.

"Is it a bit of the soger's paper you're wantin'? Here's for you."

She fumbled in the pocket of her skirt and drew out a crumpled scrap of paper.

"I snapped it out of his hand in the kitchen. It was for grabbing it that he caught me by the hair o' the head. I saw him glowerin' at it as soon as ever he came intil the light."

Donald Ward took it from her hand and read--

"The house of Felix Matier, an inn at the far end of North Street, to be known easily by the sign of Dumouriez which hangs before the door. Felix Matier is + + +."

He passed it without comment to Matier, who read it and laughed.

"They have me marked with three crosses," he said. "I'm dangerous. But what do they mean by it. How do they come to know so much about me?"

*"'Ken ye aught of Captain Grose Igo and ago.
Is he among friends or foes? Iram, coram, dago.'*

"Who set the dragoons on you?" said Donald. "That's the question."

"By God, then, it's easily answered," said Matier. "I'll give it to you in the words of the poet--

*"'Letters four do form his name.
He let them loose and cried Halloo!
To him alone the praise is due.'*

"P.I.T.T. Does that content you?"

"Pitt," said Donald. "Oh, I see. That's true, no doubt. But I want some one nearer hand than Pitt. Who gave them this paper? Whose is the writing on it?"

"I can tell you that," said James Bigger. "I have a note in my pocket this minute from the man who wrote that. It's a summons to a meeting for important business at the house of Aeneas Moylin, on the hill of Donegore, next week."

"Have you?" said Donald.

"Ay, and the man's name is James Finlay."

A dead silence followed the statement. It was Donald who broke it.

"I reckon, friend Bigger, that I'll go with you to that meeting. We'll take Neal here along, too. He knows the man. There'll be some important business done that night, though maybe not quite the same as what James Finlay has planned."

CHAPTER VIII

Neal Ward was awakened next morning by the noise which Peg Maclrea made sweeping and tidying the room where he slept. He lay for a few minutes watching the girl. Her red hair was coiled up now in a neat roll at the back of her head. Her freckled face was clean, and had apparently escaped bruising in her conflict with the dragoon. She wore a short grey skirt of woollen homespun. The sleeves of her bodice were rolled up, and displayed a pair of muscular red arms. The girl was more than commonly tall, and anyone listening to her heavy footfall, and noting her thick figure and broad shoulders, would have understood that she was well able to carry a young man, even of Neal's height, up a flight of stairs. The dragoon might easily have come to the worst in single combat with such a maiden if he had not obtained an advantage over her at the start by twisting her hair round his hand.

It was not very long before she noticed that Neal was awake. She came over to him smiling.

"You've had a brave sleep," she said. "It's nigh on eleven o'clock. The master and Mr. Ward are out this twa hours. They bid me not stir you. I was just readying up the room a bit, and I went about it as mim as a mouse."

"I'm thinking," said Neal, "that I'll be getting up now."

"Deed, then, and you'll no. The last word the master said was just that you were to lie in the day. I'm to give you tea and toasted bread, and an egg if you fancy it."

"But," said Neal, "I can't lie here in bed all day."

"Whisht, now, whisht. Be good and I'll get you them twa graven images the master's so set on and let you glower at them. Maybe you never seen the like."

She spoke precisely as if she had a sick child to humour; as if she were the nurse in charge, determined at any sacrifice to keep the peevish little one from crying. She crossed the room to a book-case and took down two bronze busts. With the utmost care she carried them over and laid them on the bed in front of Neal.

"The master's one of them that goes neither to church nor mass nor meeting," she said. "If ever he says his prayers at all, at all, it's to them twa graven images he says them, and the dear knows they're no so eye-sweet."

She left the room, well satisfied apparently that she had provided her patient with playthings which would keep him good till she returned with his breakfast. Neal took up the busts and examined them. He would not have known whose faces were represented had not an inscription on the pedestal of each informed him. "Voltaire," he read on one, "Rousseau" on the other. These were strange household gods for a Belfast innkeeper to revere. Neal, gazing at them, slowly grasped their significance. He had heard talk of French ideas, had seen his father shake his head over the works of certain philosophers. He knew that there was an intellectual freedom claimed by many of those who were most enthusiastic in the cause of political reform. He had not previously met anyone who was likely to accept the teaching of either Voltaire or Rousseau. His eyes wandered from the busts to the book-case on which they had stood. It was well filled, crammed with books. Neal could see them standing in close rows, books of all sizes and thicknesses, but he could not read the names on their backs. Peg Maclrea returned with his breakfast on a wooden tray. She put it down in front of him and then set herself to entertain him while he ate.

"Thon was a brave coup you gave the soger in the street," she said. "You gripped him fine, the ugly devil. But you did na hurt him much. He was up and off when they got us dragged from him, as hard as ever he could lift a foot. You'll be fond of fighting?"

"So far," said Neal, "I have generally got the worst of it when I have fought."

"Ay, you would. Your way of fighting is no just the canniest, but I like you no the worse for it. You might have got off without thon bloody clout on the top of your head if ye'd just clodded stones and then run like the rest of them. But that's no your way of fightin'. Did ye ever fight afore?"

"Just two nights ago," said Neal, "and I got the scrape on the side of my face then."

"And was it for a lassie you were fightin' thon time? I see well by the face of you that it was. And she liked you for it. Did she no? She'd be a quare one that didna. Did she give you a kiss to make the scrab on your face better? I wouldna think twice about giving you one myself only you wouldn't have kisses from the likes of me. Be quiet now, and sup up your tea. I willna have you offering to slabber ower my hand if that's what you're after."

Neal, who had felt himself goaded to some act of gallantry, returned sheepishly to his tea and toast.

"You're no a Belfast boy?" said Peg.

"No," said Neal, "I'm from Dunseveric, right away in the north of the county."

"Ay, are you? Do you mind the old rhyme--

*'County Antrim, men and horses,
County Down for bonny lasses.'*

Maybe your lassie, the one that kissed you, was out of the County Down?"

"She was not," said Neal, unguardedly.

Peg Macllrea laughed with delight and clapped her hands.

"I knew rightly there was a lassie, and that she kissed you. Now you've tellt me yourself. But I willna split on you, nor I willna let on that you tellt on her. But I hope she's bonny, though she does not come from the County Down."

Neal grew angry. It did not seem fitting that this red-haired, freckled servant, with her bold tongue and red arms, should make game of Una St. Clair's kisses. They were sacred things in his memory.

"Now you're getting vexed," she said. "You're as cross as twa sticks. I can see it in your eyes. Well, I've more to do than to be coaxing you."

She turned her back on him and began to sing--

*"I would I were in Ballinderry,
I would I were in Aghalee,
I would I were on bonny Ram's Island,
Sitting under an ivy tree.
Ochone! Ochone!"*

"Peg," said Neal, "Peg Macllrea, don't you be cross with me."

"I would I were in Ballinderry,"

she began again.

"Peg," said Neal, "I've finished my tea, and I wish you'd turn round. Please do, please."

She turned to him at last with a broad smile on her face.

"Is that the way you wheedled the poor lassie out of the kiss? But there now, I'll no say a word more about her if it makes you sore. But I can't sit here crackin' all day. I've the dinner to get ready, and the master'll be quare and angry if it's no ready against he's home."

She picked up the tray as she spoke.

"Would you like me to leave you them twa graven images?" she said.

"I'd like you to take them away," said Neal, "and then get me a book out of the case."

"I will, surely. What sort of a book would you like? A big one or a wee one. There's one here in a braw red cover with pictures of ships in it. Maybe it might content you."

"Read me a few of their names," said Neal, "and I'll tell you which to bring."

"Faith, if you wait for me to read you the names you'll wait till the crack of doom. Nobody ever learned me readin', writin', or 'rithmetic."

"Bring me three or four," said Neal, "and I'll choose the one I like best."

She deposited half a dozen volumes on the chair beside him and left the room. Neal took them up one by one. There was a volume of "Voltaire," Tom Paine's "Rights of Man," "The Vindiciae Gallicae," by Mackintosh, Godwin's "Political Justice," Montesquieu's "Esprit des Lois," and a volume of Burns' poetry, not long out from a Belfast printer. Neal already knew Godwin's works and the "Esprit des Lois." They stood on his father's bookshelves. He glanced at the pages of the others, and finally settled down to read Burns' poetry. The Scottish dialect presents little difficulty to a man bred among County Antrim people. The love songs, with their extraordinary freshness and vivid emotion, delighted Neal. Like many lovers of poetry, he tasted the full pleasure of verse best when he read it aloud. One after another he declaimed the marvellous songs, returning again and again to one which seemed peculiarly suited to his circumstances--

*"It's not the roar o' sea or shore
Wad make me longer wish to tarry;
Nor shouts o' war that's heard afar--
It's leaving thee, my bonny Mary."*

He read the song aloud for the fourth time. As he uttered the last words he heard a laugh, and, looking up, saw his host, Felix Matier, standing at the door of the room.

"Well, Neal, good morrow to you. You're well enough in body, to judge by your voice. But if that poem's a measure of the state of your mind you're sick at heart. Never mind Mary, man. There's better stuff in Burns than that. He's no bad poet, is Rabbie Burns. Listen to this now. Here's one I'm fond of."

He took the book out of Neal's hand, and read him "Holy Willie's Prayer." His dry intonation', his perfect rendering of the dialect of the poem, the sly twinkle of his eyes as he read, added exquisite malice to the satire.

"But maybe," he said, "I oughtn't to be reading the like of that to you that's the son of the Manse, though nobody would think of Holy Willie and your father together. I'm not very fond of the clergy myself, Neal, either of your Church

or another. I'm much of John Milton's opinion that new presbyter is just old priest writ large, but if there's one kind of minister that's not so bad as the rest it's the New Light men of the Ulster Synod, and your father's one of the best of them. But here's something now that Micah Ward would approve of. Just let me read you this. I'll have time enough before your uncle comes in. He's not a man of books, that uncle of yours, and I'd be ashamed if he caught me reading at this hour of the day. But listen to me now."

He took up the volume of "Voltaire" and read--

*L'ame des grands travaux, l'objet des nobles vœux,
Que tout mortel embrasse, ou desire, ou rapelle,
Qui vit dans tous les cœurs, et dont le nom sacré
Dans les cours des tyrans est tout bas adore, La Liberté!
J'ai vu cette déesse altière
Avec égalité repandant tous les biens,
Descendre de Morat en habit de guerrière,
Les mains teintes du sang des fiers Autrichiens
Et de Charles le Teméraire."*

Felix Matier's manner of pronouncing French was somewhat painful to listen to. Voltaire would probably have failed to recognise his solitary lyric if he had heard it read by Mr. Matier. But if the poet had discovered that the verses were his own and had got over his shudder at a mangling of French sounds worse than the worst he can have heard at Potsdam from the courtiers of Frederick William, he would probably have been well enough satisfied with the spirit of the rendering. Mr. Matier, of the North Street, Belfast, was obviously a sincere worshipper of the *déesse altière*, and would have been delighted to see her hands *teintes du sang* of the men who had torn down his sign the night before. Neal, though he could read French easily, did not understand a single word he heard. He took the book from his host to see what the poem was about. Mr. Matier did not seem the least vexed, although he understood what Neal was doing.

"The French are a great people," he said. "Europe owes them all the ideas that are worth having. I'd be the last man to breathe a word against them, but I must say that it requires some sort of a twisted jaw to pronounce their language properly. I understand it all right when it's printed, but as for speaking it or following it when a Frenchman speaks it----"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"But it's time I stopped moivering you with poetry. I hope you're really feeling better. I hope Peg took good care of you, and brought you your breakfast."

"Indeed she did. She took rather too good care of me. I thought one time she was going to kiss me.

"Did she make to do that? Well, now, just think of it! Isn't she the brazen hussy? And I'm sure her breath reeked of onions or some such like."

"Oh," said Neal, "we didn't get as far as that. Her breath may be roses for all I know."

"You kept her at arm's length. Serve her well right. I never heard of such impudence. But these red-haired ones are the devil. It's the same with horses. I had a chestnut filly one time--a neat little tit in her way--but she'd kick the weathercock off the top of the church steeple whenever she was a bit fresh. Never trust anything red. A red dog will bite you, a red horse will kick you, a red wench will kiss you, besides being a damned unlucky thing to meet first thing in the morning, a red soldier will hang you. There's only one good thing in the world that's red, and that's a red cap--the red cap of Liberty, Neal, and may we soon have all the red coats in the country cut up into such head-gear."

It was fortunate for Neal that he found Felix Matier's conversation amusing and Felix Matier's books interesting. He had ample opportunity of enjoying them during the week which followed the dragoons' riot. Donald Ward refused, as long as possible to allow him to get out of bed, and even when Neal was up and dressed, peremptorily forbade him to leave the house. He spoke weighty words about his experience of wounds, of frightful consequences which followed cuts on the head when the cold of the outer air got at them, of men who had died of lockjaw because they would not take care of scalp wounds, of burning eruptions which broke out on the unwary, of desperate fevers threatening life and reason.

Neal was puzzled. He had tumbled about among the rocks at Ballintoy a good deal during his boyhood, cutting and bruising most parts of his body. Even his head had not escaped. There was a deep scar under his hair which he had come by in the course of an attempt to enter a long fissure among the rocks of the Skerries, off Port-rush. But such wounds had troubled him very little. He had never made a fuss about them or taken any special precautions on account of them, neither knowing nor caring anything about the evils which may follow wounds, which do follow wounds, in pampered bodies. He could not understand why his uncle, who was certainly not otherwise given to morbid coddling, should insist upon such excessive care of a cut which was healing rapidly.

The fact was that Donald Ward was nervous about Neal, not at all on account of his cut head, which was nothing, but because Captain Twinely and his yeomen had returned to Belfast. It leaked out that the military authorities were not pleased with Captain Twinely. He had brought back three prisoners and the cannon, but he had not brought back Micah Ward, who was particularly wanted. Captain Twinely, angry at his cold reception, and furious at the hanging of his trooper, was anxious to revenge himself upon some one. Lord Dun-severic was too great a man to be attacked. The

Government could not afford to interfere with his methods of executing justice in North Antrim. Captain Twinely was given a broad hint that he must hawk at lower game, and keep his mouth shut about the hanging of his trooper. There was no objection to the yeomen outraging women so long as they confined themselves to farmers' wives, but an insult offered to Lord Dunseveric's sister and daughter, under Lord Dunseveric's own eyes, was a different matter. The less said the better about the hanging of the man who had distinguished himself by that exploit. Captain Twinely, growing savage at this second snub, and afraid lest perhaps he himself might be sacrificed when Lord Dunseveric's story of his raid came to be told, sought to ingratiate himself with the authorities by offering them a fresh victim. He gave an exaggerated version of Neal Ward's attack on the troopers outside the meeting-house, and drew an imaginary picture of the young man as a deep and dangerous conspirator. He even managed to shift the responsibility for the hanging of the trooper from Lord Dunseveric's shoulders to Neal's. He knew that Neal had left Dunseveric, and he assured Major Fox, the town major, that Neal was at that moment in Belfast arranging for the outbreak of the rebellion. Major Fox was worried by the complaints which respectable citizens were making about the dragoons' riot. He was anxious to prove, if possible, that the soldiers' conduct had been provoked by the violence of the United Irishmen. He produced the man whom Peg Macllrea and Neal had mangled and set him before the public as an object of pity, his wrist tied up and his head elaborately bandaged. A great idea flashed on him. He allowed it to be understood that he was on the track of a most dangerous rebel—a young man who had hanged a yeoman in Dunseveric and nearly murdered a dragoon in Belfast. In reality he was too busy just then with more important matters to make any real search for Neal Ward. But a week later he offered a reward of fifty pounds for such information as would lead to his apprehension.

But the rumours of Captain Twinely's sayings were sufficient to frighten Donald Ward. He did not shrink from danger himself, and, had his own life been threatened, would have taken measures to protect himself without any feeling of panic, but his apprehension of peril for Neal was a different matter. He felt responsible for his nephew, and did not intend to allow him to be captured if caution could save him. Therefore, he insisted on Neal's remaining indoors, and plied him with the most alarming accounts of the danger of his wound. He hoped in a few days to get Neal out of Belfast to the comparative safety of some farmhouse. He was particularly anxious that Finlay, who would certainly recognise the young man, should not see him.

News reached Belfast that the United Irishmen in Wexford were in arms and had taken the field against the English forces. The northern leaders became eager to move at once and to strike vigorously. Everything seemed to depend on their obtaining the command of Antrim and Down, and opening communications with the south. James Hope arrived in Belfast. Henry Joy M'Cracken was there. Henry Monro rode in every day from Lisburn. Meeting after meeting was held in M'Cracken's house in Rosemary Lane, in Bigger's house in the High Street, in Felix Matier's shattered inn, or in Peggy Barclay's. Robert Simms, the general of the northern United Irishmen, resigned his position. His heart failed him at the critical moment, and when pressed by braver men to take the field at once he hung back and gave up his command. He forgot his oath on MacArt's Fort, where he stood side by side with Wolfe Tone. Henry Joy M'Cracken, a man of another spirit, was appointed in his place. With extreme rapidity and an insight into the conditions of the struggle, marvellous in a man with no military training, he laid his plans for simultaneous attacks upon a number of places in Down and Antrim.

The Government was not idle. The northern United Irishmen were the best organised and most formidable body to be dealt with. During the pause before the outbreak of hostilities spies went busily to and fro. Reports were carried to the authorities of every movement made, of almost every meeting held. Men were arrested, imprisoned, flogged in the streets of Belfast. Information was forced from prisoners under the lash. Parties of yeomen rode through the country burning, ravishing, and hanging as they went.

James Finlay earned his pay with the best of his kind, denouncing men whom he knew to be United Irishmen, and giving information about their whereabouts. He was settled in Bridge Street, and, strangely blind to the fact that he was no longer trusted, invited the leaders to confer with him, and allowed his house to be used as a store for ammunition. Donald Ward, grimly determined that this man should get his deserts, insisted that nothing should be said or done to alarm him.

"We can't deal with him here," he said. "Wait, wait till we get him down to Donegore next week. If we frighten him now he won't go."

Of all these doings Neal heard only vague rumours. Sometimes Peg Macllrea, crimson with horror and rage, came to him and told him of a flogging, sparing him no details of the brutality. Sometimes his uncle sat an hour with him and talked of the fight that was coming. He seemed neither impatient nor excited. He looked forward with calm satisfaction to the day when he would have a gun in his hand and an opportunity of shooting at the men who were harrying the country.

"We have a couple of brass cannons, Neal. They're not much to boast of, but if they are properly served they will do some mischief. I have a little experience of artillery, though it wasn't in my regular line of fighting. I think I'll perhaps get charge of one of them."

Felix Matier came often to see Neal. As things grew darker outside he became more and more extravagantly cheerful.

His talk was all of liberty, of the dawn of the new era, of the breaking of old chains, and the rising of the peoples of the world in unconquerable might.

"We're to do our share in the grand work, Neal Ward, you and me; we'll have our hands in it in a day or two now.

*"May liberty meet with success!
May prudence protect her from evil!
May tyrants and tyranny tine in the midst
And wander their way to the devil."*

"Ora, but fighting's the work for a man after all. Here am I that have spent my life making up reckonings and seeing to drink and men's dinners and the beds they were to sleep in. But I never was contented with such things, and the money I made didn't content me a bit more. *They* taught me better, boy." He put his hand on the pile of books which lay on the table in front of Neal. "They taught me that there was something better than making money and eating full and living soft, something in the world a man might fight for. Eh, but I wasn't meant for an innkeeper--I was meant for a fighter.

*"I'd fight at land, I'd fight at sea;
At hame I'd fight my auntie, O!
I'd meet the devil and Dundee
On the braes o' Killiecrankie, O!"*

James Hope also came to see Neal. His talk was very different from the flamboyant exultation of Felix Matier; very different also from Donald Ward's cool delight in the prospect of battle. James Hope seemed to realise the awful gravity of taking up arms against established government. He alone understood the very small chance there was of victory for the United Irishmen. Yet Neal never for an instant doubted Hope's courage. He felt that this man had argued out the whole matter with himself and thought deeply and prayed earnestly and had made up his mind.

"I do not think that we are sure to win, Neal, but I hope that our fighting will enable those coming after us to obtain by other means the liberty and security which will surely be withheld from them unless we fight. I do not say these things to every one, but I feel safe in saying them to you. You will not fear to die, if death is to be the end of it for us."

Neal felt convinced that Hope himself would go calmly, steadfastly on if he were quite sure that the gallows waited for him. It was to Hope, more than to either of the others, that he complained about his confinement in Matier's house.

"I cannot bear," he said, "to be shut up here. I am not ill. The cut on my head is cured now. There must be some other reason for keeping me here. Am I not to be trusted? You say that you believe I will not shrink. Why keep me here as if you were all afraid of my turning coward or traitor?"

Hope parried these complaints as well as he could, telling Neal that a soldier's first duty was obedience, that in good time he would be given something to do; that in the meanwhile he must show himself brave by being patient!

"It is harder," he said, "to conquer yourself than to conquer your enemy."

One day, when Neal had been a week in captivity, he broke out passionately to Hope--

"I cannot bear this any longer. I hear of you and my uncle and the others risking your lives. I hear of the brutality of the soldiers. I hear of great plans on foot. I claim my share of the danger that surrounds us. I understand now why you all combine to keep me here. You are afraid of my running risks. I claim, I claim as a right, that I be allowed to take the same risks as the rest."

James Hope sat silent. His fingers played with the dark lock of hair which hung over his forehead. Neal knew the gesture well. It was common with Hope when he thought deeply and painfully. His fine dark eyes were fixed on Neal's, and there was the same curiously gentle expression in them which had attracted Neal the first time he noticed it.

"I admit your claim," said Hope, slowly, at last. "I shall speak to your uncle. To-morrow, I think I may promise this; to-morrow you shall come with me, and we shall do something which will be difficult, and I think a little dangerous too."

CHAPTER IX

James Hope kept his promise. About noon the next day he came to the inn and found Neal waiting for him impatiently.

"We are going," he said, "to James Finlay's house. Before we start I think I ought to tell you that in any case you could not stay here any longer. I saw this morning a proclamation offering a reward of fifty pounds for your capture, and I have no doubt that Finlay will earn it if he can, even if the soldier you mauled does not trace you here."

"I am ready," said Neal.

"You are not afraid? I see you are not, and we are not going to run into any unnecessary danger. Finlay will not betray you at once. He will not run out and call soldiers to take you the moment he sees you. He has a deeper plan. He has arranged that a meeting of our leaders will be held in Aeneas Moylin's house to-morrow night. He is to be there himself, and he has received assurance that most of our chief men will be there. We have little doubt that he has given information about the meeting, and made his arrangements for capturing us all. We shall tell him that you are to be there, too. Then he will not want to risk exposing himself by betraying you at once. He will wait for you till to-morrow. But when to-morrow comes he will not find our leaders at Donegore. I have not asked, and I do not wish to know, what he will find when he gets there."

"I understand," said Neal. "When we meet I am to pretend that I trust him thoroughly."

Hope smiled.

"You are a good soldier. You are prepared to obey, and you do not ask too many questions. But I am going to trust you fully, and tell you why we are going to Finlay's house to-day. Some time ago we stored some cases of ball cartridges there. They are in a cellar, and I have no doubt that Major Fox knows all about them, and thinks them as safe as if they were in the munition room of the barrack. You and I are going to carry off those cases. We want the cartridges badly, and we cannot wait for them. We shall be using them, I hope, the day after to-morrow, and if we leave them there till Finlay goes to Donegore to-morrow evening I fear they may be seized by the soldiers. We must take them at once, and it seems to me that our best chance will be to walk off with them in broad daylight without an attempt at concealment. We shall bring them here."

"How many cases are there?" asked Neal.

"Eight," said Hope. "We must manage to carry four each, but the distance is not very great."

Neal drew a deep breath of relief when he reached the street. Any service, however dangerous, any form of activity in the open air, was a joy to him after his long confinement in the house.

The streets, as he and Hope passed through them, were full of soldiers. Companies of yeomen marched and countermarched in indifferent order through every thoroughfare. Pickets of regulars, their bayonets fixed, stood at the street corners and in front of the principal buildings. Troops of dragoons, rattling and jingling, trotted briskly in one direction or another. Orderlies cantered their horses from place to place. Business in the town was almost suspended. Many of the shops were shut. Grave citizens, engaged in pressing affairs, hurried, with downcast eyes, along the causeways, seldom stopping to speak to each other, greeting acquaintances with hasty nods. Women of the better sort, if they ventured out at all, walked quickly, heavily cloaked and veiled. The trollops and street walkers of a garrison town emerged from their lairs even at midday, and stood in little groups at the corners exchanging jests with the soldiers on picket duty, or shouted ribaldries to the yeomen and dragoons who passed them. Idle maid servants, sluttish and dishevelled, leaned far out of the upper windows of the houses to gaze at the pageant beneath them. In the High Street a crowd of loafers--coarse women and soldiers off duty--was gathered in front of an iron triangle where, it was understood, some prisoners were to be flogged. Town, Major Fox, Major Barber, and some other officers in uniform, strolled up and down in front of the Exchange, rudely jostling such merchants as ventured to enter or leave the building.

James Hope walked slowly through the streets, chatting cheerfully to Neal as he went. Now and then he even stopped to watch a troop of dragoons go by or to gaze at the uniforms of the soldiers who stood on guard. In crowded places he waited quietly until he saw a way of passing on without pushing or attracting attention to his movements. The trial was a severe one for Neal's nerves. It was hard to pose as a curious sightseer within a few feet of men who could have earned fifty pounds by arresting him.

At last, after many pauses, and what seemed an interminable walk, Hope stopped at the door of a respectable looking house and knocked. A woman half opened the door and eyed them suspiciously. Then, recognising a whispered password of some sort from Hope, she admitted them and ushered them into a room on the ground floor. James Finlay sat at a table with writing materials spread before him. He started slightly when he saw Neal, but recovered himself instantly. He came forward, shook hands with Hope, and then said to Neal--

"You and I know each other, Mr. Ward. I trust your father is in good health, and that all is well at Dunseveric?"

Neal, though he had schooled himself beforehand to greet Finlay cordially, shrank back. He felt a violent loathing for the man. It became physically impossible for him to take Finlay's hand in his, to speak smooth words to this hypocrite who inquired of the good health of the very people he had betrayed. Hope saw the hesitation and tried to cover it with a casual remark. Finlay also saw it and misinterpreted it.

"I hope," he said, "that you do not bear me any malice on account of the little trouble there was between us long ago in the north. You ought to forgive and forget, Mr. Ward. We are both workers in the same cause now. At least, I suppose you are a United Irishman like your father or you wouldn't come here with James Hope to-day."

"Neal Ward," said Hope, "is going to the meeting at Donegore to-morrow evening."

Neal recovered himself and held out his hand to Finlay.

There was another knock at the door of the house. Finlay started violently and ran to the window.

"It's all right," he said, "it's only a lad I keep employed. I sent him out an hour ago to find out what was going on in the streets and to bring me word."

He returned to Hope with a smile on his face, but he had grown very white, and his hands were trembling slightly. A boy burst into the room, followed by the woman who had opened the door for Hope and Neal.

"Master," he cried, "they've brought out Kelso into the High Street. The soldiers are dragging him along. They are going to flog him."

The boy's eyes were wide with excitement. Having delivered his message, he turned and fled. A flogging was too great a treat for Finlay's boy to miss. The woman, without staying to don hat or shawl, went after him. Finlay called to her to stay. She shouted her answer from the threshold.

"Do you think I'm daft to be sitting my lone in your kitchen and them flogging a clever young man in the next street?"

Then the hall-door slammed. Finlay turned to Hope. He was whiter than ever, and his whole body shook as if with an ague.

"Kelso will tell," he said. "Kelso knows, and they'll flog the secret out of him. He'll tell, I know he will. He must tell; no man could help it."

If Finlay was pretending to be terrified he acted marvellously well. It seemed to Neal that he really was afraid of something, perhaps of some sudden betrayal of his treachery, of vengeance taken speedily by Hope.

"What ails you?" said Hope. "You needn't be frightened."

"The cartridges, the cartridges," wailed Finlay. "Kelso knows they are here."

"If that's all," said Hope, "Neal Ward and I will ease you of them. We came here to take them away."

"You can't, you can't, you mustn't. They'd hang you on the nearest lamp iron if they saw you with the cartridges."

There was a bang on the door and a moment later a knocking on the window of the room, and then a woman's fate was pressed against the glass. Hope sprang across the room and flung open the window. The servant woman who had gone to see the flogging pushed her head into the room and said--

"They're taking down Kelso, and he's telling all he knows. Major Barber and the soldiers are getting ready to march. It's down here they'll be coming."

"It's time for us to be off, then," said Hope.

"Come along, Neal, down to the cellar, and let us get the cartridges."

James Finlay followed them downstairs, begging them not to attempt to carry off the cartridges. He held Hope by the arm as he spoke.

"Don't do it," he said, "for God's sake don't do it. The soldiers are coming. They will be here in a minute. They will meet you. They will hang you. I know they will hang you. Oh! for God's sake go away at once while you have time. Leave the cartridges."

Hope shook off the grip on his arm with a gesture of impatience. He pushed open the cellar door.

"Now, Neal," he said, "pick up as many of the cases as you think you can carry."

James Finlay turned from Hope and seized Neal by the hands. The man was trembling from head to foot; his face was deadly white; the sweat was trickling down his cheeks in little streams.

"Don't let him. Oh! don't let him. He won't listen to me. Stop him. Make him fly."

He fell on his knees on the floor and clasped Neal's legs. He grovelled. There was no possibility of doubting the reality of his emotion. This was not acting. The terror was genuine. James Finlay was desperately frightened.

"Get out of my way. No one is going to hurt you in any case."

"It's not that," he said. "Believe me if you can. Believe me as you hope to be saved. I can't, I won't see *him* hanged. I can't bear it."

He was speaking the literal truth. He believed that James Hope would be caught and would then and there be hanged. Finlay had betrayed many men, had earned the basest wages a man can earn--the wages of a spy. He knew that his victims went to flogging and death, but he never watched them flogged, he never saw them die. He even bargained never to stand in a witness box. The results, the inevitable issues of his betrayals, were never immediately before his eyes. Between him and the punishment of his victims there was always some space of time spent in prison, some appearance of a legal trial, some pretence of a just judgment. He was able, with that strange power of self-deception which most men possess, to conceal from himself that it was his information which led to the brutalities which followed it. If James Finlay had been obliged himself to execute the men whose execution his testimony secured; if he had been forced to lay the lash on quivering flesh or fit the noose round the necks of living men; it is likely that no bribe would have bought him, that sheer cowardice and an instinctive horror of death and pain would have saved him, as no consideration of honour and truth did, from the extreme baseness of an informer's trade. Here lay part of the meaning of his terrified desire for Hope's escape. He could not bear to see men hanged before the door of his own house, or hear with his ears their shrieks under the lash.

But there was more behind this feeling than utter cowardice. He knew James Hope, knew him intimately, though he had known him only for a short time. Like Neal Ward he had walked with Hope along the roads and lanes of County Antrim, had heard him talking, had seen--as no man, even the basest, could fail to see--the wonderful purity and unselfishness of Hope's character. James Finlay had sold his own honour, but there remained this much good in him, he refused to sell Hope's life. God, reckoning all the evil and baseness of James Finlay's treachery and greed, will no doubt set on the other side of the account the fact that even Finlay recognised high goodness when he saw it, that he did not betray Hope, that he grovelled on the floor before a man whom he hated for the chance of saving Hope from what seemed certain death.

Neal pushed Finlay aside and stepped forward. He took five of the cases of cartridges--three under his right arm two under his left. Hope raised the other three. Then, picking up a bundle from a corner, he said--

"There is more gear here, which we may as well take with us. There is a green jacket which some of our young fellows may like to wear, and a flag; we ought to have a flag to fight under."

They turned to leave the house. Neal cast one glance behind him and saw Finlay lying curled up on the ground, his face covered with his hands, as if he were already trying to shut away from his eyes the sight of Hope's body dangling from a lamp iron.

Reaching the street, Hope stood for a moment and glanced up and down it. A party of soldiers was marching towards them. Hope looked at them carefully.

"These are not the men whom the woman warned us of. Major Barber, if he were coming here from High Street, would be marching the opposite way. This is some company of yeomen."

A band played at the head of the approaching company, and the men stepped out briskly to the tune of "Croppies Lie Down." Their uniforms were gay, their arms and accoutrements in good order, the officer in command was well mounted; a crowd of idle young men and some women were walking beside and behind the soldiers, attracted by the music and the unusually smart appearance of the men.

"I know these," said Hope, "they are the County Down Yeomanry. They have just marched in, and are no doubt going to report themselves. Come, Neal, this is our chance."

He joined the crowd which walked with the soldiers. Neal followed him closely. Hope, as if feeling the weight of the boxes he carried, walked slowly until he found himself in that part of the crowd which followed the regiment. Then, pushing forward briskly, he and Neal came close behind the last soldiers. The ranks were not well kept, nor the march orderly. Hope made his way forward until he and Neal were walking amongst the yeomen. As they swung out of the street they were met by another body of troops.

"These are regulars," whispered Hope, "and Major Barber is in command of them. That is he."

The two bodies of troops halted. There was a brief conversation between their commanding officers. Then an order was given. The yeomen, their band playing briskly again, marched on. Hope and Neal, now in the very middle of the ranks, marched with them. The royal troops presented arms as they passed. Major Barber watched them critically.

"It's a pity these volunteers won't learn their drill," he said to a young officer beside him. "Look at that for marching. The ranks are as ragged as the shirt of the fellow we've just been flogging; but they're fine men and well armed. By Jove, they have two country fellows with them carrying spare ammunition. I'll bet you a bottle of claret there are cartridges in those cases."

He pointed to Hope and Neal.

"Ought to have a baggage waggon," said the officer, "or ought to put the fellows into uniform. They might be damned rebels for all any one could tell by looking at them."

"I'd expect to meet a rebel pretty near anywhere," said Major Barber, "but, by God, I would not expect to find one marching in the middle of a company of yeomen."

The yeomen passed and the infantry marched again towards Finlay's house. Hope turned to Neal. Laughter was dancing in his eyes, but, except for his eyes, his face was grave.

"Now," he whispered, "we've got to slip out of the ranks and make our way into North Street."

As he spoke he lurched against the yeoman next to him and allowed the bundle he carried to slip from his arm. The soldier cursed him for a clumsy drunkard. Hope, in return, abused the soldier for knocking the parcel out of his arms, and then called to Neal--

"Wait for me, mate, wait till I gather up my goods again."

He deposited his cartridge cases on the ground, went after the bundle which had rolled into the gutter, and then, arranging his load slowly, allowed the yeomen to march past.

"Did you hear Major Barber say that he'd be ready to bet that these cases held cartridges? A sharp man, Major Barber! But there are more men than him about with eyes in their heads. The next officer we meet will be wanting to know where we are taking the cartridges. We won't have another company of yeomen to vouch for our characters. I think, Neal, we'd better get something to cover these up. There's a man here in charge of a carman's yard who is sure to have a couple of sacks which will suit us very well."

He passed under an archway, followed by Neal, and entered a small yard.

"Charlie," he cried, "are you there, Charlie?"

A young man emerged from one of the stables. He started at the sight of Hope.

"Are you mad, Jemmy Hope?" he said. "Are you mad, that you come here, and every stable full of dragoons' horses? They have them billeted on us, curse them, and the villains are in the coachhouse polishing their bits and stirrup irons. Hark to them."

"I hear them," said Hope. "Get me two of your oat sacks, Charlie, good strong ones. I have goods here that want protecting from the sunlight."

The man cast a swift glance round, ran to one of the stables, and fetched the sacks.

"Now, Neal, pack up, pack up."

He pushed his own cases into one of the sacks. Neal followed his example.

"It won't do," said Hope, "the sacks don't look natural. There are too many sharp corners bulging out. Charlie, lad, fetch us some straw--a good armful."

While they were stuffing the sacks with the straw one of the dragoons swaggered across the yard. He stood watching Hope and Neal for a minute or two, and then said.

"What have you there that you're so mighty careful of?"

"Whisht, man, whisht," said Hope, "it's not safe to be talking of what's here."

He winked at the soldier as he spoke--a sly, humorous wink--a wink which hinted at a good joke to come. The dragoon, a fat, good-natured man, grinned in reply.

"I won't split on you, you young thieves. I've taken my share of loot before this, and I expect some pickings out of the croppies' houses before I've done. I won't cry halvers on you. What's yours is yours. But tell us what it is."

"It's cases of cartridges," said Hope, winking again. "We're taking them to the general in command of the rebel army, so don't be interfering with us or maybe they'll hold a courtmartial on you."

The fat dragoon laughed. The idea of packing up ammunition for the croppies in the temporary barrack of a squadron of dragoons, and using His Majesty's straw to stuff the sacks, appealed to him as extremely comic. Hope and Neal shouldered their bundles and left the yard.

"I'm afraid," said Hope, "that we can't store these in Matier's house. When Barber learns that the cases are gone he'll search high and low for them, and Matier's will be just one of the places he'll look sooner or later. Are you good for a tramp, Neal, with that load on your back?"

"Yes," said Neal, "I'll carry mine for miles if you like."

"Then," said Hope-, "we'll just look in at Matier's as we pass, and if the coast's clear I'll leave word where we're going. I know a snug place on the side of the Cave Hill where we can lie for the night. To-morrow you can join your uncle at Donegore."

There were no soldiers round the inn when they reached it. Felix Matier and Donald Ward were both out. Hope left his message with Peg Macllrea, who was sanding the parlour.

"So you're going to sleep out the night on the Cave Hill?" she said to Neal. "That'll be queer and good for your clouted head I'm thinkin'."

"It'll do my head no harm," said Neal. "You know well enough, Peg, that there never was much the matter with it."

They shouldered their loads again, walked up the street, and then, quickening their pace, tramped along the Shore

Road for about three miles.

"Now," said Hope, "turn to the left up that loaning, and we'll strike for the hill."

They crossed the fields round the homesteads which lay between the hill and the road, reached uncultivated and stony ground, and then commenced their climb. Neal was strong, active, and accustomed to fatigue, but he began to feel the weight of his sack of cartridge cases before he had climbed five hundred feet. When Hope bade him halt he was glad enough to lie panting on the springy heather.

"We're safe now," said Hope, "but we've got further to go before night. We must make the place I named so that the men will be able to find me and the cartridges to-morrow morn."

Neal, ashamed of his weariness, bade Hope lead on.

"I might have trysted with them for Mac Art's Fort," said Hope. "It was there that Neilson and Tone and M'Cracken swore the oath. That would have been a brave romantic spot for you and me to spend the night. We might have thought of great things there with the stars over us and nothing else between us and God's heaven. But it's a draughty place, lad." The laughter came into his eyes as he spoke. "A draughty place and a stony, like Luz, where Jacob lay, and maybe the angels wouldn't come near the likes of us. The place I have in my mind is warmer."

They reached it at last--a little heathery hollow, lying under the shelter of great rocks.

"You might sleep in a worse place, Neal. It was here that Wolfe Tone and the men I told you of dined three years ago--and a merry day they had of it. I could wish we had a few of the scraps they left. It's cold work sleeping in the open on an empty stomach, but we must just cheer each other with Tone's byword--

*"'Tis but in vain
For soldiers to complain."*

Neal, lying full length on the heather in the warmth of the afternoon sun, dropped off to sleep. He had undergone severe physical exertion, which told on him. He had been through an hour and more of great excitement, which exhausted him far more than the exertion. When he woke the sun had sunk behind the hill, and the air was pleasantly cool. Hope sat beside him, gazing out across the Lough and the town which lay below them.

"I've been thinking, Neal, of that man Finlay. He was frightened to-day when we were in his house. Now what had he to be frightened about?"

"I don't know," said Neal, "but I agree with you. The man certainly wasn't play-acting. He was in real fear."

"I think," said Hope, "that he was afraid the soldiers would take us and hang us."

"But," said Neal, "why should he fear that when he has betrayed us?"

"The human heart," said Hope, after a pause, "is a strange thing. The Book tells us that no man is altogether good; no, not one, and that's true. Never was a truer word. We try, lad, we try, and the grace of God works in us, but there remains the old leaven of evil; ay, it's there, even in the heart of a saint. Now, it isn't written, but I think it's just as true that there's no man altogether bad. There's a spark of good somewhere in the worst of us, if we could but get at it. There's a spark of good in Finlay."

"How can there be?" said Neal, angrily. "The man's a spy, an informer, a paid liar, a villain that takes gold and perjures himself."

"That's true, over true. And yet he wanted to save our lives to-day. I tell you the man's not all bad. There's something of the grace of God left in him after all."

Neal was not inclined to argue about the matter. He sat silent, watching star after star shine out of the moonless sky. After a long silence Hope spoke again.

"There are men among us who mean to take Finlay's life. I can't altogether blame them. He deserves to die. But Neal, lad, don't you have act or part in that. Remember the word,--'Vengeance is mine and I will repay, saith the Lord.' If there's a spark of good in him at all, who are we that we should cut him off from the chance of repentance? 'The bruised reed shall he not break; the smoking flax shall he not quench.' Remember that, Neal."

From far down the side of the hill the sound of a woman's voice reached them faintly. It drew nearer.

"That's some slip of a lassie from off the farms below us," said Hope. "She's looking out for some cow that's strayed."

"She's singing," said Neal. "I catch the fall of the tune now and then."

"She's coming nearer. It can't be a cow she's seeking. No beast would stray that far up amongst the heather and the stones."

The voice came more and more clearly. The words of the song reached them--

*"I would I were in Ballinderry,
I would I were in Aghalee,
I would I were in bonny Ram's Island*

*Sitting under an ivy tree.
Ochone, ochone!"*

"I know that song," said Neal.

"Everybody knows that song. There isn't a lass in Antrim or Down but sings it."

"But I know the singer too. I heard Peg MacIre sing it once, Matier's Peg, and I'm not likely to forget her voice."

"If you're sure of that, Neal, I'll let her know we're here. Anyway it can do no harm. There isn't a farm lass in the whole country would betray us to the soldiers. Wait now till she sings it again."

By the firesides of Irish cottages when songs are sung during the long winter evenings the listeners often "croon" an accompaniment, droning in low voices over and over again a few simple notes which harmonise with the singer's voice. When the girl began her tune again Hope sang with her, repeating "Ochone, ochone" down four notes from the octave of the keynote through the mediate to the keynote again. When she reached the end of the last line his voice rose suddenly to an unexpected seventh, which struck sharply on the ear. Prolonging the note after the girl's voice died away, he rose to his feet and waved his arms. Soon Peg MacIre was beside them.

"I tell't the master where ye were," she said, "and I tell't Mr. Donald. They couldn't come theirsells, and they were afeard to let me out my lone. But I knew finely I could find you. I knew Neal here would mind my song. I brought you a bite and a sup so as you wouldn't be famished out here on the hillside."

She took a basket from her arm and laid it at Neal's feet.

"Sit down, Peg," said Hope, "sit down and eat with us. You're a good girl to think of bringing us the food, and you'll be wanting some yourself after your walk."

"I canna bide with you, and I ate my supper before I made out. I must be gettin' back now. But I've a word to give you from your uncle, Neal. He bid me tell you that you're trysted with him for Aeneas Moylin's house the morrow night at eight o'clock."

CHAPTER X

Early next morning Neal bade farewell to Hope and started on his walk to Donegore. For a while he kept along the side of the hill above the homesteads that clustered on the lower slopes. Nearing Cammoney he descended and entered a small inn in order to obtain some breakfast. He found the master and his wife in a state of great excitement at the news which had just reached them that their son had been arrested in Belfast. It was some time before Neal could persuade the poor people to attend to his wants, and it was a wretched breakfast which he obtained in the end. Leaving the inn, he walked along the high road through Molusk. He felt tolerably safe, though bodies of troops and yeomen occasionally passed him. His appearance was known to very few, and the people of the district through which he was going were either United Irishmen or in strong sympathy with the society. It was unlikely that any small body of troops would venture to make an arrest unless the officer in command was perfectly certain of the identity of his prisoner. So bold and determined were the people that Neal, stopping opposite a forge, saw the smith fashioning pike heads openly, and apparently fearlessly. A number of men stood round the forge door talking earnestly together. Among them was Phelim, the blind piper, whom Neal had seen in the street of Antrim. They did not care to be silent or to lower their tones when Neal came within earshot.

"The place of the muster," said the piper, "is the Roughfort. Mind you that now, and let them that has guns or pikes bring them."

"And will M'Cracken be there?"

"Ay, he will. Did you no see the proclamation?"

"Will Kelso," said some one to the smith, "are you working hard, man? We'll be needing a hundred more of them pike heads by the morrow's morn."

The smith let his hammer fall with a clang on the anvil, and wiped his brow.

"If you do as good a day's work the morrow with what I'm working on the day there'll be no cause to complain of you."

For the first time since he left Dunseveric Neal felt a glow of hope for the success of the movement. He knew what kind of men these farmers and weavers of Cammoney and Templepatrick were--austere, cold men, difficult to stir to violent action; much more difficult to cow into submission when once roused. And it appeared to him that they were effectually roused now. He recalled his father's fanciful application of the verse from the prophet Jeremiah. He felt, as he listened to the men round the forge, the hardness of "the northern iron and the steel." Was there among the blustering yeomen and the disciplined troops of the King iron strong enough to break this iron?

He left the forge and passed on. His thoughts wandered from the enterprise to which he had pledged himself, and went back, as time after time during the last week they had gone back, to Una. He walked slowly, wrapped in a delicious day dream. Neglecting all fact, driving from his mind the pressing realities which separated him hopelessly from the girl he loved, he imagined himself walking with her hand-in-hand in some fair place far from strife and the oppression which engendered strife. A feeling of fierce anger succeeded his day dream. The sun shone around him, the fields were fair to see. Life ought to be like the sun and the fields--simple and good and beautiful. Instead it was difficult and cruel. He was being dragged into a vortex of hate and battle. He loathed the very thought of it. He wanted peace and love. And yet, what escape was there for him? Did he even want to escape if he could? The wrong and tyranny he was to resist were real, insistent, horrible. He would be less than a man, unworthy of the love and peace he longed for, if he failed to do his part in the struggle for freedom and right.

At midday he reached Templepatrick village, and found the inn occupied by a company of yeomen. He sought the house of the weaver with whom he had dined, in company with James Hope, on his way to Belfast. The door was closed, which struck Neal as strange, for the day was hot and bright. Coming near, he was surprised not to hear the rattle of the loom. Birnie was a diligent man; it was not like him to leave his loom idle. And the house was not empty; he could hear a woman's voice within. He tapped at the door, intending to ask for a meal and for leave to rest awhile in the kitchen. There was no answer, and yet he heard the woman still speaking in low, even tones. He tapped again, and then, despairing of attracting attention, raised the latch, half opened the door, and looked in.

In the centre of the room, before the table, a young woman knelt motionless, her hands stretched out before her. Neal heard her words distinctly. She was praying aloud, steadily, quietly, but with intense earnestness, repeating petition after petition for her husband's safety. Very softly Neal withdrew, and closed the door. He might go dinner-less, but he would not interrupt the woman's prayer. He turned, to find a little girl gazing at him. He recognised her as the Birnies' child.

"Were you wanting my da?"

"Yes, little girl, but I see he's gone away."

"Ay, but if any stranger come for him I was to tell my mammy."

"Never mind," said Neal, "you mustn't disturb her now."

"Will I no, then, when I was bid? Mammy I Mammy!"

In answer to the child's cry, the mother opened the door.

"What ails you, Jinny? I beg pardon, sir, were you waiting long on me?"

"You don't know me, Mrs. Birnie. You don't remember me, but I came here one day before with James Hope."

"I mind you rightly, now," she said. "Come in and welcome, but if it's my Johnny you're wanting to see, he's abroad the day."

"I won't disturb you," said Neal.

"You'll come in. You'll no be disturbing me. There's time enough for me to do what I was doing when the wean called me."

Neal entered the house and sat down.

"You'll be wanting a bite to eat," said Mrs. Birnie. "It's little I have to set for you. The wee bit of meat we had I cooked for him to take with him. It's no much Jinny and I will be wanting while he's awa from us. Ay, and it's no much Jinny and I will get if he doesna come back to us."

"Where has he gone?" said Neal.

"He's gone to the turn-out," she said, "to the turn-out that's to be the morrow. It's more goes to the like, I'm thinking, than comes back again. He's taken the pike with him that lay in the thatch over our bed this year and more. But the will of the Lord be done."

"May God bring him safe home to you," said Neal.

"Ay, for God can do it, God can do it. I take no shame to tell you, young as you are, that I was just beseeching the Lord to do that very thing the now while you were standing at the door with Jinny. But the Lord's ways are not our ways."

She set a plate of oatcake and a jug of buttermilk on the table before Neal, and bade him eat. When he had finished, he sat and talked with her awhile, trying to cheer her. But she was not a woman to whom it was easy to speak comfortable platitudes. She knew the risks her husband ran--the risk of battle, and the worse risks which would follow defeat. Neal rose at last and bid her farewell.

"When you are saying a prayer for your husband," he said, "say one for me; I'll be along with him. I'm going to fight, too."

"And will you be for the turn-out, then, with the rest of them? Ay, I'll say a prayer for you, And--and, young man, will you mind this? When you're killing with your pike and your gun, even if it's a yea that's forinst you, gie a thought to the woman that's waiting at home for him, and, maybe, praying. What would hinder her to pray for her husband even if he's a yeoman itself?"

It was seven o'clock when Neal reached Aeneas Moylin's house, after climbing the steep lane that led to Donegore Hill. He found six men seated in the kitchen--Donald Ward, Felix Matier, James Bigger, Moylin, and two others whom he did not know.

"It's Neal Ward," said Donald. "It's my nephew. Sit you down, Neal."

No one else spoke, though all nodded a welcome to Neal, and room was made for him at the table round which they sat. Aeneas Moylin rose and fetched another chair from the next room. Neal noticed that all six men were armed with swords and pistols. Donald Ward sat at the head of the table, and had the air of presiding over the assembly. There was dead silence in the room, save for the ticking of a clock which stood in a dark corner out of reach of the rays of the lamp. No man looked at any of his fellows. They stared fixedly at the ceiling, the table, or the walls of the room. After about ten minutes, Felix Marier rose, crossed the room, and peered at the face of the clock. He went to the door and looked down the lane. Then, with a sharp in drawing of the breath, he took his seat again. The movement roused Donald Ward. He fumbled in his pocket and took out his tobacco box and pipe. He held up the box--a round metal one--between his finger and thumb. Neal, watching, noticed with surprise that his uncle's hand trembled. Donald held the box without opening it for perhaps two minutes. Then, when he was satisfied that his hand had become quite steady, he filled his pipe. He rose, took a red peat from the hearth, and pressed it into the bowl of the pipe. He did not sit down again, but stood with his back to the fire, smoking slowly.

Aeneas Moylin spoke in a harsh, constrained voice.

"Would you like to drink while you wait? I have whisky in the house."

"No," said Donald.

No one else spoke. Several of the men passed their tongues over their dry lips. They would have liked to drink. Their mouths craved for moisture, their nerves for stimulant, but they did not dispute Donald Ward's emphatic refusal of the offer.

Felix Matier rose again. Again he peered at the clock, again he opened the door and looked down the lane. This time he turned almost immediately, and said in a whisper--

"There's a man coming up the lane, a single rider. I hear the tramp of his horse."

He hurried back to his seat, as if he were afraid of being found apart from his comrades, as if he expected to discover safety in being just as they were. Donald Ward took his seat at the head of the table. His pipe was still between his teeth, but he ceased to puff at it. It went out. The noise of the approaching horse was plainly audible in the room. Felix Matier suddenly laughed aloud, and then, half chanting the words in a cracked falsetto, quoted--

*"What is right and what is wrong by the law?
What is right and what is wrong?
A short sword and a lang,
A stout arm and a Strang,
For to draw."*

"Silence," said Donald.

"It is the man," said Aeneas Moylin, "I hear him putting his horse into the shed. It must be he, for no stranger would know the ways of the place."

James Bigger drew a pistol from his pocket, looked carefully at the priming, cocked it, and laid it on the table before him. He sat at the end of the table opposite Donald Ward, and was nearest to the door.

The latch was lifted from without, and James Finlay entered the room.

"You are welcome," said Donald, and every man at the table repeated the words.

Something in the tone of the greeting, some sense of the feeling of those who sat in the room, startled Finlay. He glanced quickly at the faces before him, became deadly white, took a step forward, and then turned to the door. It was shut, and James Bigger, pistol in hand, stood with his back against it. Finlay stood stock still. Neal, looking at him, saw in his eyes an expression of wild terror--an agonised appeal against the horror of death. In a single instant the man had understood that he was to die. Neal felt suddenly sick. Then a faintness overcame him. He leaned back in his chair unable to move or speak. He heard, as if from a great distance, as if out of some other world, his uncle's voice--

"The men you expected are not here, friend Finlay. M'Cracken is busy elsewhere, Munro has an engagement this evening, Hope, whom you let slip through your fingers yesterday, is not here to meet you."

"I wear to you," said Finlay, "that I tried to save Hope yesterday."

Donald took no notice of the words. He went on in a cool, not unfriendly voice--

"We are here instead, and I think we are quite competent to conduct the business for which we have met; but you will agree with us that this house will not be a suitable place for our meeting. We think it possible that Aeneas Moylin's house may be honoured to-night by a visit from some dragoons or yeomen. They will probably be here in half an hour or so. In the meanwhile, we shall adjourn. There is near at hand a building in which we may do our business with perfect safety. You have heard, no doubt, of the custom of body-snatching. Certain men--resurrectioners, I think, they are called--have of late been robbing the graves of the dead and selling the bodies to the medical schools for the use of students. The good people of Donegore have built in their churchyard a very strong vault with an iron door, of which Aeneas Moylin keeps the key. Here they lock up the bodies of their dead for some time before burying them--until, in fact, the natural process of decay renders them unsuitable for dissection. This is their plan for defeating the resurrectioners. There is no corpse in the vault to-night. We shall adjourn to it for our meeting. The walls are so thick, I am told, that remarks made even in a loud tone inside will be perfectly inaudible to eavesdroppers. The door is very small, and we can hang a cloak over it, so that our light will not be visible. It will be quite safe, I think; besides, it will be very comforting to think that if one of us should die suddenly his body will not become a prey to the ghoulish people of whom we have been speaking."

He paused. Then, changing his tone, gave a series of orders sharply--

"Bind his hands; gag him; bring a lantern and means of lighting it; bring the key of the vault; leave the light burning in this room. Come."

The orders were quickly obeyed. It was evident that every man had his part assigned to him beforehand, and was ready to perform it. There was no confusion, and no talking.

Aeneas Moylin led the way. Two others followed, holding Finlay, gagged and bound, by the arms. Donald Ward, his sword drawn, brought up the rear. They moved like shadows, silent as the prowling body-snatchers of whom Donald had spoken. In front of them, a dark mass in the June twilight, stood the church, and round it rows and rows of gravestones. Moylin crossed the stile. Finlay sank helplessly in a heap in front of it. He could not, or would not, put his feet on the stone steps. Without a word his two guards lifted him over and set him down among the graves. Donald crossed last. Moylin, skirting the north side and east end of the church, led the way to a corner of the cemetery where as yet there were no graves. Here, barely visible among the tangle of brambles, nettles, and high grass which

surrounded it, was the vault. Kneeling down, Moylin fumbled with the lock, turned the key with a harsh, grating sound, and swung open the iron door. It was so low that he had to crawl through. Once inside, he lit the lantern which he carried, and set it on a projecting ledge of the rough masonry. Finlay was dragged in. The others followed, until only Neal and his uncle stood outside.

"Go next, Neal."

"I cannot, uncle, I cannot. I am not able to bear this. Let me go away."

"No. Go in, Neal. I want you. I shall let you go before the end."

The vault was very small inside. It was hardly possible to stand upright, and there was little room for moving. James Finlay, still bound and gagged, lay at full length on the floor. Round him, their backs against the walls, crouched the other men. Moylin's lantern cast a feeble, smoky light. The air was heavy and close. It was the air of a charnel house.

"Take from the prisoner the arms he has about him," said Donald. "Search his pockets, and hand me any papers you find. Now unbind his hands and free his mouth."

"James Finlay, we are here to do strict justice. You shall have every opportunity of making any defence you can when you hear the charges against you. If you clear yourself you shall go free. If you fail to clear yourself you must abide the sentence we shall pronounce on you."

"You mean to murder me," said Finlay.

"We do not mean to murder you. We mean to try you fairly, to acquit or condemn you in strict justice. The first charge against you is this. Having been sworn a member of the United Irishmen's society in Dunseveric, having been elected a member of the committee, you did in Belfast betray the fact that there were cannons hidden in Dunseveric meeting-house, and gave the names of your fellow-members to the military authorities."

"I deny it," said James Finlay. "You have no proof of what you assert. Will you murder a man on suspicion?"

"Neal Ward," said Donald, "is this the James Finlay who was sworn into the society by your father?"

"Yes," said Neal.

"Tell us what you know about the visit of the yeomen to Dunseveric."

Neal repeated the story, telling how he knew that his own name was on the list of persons to be arrested. There was a short silence when he had finished. Then James Bigger said--

"You have not proved that charge. The circumstances are suspicious, but you have proved nothing."

Donald Ward bowed. Finlay raised his eyes for the first time since he had been dragged into the vault, and looked round him. There had risen in him a faint gleam of hope.

"You are charged," said Donald again, "with having provided the dragoons who rioted in Belfast last week with information which led them to attack and wreck the houses of those who are in sympathy with the society."

"I deny it. I was not in Belfast that day. I was here in Donegore with Aeneas Moylin."

"You were here the day before," said Moylin. "You left me that day early. You might have been in Belfast."

"I was not," said Finlay.

Donald Ward produced the scrap of paper which Peg Macllrea had taken from the dragoon.

"Is that your handwriting?" he asked.

James Finlay looked at it.

"No," he said.

"James Bigger, give me the last letter you had from Finlay. Now put the lantern down on the floor."

He looked steadily at the two papers, and then said--

"In my opinion these two are written in the same hand."

He passed them to the man next him. They went from one to another, and the lantern followed them on their round. Each man examined them, and each nodded assent to Donald's judgment.

"Let me see them," said Finlay.

They were handed to him.

"I wrote neither of them," he said.

"Your name is signed to one," said Donald.

"I did not write it. I had hurt my hand on the day that note was written. I employed another man to write for me. The writing is his, not mine."

"Name the man you employed."

"Kelso, James Kelso."

"Kelso was flogged yesterday," said Donald, "and is in prison now. Do you expect us to believe that he is an

informer? Is flogging the wages the Government pays to spies?"

"I tried to save Hope yesterday," said Finlay. "Neal Ward, you have borne witness against me, tell the truth in my favour now."

"I believe," said Neal, "that he did his best to save Hope and me yesterday. I believe that he wanted to save us."

He told his story, and he told of the conversation on the Cave Hill afterwards. Again the flicker of hope crossed Finlay's face.

"You hear," he said. "Would I have done that if I had been a spy? Could I not have handed them over to Major Barber if I had wished?"

"I shall give you credit for wishing to save Hope," said Donald. "Now I shall pass on to examine the papers found on your person to-night."

Finlay protested eagerly.

"I beg that you do not examine the papers you have taken from me. They are of a very private nature."

"I can believe," said Donald, "that they are of such a kind that you would willingly keep them private."

"I protest against your reading them. You have no right to read them. They concern others besides myself. I give you my word." Donald smiled slightly. "I swear to you, I will take any oath you like that there is no paper there concerned with politics. You will be sorry if you read them. I assure you that you will repent it afterwards. You will be doing a base action. You will pry into a woman's secrets. You will bring dishonour on the name of a lady, a noble lady."

"Do you expect us to believe," said Donald, "that any lady, noble or other--that any woman, that any soldier's drab even--has written love letters to you?"

He opened the first which came to hand of the pile of papers which lay at his feet on the ground. Finlay suddenly collapsed. His impudence, his ready tongue, deserted him. He had fought hard for his life, had lied--though he lied clumsily in his terror--had twisted, doubled, fought point after point. Whatever the papers were that had been found on him, he recognised that they condemned him utterly and hopelessly. The game was up for him. He saw death near at hand, as he had seen it earlier when he first realised that he was trapped in Moylin's kitchen. Donald read paper after paper silently. Some he laid aside, some he passed to the man next him to read. Finlay rallied again. He made another effort to save himself.

"Listen," he said, "I have influence with the Government. I don't deny it. Call me an informer, a spy, any name you like, but admit that I have served my masters well. I can claim my reward from them. Let me go, and I swear to obtain pardons for you. I can save you, and I will. I offer you your lives as a ransom for mine."

"Would you make us what you are?" said Donald, sternly. "Would you buy our honour, you that have sold your own?"

Finlay, who had knelt during his last appeal, fell forward. He grasped Neal with his hands. It was impossible in the dim light to see the faces of the men around him, but some instinct told him that Neal alone felt any pity for him, that from Neal alone he could look for mercy.

"Save me, Neal Ward," he cried. "For God's sake, save me. Plead for me. They will listen to you. I am not fit to die. Grant me one day, only one day. I will do anything you wish. I will--- Oh God, Oh Christ, Oh save me, save me now."

Neal felt drops fall on his hands, sweat from Finlay's brow or tears from his eyes. He spoke--

"Spare him," he said. "Who are we to judge and to slay? James Hope said to me last night that we should refrain from taking vengeance. I ask you to respect what he said. Think of it. This man's case to-day may be your's to-morrow. Remember you may take life, but you cannot give it back again. Oh, this is too horrible--to kill him now, like this."

He felt, while he spoke, Finlay's clasp tighten on him. He felt the wretched man cover his hands with kisses, mumble, and slobber over them. There was silence for a while when Neal ceased speaking. Then Donald Ward said--

"Neal, you had better go outside. This is no work for a boy. It is, as you say, horrible. To inflict death is horrible, but it is sometimes just. If ever it is just for man to shed the blood of his brother man it is just to shed James Finlay's. He has broken oaths, has brought death on men, has made women widows and children fatherless; has wrecked the happiness of homes. He has done these things for the sake of gain, for money counted out to him as the priests counted money out to Judas."

It was impossible to plead his cause any more. Moylin pushed open the iron door of the vault. Neal dragged his hands from Finlay's grasp, and crawled out. He heard the door clang behind him, shut fast again upon the broken, terrified wretch and his judges--relentless men of iron, the northern iron.

No sound reached him from the vault. Save for the occasional belated cawing of some rooks in the trees which shadowed the graveyard, no sound reached him at all. He sat down among the nettles, the brambles, and the rank grass and burst into tears.

CHAPTER XI

The paroxysm of tears swept Neal as the Atlantic waves sweep foaming and furious over Rackle Roy. Then it passed and left him panting, shaking with recurrent sobs, and a prey to an hysterical dread of hearing some sound from the vault beside him. He sat absolutely motionless. He hardly dared to breathe. He waited in horrible expectation of hearing something. He listened intent, agonised, feeling that if a sound reached him he would cry aloud and on the instant become a raving madman. The scene inside the vault rose to his imagination. Far more really than he saw the dim church and the trees, he saw Finlay grovelling on the ground and the stern men crouching over him. He saw a knife gleam in the lantern's light. He shut his eyes, as if by shutting them he could blot out the pictures of his imagination. He waited to hear a shriek, a smothered cry, a groan, the laboured breath of struggling men, the splash of blood. The suspense became an agony. He rose to his feet and fled.

He stumbled over a grave, and fell headlong, bruising his outstretched hands against a tombstone. He rose instantly and fled again. Stumbling again, he struck his head against the wall of the church. Dizzy and bewildered, he hastened on, driven forward by the terror of hearing some death noise from the vault. Tripping, staggering, rushing blindly, he reached the stile at last, and stood beyond it on the road. Before him was Moylin's house. The window was lighted up, the door was open. He saw men seated within, and heard them laugh aloud. They seemed to him not men, but fiends making merry over murder, and the winning for their hell of a new damned soul. He fled from them as he had fled from the sound he dreaded. He rushed down the steep lane. Loose stones rolled under his feet. Sparks started into sudden brightness where the nails in his boot soles struck flints. The hedges rose high on each side of him, making the lane, even in the pale June night, intolerably dark. He fled on, blind, reckless, for the moment mad.

Suddenly he was stopped short. Strong arms were round him. He was flung to the ground. A man knelt on his chest. Rough hands grasped his throat.

"Who have you there, Tam?"

"A damned fool for certain, whoever he is. What brings him down a hill like this in the dark, as if the devil was after him?"

"Loose his throat; do you want to choke him. Let him speak. Now, then, man, tell us who you are, and what you're doing here."

Neal's powers of reasoning and thought returned to him. With the presence of real danger his fear vanished. He saw the forms of the men above him, discerned against the dull grey of the sky that they were armed and in uniform. He understood at once that he had fallen into the hands of soldiers, perhaps of yeomen.

"Who are you?" said the voice again.

Then the man who knelt on him added a word of warning--

"If you won't speak, we're the boys who know how to loose your tongue. We've made many a damned croppy glad to speak when we'd dealt with him."

Neal remained silent.

"Get him on his feet, Tam, and we'll take him to the Captain. If he's not a rebel himself he'll know where the rebels are hid."

Neal was pulled up by the arms and marched along the lane again to Moylin's house. He was led into the kitchen. Two men sat at the table drinking. They were in uniform. Neal recognised it as that of the Kilulta yeomen, the men who had raided his father's meeting-house. He recognised one of the officers--Captain Twinely. The sergeant made his report. He and his men had been patrolling the lane as they had been ordered. They had heard a man running fast towards them, had stopped him, and arrested him.

"Who are you, and what are you doing here?" asked Captain Twinely.

Neal made no answer. The sergeant peered closely at his face.

"I think I know the man, sir. He's the young fellow that was with the women at the meetinghouse in the north. The man the old lord made us loose when we had him. What do you say, Tam?"

"You're right as hell," said the trooper who stood by Neal. "I'd know the young cub in a thousand."

Captain Twinely rose, took the lamp from the hook where it hung, held it close to Neal's face, and looked at him.

"I believe you're right," he said. "Now, young man, we know who you are; You're Neal Ward." He drew a paper from his pocket and looked it over. "Yes, that's the name, 'Neal Ward, son of the Reverend Micah Ward, Presbyterian minister of Dunseveric. A young man, about six foot high, well built, fair hair, grey eyes, active, strong.' Yes, the description fits all right. Now, Mr. Neal Ward, since I've answered my first question myself, perhaps you'll be so good as to answer my second for me. Where are your fellow-rebels?"

Neal was silent.

"Come now, that won't do. We know there's a meeting of United Irishmen here to-night. We know that the leaders, M'Cracken, Monro, Hope, and the rest are somewhere about. Where are they?"

"I don't know," said Neal, "and if I did I wouldn't tell you."

The sergeant struck him sharply across the mouth with the back of his hand.

"Take that for your insolence. I'll learn ye to say 'sir' when ye speak to a gentleman."

"Answer my question," said Captain Twinely, "or, by God, I'll make you."

"Try him with half hanging," said the other officer, speaking for the first time. "I've known a tongue wag freely enough after it's been sticking black out of a man's mouth for a couple of minutes."

"Too risky, Jack. The last fellow you half hanged wouldn't come to life again; turned out to be whole hanged, by gad." He laughed. "There's fifty pounds on the head of this young cock, and it's ten to one but the rascally Government would back out of their promise if we brought them nothing but a damned corpse. Besides, I want the information. The vermin's nest must be somewhere round. I want to get the lot of them. No, no; there's more ways of making a croppy speak than half hanging him. We'll try the strap first, any way. Now, Mr. Neal Ward, will you speak or will you not?"

"I will not."

"Hell to your soul! but I'm glad to hear it. I owe you something, young man, and I like to pay my debts. If you'd spoken without flogging I might have had to bring you into Belfast with a whole skin. Now I'll have you flogged, and you'll speak afterwards. Tam, give the sergeant your belt. Sergeant, there's a tree outside. Tie the prisoner up and flog him till he speaks, but don't kill him. Leave enough life in him to last till we get him to Belfast, unless he speaks at once."

"Yes, sir, but if your orders are so particular I'd rather you'd be present yourself to see how much he can stand."

"I'm not going to leave my bottle," said Captain Twinely, "to stand sentry over croppy carrion. Flog him till you lay his liver bare, sergeant, but don't cut it out of him."

The sergeant saluted, and marched Neal out of the house. His coat was dragged off him, his shirt stripped from his back, his hands tied to the tree which stood before Moylin's house. He set his teeth and waited. The predominating feeling in his mind at first was not fear but furious anger. He had shrunk in terror from the near prospect of seeing Finlay die. He felt nothing now except a passionate desire for revenge.

The sergeant swung the trooper's belt round his head, making it whistle through the air. Neal shivered and shrank, but the blow did not fall. The sergeant was in no hurry.

"You hear that," he said, swinging the belt again. "Will you speak before I lay it on you? You shall have time to consider. Nobody shall say I hurried a prisoner. We'll sing you a psalm, my dearly beloved, a sweet psalm to a most comfortable tune. At the end of the first verse I'll give you another chance. If you don't speak then----. Now Tam, now lads all, tune up to the Ould Hunderd,

*"'There was a Presbyterian cat
Who loved her neighbour's cream to sup;
She sanctified her theft with prayer
Before she went to drink it up.'"*

The troopers, who appeared to have learned both tune and words since the night when the sergeant sang them in Dunseveric meeting-house, shouted lustily. Following their sergeant, they drawled the last line until it seemed to Neal as if they would never reach the end of it.

"Now, Mr. Neal Ward," said the sergeant, "you've had a most comfortable and cheering psalm for the hour of your affliction. Will you speak, or----. Damn your soul, Tam, what are you at?"

The man next him lurched suddenly forward, clutching at the sergeant. In another instant there was a dull thud, and Donald Ward stood over the sergeant with a pistol, grasped by its barrel, in his hand. He had brought the butt of it down on the man's skull. Two more of the yeomen fell almost at the same instant. The rest, three of them with wounds, fled, yelling, down the lane.

"The cropies are on us! Hell and murder! We're dead men!"

There were about twenty of them, all well armed, but a night surprise has a tendency to shake the firmest nerves. Captain Twinely and his fellow-officer played no very heroic part. At the first sound of the shouting and the footsteps of the flying troopers they rushed into the inner room and crawled under the bed, fighting desperately with each other for the place nearest the wall, but Donald Ward had no time to go after them.

"Cut the boy down," he said.

It was Felix Matier who set Neal free.

"Oh, whistle and I will come to you, my lad," he quoted, as he hustled the shirt over Neal's shoulders. "Why didn't

you whistle, Neal, or shout, or something? Only for that devil's song we'd never have found you. I guessed he was at some mischief when I heard him begin it."

"Silence," said Donald, "and let us get out of this. The place must be swarming with troops, and those yelling cowards will arouse every soldier within a mite of us. It may not be so easy to chase the next lot. Over into the churchyard again, and then, Moylin, we must trust to you. You know the country, or you ought to, and I don't."

Aeneas Moylin led the way into the churchyard again, and across the wall at the lower end of it. The noise of many horsemen riding fast reached them from the lane they had left. The frightened yeomen had gathered troops to aid them, dragoons who had been posted on the main road down below. From the top of the rath, which rose dark above even the tower of the church, there came shouts. Men had been placed there, too, and were gathering to their comrades opposite Moylin's house. The hunt would begin in earnest soon. Donald called a halt and, cowering under the shadow of a thick hedge, the little party of fugitives held a consultation.

"We might go back to the vault," said James Bigger. "They would find it hard to get at us there, even if they discovered us. They couldn't burn us out, for the walls are solid stone and four foot thick at least."

"I'm not going to spend the night with---- with what's there," said Felix Matier. "I'm not a coward, but I won't sit in the dark all night with my knees up against--ugh!"

"James Finlay?" said Bigger. "He won't hurt you now."

"I'm for getting away if possible," said Donald. "I'm not frightened of dead men, but I want to be at the fight tomorrow. If we stay here all night we'll miss it."

"Hark!" said Moylin, "they're in the churchyard. I hear them stumbling about among the graves. We can't get back now, even if we want to. Follow me."

Creeping along the side of the hedge, they crossed the field they were in, another, and another after that. They came upon a by-road.

"We must cross this," said Moylin, "and I think there are soldiers nigh at hand."

Suddenly the sky behind them grew strangely bright. A flame, which cast black shadows from hedge and tree and wall, which lit up every open space of ground, shot up.

"Down," said Donald, "down for your lives, lie flat. Where the devil have they got the fire?"

"It's my house," said Moylin, quietly, "the roof is thatched. It burns well, but it won't burn for long."

The shouts of the soldiers round the burning homestead reached them plainly. A body of horsemen cantered along the lane in front of them.

"Now," said Donald, "now, while their backs are turned, get across."

They crossed unseen, and gained the shelter of the ditch at the far side. They crept along it, seeking some boundary wall or hedge running at right angles which would cast a shadow over them. The horsemen passed again, but this time the risk of discovery was less. The thatch of Moylin's house had almost burned itself out. Only a red glow remained, casting little shadow, lighting the land dimly. They crossed the field in safety and reached a grove of trees.

"We're right now," said Moylin. "We can take it easy from this on."

"Neal Ward," said Felix Matier, "next time you get yourself into a scrape I'll leave you there. I haven't been as nervous since I played 'I spy' twenty years ago among the whins round the Giant's Ring. Fighting's no test of courage. It's running away that tries a man."

"Phew!" said Donald, wiping his brow. Even he seemed to have felt the strain of the last half-hour. "I did some scouting work for General Greene in the Carolinas. I've lain low in sight of the watch-fires of Cornwallis' cavalry, but I'm damned if I ever had as close a shave as that. I felt jumpy, and that's a fact. I think it was the sight of your bare back, Neal, and that blackguard brandishing his belt over you that played up with my nerves."

"Let's be getting on," said Moylin, "my house is ashes now, the house I built with my own hands, the room my wife died in, the bed my girl was born in. She's safe out of this, thank God. I want to be getting on. I want to be in Antrim tomorrow with a pike in my hand and a regiment of dragoons in front of me."

Under Moylin's guidance they travelled across country through the night. About three in the morning, when the east was beginning to grow bright with the coming dawn, they reached a substantial farmhouse and climbed into the haggard.

"We're within twenty yards of the main road now," said Moylin, "about a mile and a half outside the town of Antrim. We can lie here till morning. It's a safe place. The man that owns it won't betray us if he does find us here."

At six o'clock Donald Ward awoke. The rest of the party lay stretched around him, sleeping as men do after severe physical exertion and mental strain. He sat still for a while, and then crept out of the barn where they slept, and reconnoitered the farmhouse. He was surprised to find no sign of life about it. Doors and windows were fast shut. No dog barked at him. No cattle lowed. Not even a hen pecked or cackled in the yard. He returned to the barn and roused

the rest of the party.

"I've been looking round," he said, "to see what chance we have of getting breakfast. As far as I can make out the place is deserted."

"I wouldn't wonder," said Moylin, "if the man that owns it has cleared out. He's a bit of a coward, and he's not much liked in the country because he tries to please both parties."

"I thought you said last night," said Donald, "that he wouldn't betray us."

"No more he would," said Moylin, "he'd be afraid of what might happen him after, but I never said he'd help us. It's my belief he's gone off out of this in dread of what may happen in Antrim to-day. He'll be at his brother's farm away down the Six Mile Water."

"Well," said Donald, "it doesn't matter about him. The question is, how are we to get something to eat?"

A long consultation followed. There were serious difficulties. The amount of food required for seven hungry men was considerable, and Donald Ward insisted strongly on the necessity of having a good meal. It was decided at last that two of the party should venture into Antrim to buy bread and wine. No one knew what troops there might be in the town. It would not be safe to count on the support of the inhabitants if they happened to have soldiers in their houses. The inns might be full of officers. The shops might be in the hands of the royal troops.

"It's no use discussing the difficulties and dangers," said Donald at last. "We've got to risk it. We can't fight all day on empty stomachs. We'd fight badly if we did. I and Neal here will go into Antrim, we're the least likely to be recognised. The rest of you are known men. We'll bring you back something to eat."

At eight o'clock they set out, and reached the town just as the people were beginning to open their doors. Donald Ward pressed some money into Neal's hand.

"Go into the inn where we stopped," he said. "Get a couple of bottles of wine and some cold meat if you can. I'll go on to the baker's. We'll meet again opposite the church. If I'm not there in twenty minutes go back without me; I'll wait that long for you. Walk in as if you owned the shanty. There's nothing starts suspicion as quick as looking frightened. Bluster a bit if they look crooked at you, and answer no questions for anybody."

Neal did his best to follow the advice. But it is not easy for a man who has slept two successive nights in the open, who has had no opportunity of shaving, and who has crawled in ditches for several miles, to assume the airs of an opulent and self-contented tourist. Neal was painfully conscious that he must look like a disreputable tramp. Nevertheless he squared his shoulders, held up his head, and jingled his money in his pocket as he passed through the door. He called valiantly for the master. A girl, tousle-headed and heavy-eyed, looking as if she, too, had slept on a hillside or slept very little in bed, came to him. He recognised her as the same who had waited on him and Donald when they spent the night in the inn. She was sharp-sighted in spite of her sleeplessness. She knew Neal.

"In there with you," she said, pointing to a door, "I'll get you what you're after wanting. The dear knows there's broken meat in plenty here the morn."

Neal entered the room. The table was littered with the remains of breakfast. A large party had evidently been there and had gone. Neal guessed that at least a dozen people had sat at the table. With his back to the room, looking out of the window, stood a young man, booted and spurred for riding, well dressed, well groomed, a sword by his side. His figure struck Neal as being familiar. A second glance made him sure that this was Maurice St. Clair. For a moment he hesitated. Then he said--

"Maurice."

"Neal," said the other, turning quickly. "What brings you here? God, man, you mustn't stay. My father is in the house and Lord O'Neill. Thank God the rest of them are gone."

"What brings you and your father to Antrim, Maurice?"

"There was to have been a meeting of the magistrates of the county here to-day. My father rode in last night and brought me with him, but there came an orderly from Belfast this morning with news which fluttered our company. The rebels are to attack the town to-day. Oh, Neal, but it was fun to see the hurry the worshipful justices were in to get home this morning. There were a round dozen of them here last night drinking death and damnation to the croppies till the small hours. This morning it was who would get his breakfast and his horse first. You never saw such scrambling."

"You and your father stayed," said Neal.

"Yes. Is it likely my lord would ride away from danger? You know him, Neal."

The girl entered with a basket on her arm. With a glance at Maurice St. Clair she came close to Neal and whispered--

"There's for you. There's plenty wine and cold meat for half a score. I'll be tongued by the master after, it's like, but I'll give it for the sake of Jemmy Hope, who's a better gentleman than them that wears finer coats, that never said a hard word or did an uncivil thing to a poor serving wench no more than if she'd been the first lady in the land."

Neal took the basket and bade farewell to Maurice, but as he turned to leave the room Lord Dunseveric and another

gentleman entered. Neal stood back, hoping to escape notice, but Lord Dunseveric saw and recognised him.

"O'Neill," he said to his companion, "pardon me a moment. This is a young friend of mine to whom I would speak a word."

He led Neal to the window.

"Are you on your way home, Neal?"

"No, my lord."

"I suppose I must not ask where you are going or what you mean to do. I don't ask, but I advise you strongly to go home. The game is up, Neal. The plans of your friends have been blown upon. Their secrets are known. See here."

He held out a printed paper. Neal took it and read--

"To-morrow we march on Antrim. Drive the garrison of Randalstown before you, and haste to form a junction with the commander-in-chief.--Henry Joy M'Cracken. First year of Liberty, 6th June, 1798."

"That paper was handed to General Clavering last night," said Lord Dunseveric, "and half a dozen more copies were sent to other officers. Is it any use going on now?"

"My lord," said Neal, "I have heard things--I have seen things. Last night I myself was stripped for flogging. They have set a price on my head. I put it to you as a gentleman, as a just man and a brave, would it be right to go back now?"

"It is no use going on."

"But would you go back? Would you desert friends who did not desert you? Would you leave them?"

"A wise man does not struggle against the inevitable, Neal."

"But a man of honour, my lord. What would a man of honour do?"

"A man of honour," said Lord Dunseveric, "would act as you are going to do."

"Farewell, my lord, I go with an easy mind now, if I go to my death, for I have your approval."

"Neal Ward," said Lord Dunseveric, "I have known you since you were a boy, and I've loved you next to my own children. I don't say you are acting wrongly or dishonourably, but you and your friends are acting foolishly. You cannot win. You and hundreds of innocent people must suffer, and Ireland, Neal, Ireland will come to the worse, to the old subjection, to the old bondage, to the old misery, through your foolishness. I say this, not to dissuade you from going on, for I think that you must go on now, but in order that when you look back on it all afterwards you may remember that there were true friends of Ireland who were not on your side."

Neal bent over Lord Dunseveric's hand and kissed it solemnly.

"I have known two great and good men," he said. "You, my lord, and one whose name you might count contemptible, James Hope, the weaver, of Templepatrick. I think myself happy that I have had the goodwill of both. And, my lord, I think Ireland the most unhappy country in the world because to-day these two men will be in arms against each other."

He sobbed. Then, lest he should betray more emotion, went quickly from the inn.

He found his uncle waiting for him outside the church.

"Well, Neal," he said, "how have you sped? You have a basket; I hope it is full. See here, I have four loaves of bread. The baker man would have denied me. He suspected me, but I had my answer for him. I told him I was groom to a great lord who was staying in the inn. I made free with the name of your friend, Lord Dunseveric. I told him that if he refused my lord the bread he wanted he would hang him for his insolence. I got the bread. For the first time and the last I have been a serving man. Now, back, back as fast as we can go to our hungry comrades."

After they left the town Donald Ward grew grave again.

"My lad," he said, "we shall have a fight to-day--a fight worth fighting. It won't be the first time I've looked on bare steel or heard the bullets sing. I know what fighting means, and I know this, that many of us will lie low enough before the sun sets. It may be my luck to come through or it may not. I have a sort of feeling that I am to fire my last shots to-day. Don't look at me like that, boy, I'm not frightened. I'll fight none the worse. But I want to settle a little bit of business with you now that we are alone. I have a paper here, I wrote it last night while you slept; I signed it this morning, and I have it witnessed. I got a parson to witness it, a kind of curate man, a poor creature. I caught him going into the church to say prayers, and made him witness my signature. I had time enough, for you were longer at the inn than I was at the baker's. Here it is for you, Neal. In case of my death it makes you owner of my share of a little business in the town of Boston. My partner is managing it now. We own a few ships, and were making money when I left. But it did not suit me. I got the fighting fever into my blood during the war. I couldn't settle down to books and figures. Maybe you'll take to the work. If you do you ought to stand a good chance of dying a rich man, and you'll be comfortably off the day you hand that paper to my partner. Not a word now, not a word. I know what you want to say. Twist your lips into a smile again. Look as if you were happy whatever you feel, and when all's said and done you

ought to be happy. Whatever the end of it may be we'll get our bellies full of fighting to-day, and what has life got to give a man better than that?"

CHAPTER XII

After breakfast Donald Ward led his party along the road up which M'Cracken's force must march to reach Antrim. At about noon he met the advance guard of United Irishmen. Several of Donald's companions were recognised by these men, and his party were led back to where M'Cracken himself marched with the central division of his army. It was then that Neal first saw this leader--a tall, fair-haired, gentle-faced man, dressed in a white and green uniform, armed with a sword. He spoke to Donald Ward, and then calling Neal, questioned him about the condition of the town of Antrim. Neal repeated all that Lord Dunseveric had said, and told how he had been shown a copy of the proclamation.

"You will not tell anyone else what you have told me, Mr. Ward," said M'Cracken, "the news that our plans are known to the enemy might be discouraging to the men. It does not alter my determination to take Antrim to-day. Now I must give you your orders and your posts." He called Donald Ward to him. "You will take charge of our two pieces of cannon," he said. "They are at the rear of the force. Neal Ward, you will join the first division of the army--the musketeers--and place yourself under James Hope's command. I think this is what both you and he would wish. Felix Matier and James Bigger will do likewise. Moylin, you and your two friends will march with the pikemen, whom I lead myself. Some of the men have arms for you."

The party had fallen somewhat to the rear of the column during this conversation with M'Cracken. Neal and his two companions hurried forward at once in order to reach the division of musketeers which was in the van. They had opportunity as they passed along to admire the steady march and the determined bearing of the men. Green flags were everywhere displayed. The long pikes, iron spear-heads fastened on stout poles, were formidable weapons in the hands of strong men. An almost unbroken silence was preserved in the ranks. The northern Irishmen are not great talkers at any time. Set to work of deadly earnest, they become very silent, very grim.

There were men in the little army belonging to some of the finest fighting stocks in the world. There were descendants of the fiery Celtic tribes to whom Owen Roe O'Neill taught patience and discipline; who, under him, if he had lived, might well have broken even Cromwell's Ironsides and sent the mighty Puritan back to his England a beaten man. Despised, degraded, enslaved for more than a century, these had yet in them the capacity for fighting. There were also the great-grandsons of the citizen soldiers of Derry--of the men who stood at bay so doggedly behind their walls, whom neither French military art nor Celtic valour, nor the long suffering of famine and disease, could cow into surrender. There were others--newcomers to the soil of Ireland--who brought with them to Ulster the traditions of the Scottish Covenantors, memories of many a fierce struggle against persecution, of conflict with the dragoons of Claverhouse. All these, whose grandfathers had stood in arms for widely different causes, marched together on Antrim, an embodiment of Wolfe Tone's dream of a united Ireland. Their flags were green, vividly symbolic of the blending of the Protestant orange with the ancient Irish blue. M'Cracken, with such troops behind him, might march hopefully, even though he knew that the cavalry, infantry, and artillery were hurrying against him along the banks of the Six Mile Water, from Blaris Camp and Carrickfergus.

James Hope greeted Neal warmly.

"There is a musket for you," he said, "and your own share of the cartridges you helped to save. There's a lad here, a slip of a boy, who is carrying them for you."

He looked round and pointed out the boy to Neal.

"There he is; you may march in the ranks along with him."

Neal took his place beside a boy with bright red hair and a pleasant smiling face, who handed him a musket and a pouch of cartridges.

"Them's yours, Neal Ward. Jemmy Hope bid me bring them for you."

"But what are you to do?" said Neal. "You have no musket for yourself."

"Faith I couldn't use it if I had. I never shot off one of them guns in my life. I'd be as like to hit myself as any one. I'll just go along with you, I have a sword, and I'll be able to use that if I get the chance."

Neal looked at the lad beside him, noted his smooth face and sparkling eyes.

"You must be very young," he said, "too young for this work."

"I might be older than you now, young as I look. But is thon Mr. Matier coming till us? Go you and talk to him if you want. I won't have him here, marching along with me."

At about half-past one Hope halted his musketeers. He was in sight of Antrim, and he waited for orders. It was clear that the town was held by English troops. Their red coats were visible in the main street, but, without that, the houses which burnt here and there gave sufficient evidence of the presence of a ravishing army.

M'Cracken made a speech to his men--an eloquent speech. Now-a-days we are inclined to look with some contempt on men who make eloquent speeches. We are so accustomed to the perpetual flow of our Sunday oratory that we have come to think of speeches as mere preliminaries to copious draughts of porter in public-houses--a sort of grace before

drink, to which no sensible man attaches any particular importance. But the orators of M'Cracken's day spoke seriously, with a sense of responsibility, because all of them--Flood, Grattan, and the rest--spoke to armed men, who might at any time draw swords to give effect to the speaker's words. M'Cracken spoke to men with swords already drawn and muskets loaded. Therefore, he had some right to be eloquent, and his hearers had some right to cheer.

Felix Matier had somehow laid hands on Phelim, the blind piper, and set him playing. A hundred voices, voices of marching men, caught the tune, whistled, and sang it. Matier's own voice rang out clearest and loudest of all. It was, the "Marseillaise" they sang--a not inappropriate anthem for soldiers about to fight for the liberty of man. But James Hope had something else in his mind besides the storming of a French Bastille and the guillotining of a French aristocracy. He believed that he was fighting: for Ireland, and the foreign tune was not to his mind. Laying his hand on Matier's shoulder he commanded silence. Then whispering to Phelim, he set a fresh tune going on the pipes. An ancient Irish war march shrilled through the ranks--a tune with a rush in it--a tune which sends the battle fever through men's veins. Now and then the passion of it reaches a climax, and the listeners, almost in spite of themselves, must shout aloud. It is called "Brian Boromhe's March," and it may be that his warriors shouted when the pipers played it marching on Clontarf against the Danes. Hope's musketeers heard it, whistled it as the piper played, hummed it in deep voices, and always, when the moment came, shouted aloud.

The musketeers halted, and the pikemen passed them by. The broad, straight street lay before them, and at the end of it, half sheltered by the market house, were the English infantry. Behind them, blocking the end of the street, splitting it as it were into two roads, which run to the right and left, was the wall of Lord Massereene's demesne. Across the bridge the English cannon, almost too late, were being hurried by an escort of sweating dragoons. There was work with them for Hope's musketeers and Donald Ward's two brass six-pounders. But between the infantry and M'Cracken's men was a body of cavalry, sitting in shelter behind the wall which surrounded the church. These would cut the musketeers to pieces. The pikemen must face them first.

The horsemen wheeled from their shelter and charged. The long pikes were lowered, steadied, held in bristling line. There was trampling, shouting, cursing, torn horses, wounded men, dust, and confusion. Then the horsemen turned back, musket bullets followed them, men reeled from the saddles, horses stumbled, the pikemen at the lower end of the street shook themselves and cheered. They had tasted victory. A louder cheer followed. Another body of pikemen, true almost to the moment of their time, marched in along the Carrickfergus Road and joined M'Cracken. The whole body moved forward together. Down the street to meet them thundered the dragoons who had brought the cannon in across the bridge. Hope's musketeers fired again, but no bullets could stop the furious charge. The dragoons were on the pikes--among the pike men, There was stabbing and cutting, pike and sabre clashed. Again the cavalry were driven back, again the musket bullets followed them--musket bullets fired by marksmen. M'Cracken, at the head of his men, pushed forward. The dragoons took shelter, the English artillery and infantry opened fire. The street was swept with grape-shot and bullets.

Neal, in the front rank of Hope's men, was loading and firing rapidly. He heard a shout behind him.

"Way there, make way!"

He turned. Donald Ward and two men with him had got one of their six-pounders mounted on a country cart. They dragged the gun to the middle of the road. Donald, sweating and dusty, but calm and alert, with a grim smile on his face, laid the gun, loaded, fired. Again he fired. The gun was well aimed. His shot ploughed its way among the men who served the English guns, but at the second discharge a round shot flung it from its carriage and laid it useless on the road. The man who stood beside it cursed and flung his hands up in despair. Donald Ward turned quickly.

"Back," he said, "get the other gun."

The pikemen pressed on against the storm of grape and cannister and bullets. The guns ceased firing to let the dragoons charge. Again the pikemen knelt to receive them, and flung them back. At last the wall of the churchyard was reached. The pikemen leaped into the churchyard and breathed in safety. A flag was raised above the wall, a green flag. A wild cheer greeted it. Hope shouted an order to his men. They rushed forward along the ground that had been so hardly won, and took their places with their comrades behind the wall. Leaning over it, or finding loopholes in the rough masonry, they opened fire on the infantry before them. A large body of pikemen crossed the road and entered a lane. They pressed along behind the houses of the street to turn the flank of the English infantry who were drawn up against the demesne wall. The English commander saw his danger, and sent dragoons charging down the street again. But Hope's musketeers were in the churchyard this time. They fired at close range. The dragoons hesitated. The remaining pikemen rushed out on them. The colonel reeled in his saddle, struck by a bullet. His men wavered. In one instant the pikemen were among them. Three horsemen shouted to the men to rally, and with the flats of their swords struck at those who were retreating. But the dragoons had had too much of the pikes. They turned and fled up the street. Sweeping to the left they galloped in confusion from the battle. The three horsemen who did not fly were surrounded. The main body of the pikemen pressed forward; the flanking party joined them. The English infantry and gunners were driven through the gates and took shelter behind the walls of the demesne.

In the middle of the street the three horsemen fought for their lives against a handful of men who had held back from

the main charge. Neal recognised two of them--saw with horror Lord Dun-severic and Maurice cutting at the pikes with their swords. He leaped the wall and rushed to their help. The third horseman--the unfortunate Lord O'Neill--was separated far from them. He fell from his saddle, ripped by a pike thrust. Lord Dunseveric's horse was stabbed, and threw its rider to the ground. Maurice leaped down and raised his father. The two stood back to back while the pikemen pressed on them. Then Neal reached them. With his musket clubbed he beat down two of the pikes. The men cursed him, and, furious at his interference, thrust at him. A sword flashed suddenly beside him, and a pike, which would have pierced him, was turned aside. Neal saw that the red-haired boy who marched with him in the morning had followed him from the churchyard and was fighting fiercely by his side. The pikemen realised that they were attacking their friends. Leaving Neal and his protector, they ran to join their comrades.

"Yield yourselves," shouted Neal. "You are my prisoners. Yield and you are safe."

Lord Dunseveric bowed.

"Thank you, Neal," he said, quietly, "we yield to you."

A bullet struck the ground at their feet, and then another. The soldiers behind the demesne wall were firing at them. The boy who had saved Neal from the pike thrust gave a sudden cry and sank on the ground.

"I think," said Lord Dunseveric, "you had better pick up that boy and walk in front of us. It is possible that our men will cease firing when they see that Maurice and I are between them and you."

Neal stooped and raised the boy.

"I can walk fine," he said, "if you let me put my arm round your neck."

There was a pause in the fighting. The English infantry drawn up on the terrace behind the wall would not fire on Lord Dunseveric and his son. Hope's musketeers in the churchyard watched in silence while the little procession approached them. Neal, with his arm round the wounded boy, walked first. Lord Dunseveric, following, drew his snuff-box from his pocket, tapped it, and took a pinch, drawing the powder into his nostrils with deliberate enjoyment.

"It seems, Maurice," he said, with a slight smile, "that we are people of considerable importance. Two armies are looking on while we march to captivity, and yet we do not appear in a very heroic light. We are the prisoners of one badly-armed young man and a wounded boy."

"Neal saved us," said Maurice.

"Yes," said Lord Dunseveric, "that is, no doubt, the way to look at it. We should certainly have been piked if it had not been for Neal."

Neal lifted the wounded boy over the churchyard wall and knelt beside him on the grass.

"Where are you hit?" he said.

"It's my leg, the calf of my leg, but it's no that bad, I could get along a bit, yet."

The English infantry opened a furious fire on M'Cracken's pikemen, who stood around the cannon they captured. Hope's musketeers replied, firing rapidly. Many of them had fallen. There were muskets to spare, and the wounded men, crawling round their comrades, loaded for them, and passed the guns up to those who still could shoot. The whole churchyard was full of smoke, and a heavy cloud of it hung in the still air before the wall. It became impossible to see plainly what was happening. Neal was aware that Felix Matier stood beside him, and that Lord Dunseveric was somewhere behind him watching, with cool interest, the progress of the fight. Suddenly Felix Matier shouted--

"We're blinded with this smoke. We must see to shoot. We must see to aim. Follow me who dare!"

He leaped into the street, and knelt down. The air was clearer there than in the churchyard. He aimed steadily, fired, loaded, and fired again. The bullets of the infantry splashed on the ground around him like rain drops in a heavy shower. His clothes were cut by them. It seemed a miracle that he did not fall. He began to sing, and this time there was no one to forbid his "Marseillaise." Then, while his voice rose to its highest, while he seemed, out there alone in the bullet-swept street, a very incarnation of the battle spirit--the end came for him. He flung up his arms, rose, staggered towards the shelter of the churchyard, turned half round in the direction of the men who fired at him, and dropped dead.

Lord Dunseveric stepped forward and tapped Neal on the shoulder.

"Listen," he said.

From the Belfast Road, along which the United Irishmen had marched in the morning, came the sound of drums. Through the smoke it was possible to discern dimly that a large body of troops was approaching the town. There could be no doubt as to who they were. No reinforcements for M'Cracken's army could be looked for from the south. Neal grasped the meaning of what he saw. Hope's men in the graveyard, which they had held so long, were caught between the soldiers in the demesne and these fresh troops who marched on them. Others besides Neal saw what was happening. The firing slackened. Here and there a man dropped his musket and stared wildly around. At the top of the street the dragoons who had fled appeared again. They attacked M'Cracken's pike-men once more, and this time victoriously. Shaken by the fire of the soldiers behind the wall, disheartened by the appearance of the enemy in their

rear, these men, who had fought so well, could fight no more. Some fled, some, with their leader, faced the dragoons and, their pikes still forming a bristling hedge in front of them, retired sullenly eastwards from the town.

The musketeers were left alone. Their position seemed desperate. Neal stopped firing, and looked round. Hope stood bare-headed, his sword in his hand.

"We have fought a good fight, men, and we'll fight again, but we must get out of this now. Load and reserve your fire till I give the order. Follow me."

He stepped into the street. His men, gaining courage from the cool confidence of his voice, loaded their muskets and went after him.

"Neal," said Lord Dunseveric, "this is madness. Stay. There are at least a thousand men in front of you. You can't cut your way through them."

But Neal did not listen. To him, for the moment, it was enough that Hope was leading.

"Neal, Neal, don't leave me."

It was the voice of the boy who had stood by him in the street and turned the pikes aside.

"See, I have bound up my leg. I can walk."

Neal took him by the arm, and together they joined the remnant of Hope's musketeers in their march against the fresh troops who approached them.

Lord Dunseveric, heedless of the bullets which still swept the street from the demesne, stood on the graveyard wall. He was excited at last.

"Maurice," he cried, "these men are going to certain destruction, but, by God, their courage is glorious. Look, they are out of the town. They have halted. They fire. Now, if the English officer has any horse he can cut them to pieces. He should advance, cavalry or no cavalry. A charge with the bayonets would settle it. See, Maurice, the red coats have halted. They are forming a square; they expect to be charged. The rebels have turned. They are satisfied with having checked the advance. They are making back into the town. Are they mad? No, by God, they wheel to their right. They are off. They have escaped."

The meaning of Hope's manoeuvre broke suddenly on Lord Dunseveric. There was a road at the end of the town leading north-east to Done-gore. By going along it Hope could join M'Cracken and the remains of the army. But to keep it open he had to check the advance of the English reinforcements. He feinted against them, calculating that their commander would not know how the fight had gone in Antrim, and must of necessity move cautiously. He risked the utter destruction of his little force in making his bid for safety. He reaped the reward of courage and skill, extricating his musketeers from what seemed an impossible position.

CHAPTER XIII

General Clavering seemed in no way disconcerted by the escape of Hope's musketeers. He marched through the town with drums beating and colours flying, having very much the air of a victorious general. Lord Dunseveric stepped out of the graveyard and saluted him.

"Accept my congratulations," he said, "on your timely arrival. You have released me and my son from what might have been an unpleasant and uncomfortable captivity."

"I am glad," said the general, "to have been of any service to your lordship. I trust you suffered no ill-usage at the hands of the rebels. If you did----, well, we have an opportunity of settling our scores with them now."

He smiled, but the look on his face was by no means pleasant to see.

"I received no ill-usage at all," said Lord Dunseveric. "On the contrary, I was treated with as much courtesy as was possible under the circumstances. I would ask your forbearance towards any prisoners you may take, and your kindness to the wounded. There are many of them in the churchyard."

"You may be sure that your lordship's recommendation shall have due weight with me."

The words were civil, but Lord Dunseveric detected a sneer in the voice which uttered them. He was not well pleased.

"I trust, sir," he said coldly, "that I am to take your words literally and not interpret them in accordance with the tone in which they are spoken."

"If you want plain speaking, Lord Dunseveric," said the general, "I shall deal with the rebels, whole or wounded, as rebels deserve. I mean to make these Antrim farmers as tame as gelt cats before I've done with them."

He beckoned to an officer of his staff, and gave some orders. In a few minutes several companies of mounted yeomen and dragoons trotted out of the town.

"It is a good job," said General Clavering, "that the rebels succeeded in getting away. If we had cut off their retreat we might have had some hard fighting. There is nothing nastier than tackling a rat in a corner. It is a much simpler business to cut up flying men. All beaten troops straggle and desert. Irregulars, operating in their own country, simply melt away after a defeat. They sneak off home, hide their arms in hay stacks, and pretend they never left their ploughs. I know their ways, and, by God, I'll track them. I'll ferret them out."

General Clavering's estimate of the conduct of irregular troops had something in it. Even James Hope's influence failed to keep his men from straggling. They had fought well while there was any chance of victory, but war was strange to them. The horrors of wounds and death, the bitter disappointment of defeat, the hopeless outlook of the future, depressed them. Their homes were near at hand. Within a few miles of them were the familiar cottages, the waiting, anxious wives, the little children with eager faces. There was always the chance for each man that he might escape unknown, that his share in the rising might be forgotten. One and another dropped out of the ranks, slipped across the fields, sought to get home again along by-paths. It was not possible for Hope to delay his march in order to reason with his men--to hearten and steady them. He knew that the enemy would be swift in pursuit, that he must press on if he were to meet M'Cracken at Donegore. He did what he could. He went to and fro through the ranks, speaking quiet, brave words. Donald Ward, cool and determined as ever, talked of the American war.

"You're young at the work, yet," he said to the disheartened men. "Wait till you've been beaten half a dozen times. It was only by being beaten, and standing up to our beatings, that we won in the end. I remember when I was with General Greene in the Carolinas----"

The men listened to him and listened to Hope. Their spirit began to return to them. The ranks closed up. The march grew more regular, but the straggling did not altogether cease. The lure of home, the thought of rest after struggle, was too strong for some of them. Neal marched near the rear of the column. He had no thought of deserting a beaten side, of trying to save himself, but he knew that he could not go on for very long, and that he would not be able to reach Donegore. The boy whom he supported leaned heavily on him, until he almost had to carry him. The strain became more and more severe. He gave his musket to a comrade to carry for him. He lifted the boy upon his back and staggered on.

After nearly an hour's march Hope called a halt. Half a mile behind them on the road was a body of dragoons advancing rapidly. Hope drew his men up across the road, the few pikemen who were with him kneeling in front, the musketeers behind them. The dragoons came on at a trot. Then a word of command was given by their officer, and they galloped forward. Hope waited, and only at the last moment gave the word to fire. Horses and men fell. The charge was checked. A few staggered forward against the pikes. Most turned and fled. A wild cheer burst from Hope's men. Without waiting for orders they rushed after the retreating dragoons. The misery of defeat was forgotten for a moment. They tasted the joy of victory again. But the horsemen rallied, turned on their pursuers, and rode through them, cutting with their sabres. Neal, who had sat down on the roadside after firing his musket, saw Hope trying to recall his men,

saw Donald Ward far down the road gather a few pikemen round him and stand at bay. The dragoons, who had had enough of charging pikes, dismounted, unslung their carbines, and fired. Neal saw his uncle fall. Hope reformed his men and bade them load again, but the dragoons had no taste for another charge. Their officer was wounded. They turned and rode back towards Antrim.

Hope gave the word to march again, but Neal could carry the boy no more.

"I can't do it," he said. "We must stay here and take our chance."

"Go on," said the boy, "go you on. I've been a sore trouble to you the day, have done with me now."

"I will not leave you," said Neal, "we'll take our chance together."

He watched Hope's little force disappear up the road. Then he dragged the boy through the hedge into the meadow beyond it, and lay down in the deep grass.

"Is your leg very bad?" said Neal.

"It's no that bad, only I canna walk. It's bled a power, my stocking's soaked with the blood. Maybe if we could tie it up better we might stop it and I'd get strength to go again."

Neal dragged the lining from his coat, and tore it into strips. He cut the stocking from the boy's leg with his pocket-knife, and bandaged a long flesh wound as best he could.

"Rest now," he said, "and after a while we'll try and get on a bit."

They lay in the deep, cool grass. There was pure air round them, and they drew deep breaths of it into throats and lungs parched by the fumes of sulphurous smoke. A delicious silence wrapped them, folded them as if in a tender, kind embrace. A faint breeze stirred the grass, waved the white plumes of the meadow sweet, shook the blue vetch flowers and the purple spears of lusmor. In the hedge the reddening blooms of faded hawthorn still lingered. The honeysuckle fragrance filled the air. Groups of merry-faced dog-daisies nodded in the ditch, and round their stalks were buttercups, and beyond them the rich yellow of marsh marigolds. Neal fancied himself awaking from some hideous nightmare. It became impossible to believe in the reality of the battle, the fierce passion of it, the smoke, the sweat, the wounds, the cries. He was lulled into delicious ease. Rest was for the time the supreme good of life. His eyes closed drowsily. He was back in Dunseveric again, and in his ears the noise of a gentle summer sea.

He was roused by a touch of his companion's hand.

"I'm afraid there's a wheen o' sogers coming up the road."

Neal rose to his hands and knees and peered cautiously through the hedge. He saw mounted men riding slowly along the road from the direction of Antrim. They were still about half a mile off. Every now and then they halted and peered about them. They rode as if they feared an ambush, or as if they sought something or some one in the fields at each side of the road.

"They're yeomen," said Neal, "and they're coming towards us. We must lie as still as we can. Perhaps they may pass without seeing us."

"They willna," said the boy, "they'll see us. We'll be kilt at last."

Neal peered again. The yeomen had reached the spot where Donald and his pikemen had made their stand. They halted and dismounted to examine, perhaps to plunder, the bodies. Neal could see their uniforms plainly. He shivered. They were men of the Kilulta yeomenry, of Captain Twinely's company.

"Neal Ward, there's something I want to say to you before they catch us."

"Well, what is it? Speak at once. They'll be coming on soon, and then it won't do to be talking."

"Ay, but you mustn't look at me while I tell you."

Neal turned away and waited. He was impatient of this making of mysteries in a moment of extreme peril.

*"I would I were in Ballinderry,
I would I were in Aghalee,
I would I were in bonny Ram's Island
Trysting under an ivy tree--
Ochone, Ochone!"*

The words were sung very softly, but Neal recognised the voice at once. He turned at the second line and gazed in open-eyed astonishment at the singer.

"Ay, it's just me, just Peg MacIlrea." She smiled up at him as she spoke.

"But, Peg, how could you do it? Peg, if I'd only known. Why did you come?"

"It wasna right. It wasna maidenly. If that's what you want to be saying to me, Neal Ward. The other lassie wouldna have done it. Maybe not. But a' the lads I knew well were turning out and going to the fight, and what was to hinder a poor, wild lassie, that nobody cared about, from going, too? Ay, and being there at the break, the sore, sore break, in Antrim town?"

Neal heard the tramp of the yeomen's horses on the road. He heard their voices, their laughter, their oaths.

"Neal," said Peg, "you're a brave lad and a kind. I aye said it of ye from thon night when you throttled the dragoon. Do you mind it? D'you mind how I bit him?"

The yeomen were almost opposite their hiding-place now.

"Neal," whispered Peg, "will ye no gie me a kiss? The other lassie wouldna begrudge it to me now, I'm thinking."

He bent over her, put his arms round her neck, raised her head, and kissed her lips.

"Hush, Peg, hush," he whispered.

"There's a musket on the road in front of you, sergeant." Neal recognised Captain Twinely's voice. "There might be some damned croppy lurking in the meadow there. Dismount and beat him up. Hey! but we'll have some sport hunting him across country if he runs. The earths are all stopped. We'll have a fine burst, and kill the vermin in the end."

Neal stood upright.

"I surrender to you, Captain Twinely. I surrender as a prisoner of war."

It seemed to him the only chance of saving Peg MacIlrea. It was just possible that the yeomen would be satisfied with one prisoner.

"By God," said the captain, "if it isn't that damned young Ward again. Come, croppy, come, croppy, I'll give you a run for your life. I'll give you two minutes start by my watch, and I'll hunt you like a fox. It's a better offer than you deserve."

Neal stood still, and made no answer.

"To him, sergeant, prick him with your sword. Set him running."

The sergeant came blundering through the hedge. Neal stepped forward to meet him, in the hope of keeping Peg concealed, but the sergeant caught sight of her.

"There's another of them, Captain, lying in the grass."

"Rout him out, rout him out," said Captain Twinely, "we'll run the two. We'll have sport."

The sergeant stepped forward and kicked Peg. Neal flew at the man and knocked him down.

"Ho, ho," laughed Captain Twinely, "he's a game cub. Get through the hedge, men, and take a hold of him. We'll hunt the other fellow first."

"The other seems to be wounded, sir," said one of the men. "He has his leg bandaged."

"Then slit his throat," said the captain, "he can't run, and I've no use for wounded men."

Neal, his arms tightly gripped by two troopers, made a last appeal.

"It's a girl," he said, "would you murder a girl?"

Captain Twinely rolled in his saddle with mirth.

"A vixen," he cried. "Damn your soul, Neal Ward, but you're a sly one. To think of a true blue Presbyterian like you, a minister's son, God rot you, lying and cuddling a girl in a field. A vixen, by God. Strip her, sergeant, till we see if he's telling the truth."

Neal, with the strength of a furious man, tore himself from the grasp of his guards. He plunged through the hedge and leaped at Captain Twinely. He gripped the horse's mane with his left hand, and made a wild snatch at the throat of the man above him in the saddle. A blow on the face from the hilt of Twinely's sword threw him to the ground. He fell half stunned. He heard Peg shriek wildly, and then lost consciousness of what was happening.

He was roused again by a prod of a sword, and bidden to stand up. His hands were tied and the end of the rope made fast to the stirrup iron of one of the trooper's horses.

"We're going to take you back into Antrim," said Captain Twinely. "I don't deny that I'd rather deal with you here myself, but you're a fifty-pounder, my lad, and my men won't hear of losing their share of the reward. It'll come to the same thing in the end, any way. Clavering isn't the man to be squeamish about hanging a rebel. Mount men and march."

"Maybe the young cub would like to see his lass before he leaves her. Her face is a bonny one for kissing now."

Neal shuddered, and turned sick. Beyond the hedge in the trampled grass, among the meadow sweet and the loose strife, lay unnamable horror. He shut his eyes, dreading lest he should be forced to look, but the suggestion was too brutal even for Captain Twinely.

"Shut your devil's mouth," he said to the sergeant, "isn't what you've done enough for you? If the croppy that came on you at Donegore had broken your skull, instead of just cracking it, he would have rid the country of the biggest blackguard in it."

"Thon's fine talk," growled the sergeant, "but who bid us strip the wench? Is bloody Twinely turning chicken-hearted at the last?"

Captain Twinely did not choose to hear the sergeant's words, or the grumbling of the men around him. He put his troop in motion, and trotted off towards Antrim. Neal, running and stumbling, dazed, utterly weary and dejected, was dragged with them.

General Clavering sat at dinner in a private room of the Massereene Arms. He had with him Colonel Durham and several of the officers who had commanded troops during the battle. The landlord, obsequious and frightened, waited on the party himself. He had the best food he could get on the table, and the best wine from the cellar was ready for his guests. In the public room a larger party was gathered--yeomanry officers, captains, and lieutenants of the royal troops, and a few of the country squires who had ridden into the town after the fighting was over. Lord Dunseveric and Maurice were in the room where they had slept the night before. Lord O'Neill lay on one of two beds. Life was in him still, but he was mortally wounded. Lord Dunseveric sat beside him, holding his hand, and speaking to him occasionally. Maurice was at the window. The laughter of the party in the room below reached them, and the noisy talk of the troops who thronged the streets. Jest, curses, snatches of song, and calls for wine mingled with the groans which his extreme pain wrung from the wounded man and the solemn, quiet words about strength and courage which Lord Dunseveric spoke.

A party of horsemen clattered up the street, and halted at the inn door. They had a prisoner with them--a wretched-looking man, with torn clothes, a bruised, bloody face, and hair matted with sweat and grime. But Maurice recognised him. It was Neal Ward. He turned to his father.

"A company of yeomen has just marched in and they have Neal Ward with them. Their officer, I think it was that blackguard Twinely, has asked for General Clavering, and entered the inn."

"Very well, Maurice." Lord Dunseveric turned to the wounded man. "I must leave you for a few minutes, my friend; keep quiet and be brave. I shall be back again. Maurice will stay with you, and get you anything you want."

"Where are you going, Eustace?"

"I'm going to the general, to this Clavering man. He has a prisoner now whom I want to help if I can--the young man I told you about, who saved me from being piked in the street to-day. I would to God he could have saved you, too."

"That's past praying for now," said Lord O'Neill, "but you're right, Eustace, you're right. Save him from the hangman if you can. There's been blood enough shed to-day--Irish blood, Irish blood. There should be no more of it."

Lord Dunseveric entered the room where General Clavering and his officers sat at dinner. Captain Twinely stood at the end of the table, and Lord Dunseveric heard the orders he received.

"Put him into the market-house to-night. I'll hang that fellow in the morning, whatever I do with the rest."

"The market-house is full, sir," said Captain Twinely, "the officer in command says he can receive no more prisoners."

"Damn it, man, shut him up somewhere else, then, but don't stand there talking to me and interrupting my dinner. Here, landlord, have you an empty cellar?"

"Your worship, my lord general, there's only the wine cellar; but it's very nigh on empty now."

A shout of laughter greeted the remark.

"Fetch out the rest of the wine that's in it," said the general, "we'll make a clean sweep of it. Or, stay, leave the poor devil one bottle of decent claret. He's to be hanged tomorrow morning. He may have a sup of comfort to-night."

Captain Twinely saluted and withdrew.

"General Clavering," said Lord Dunseveric, "I ask you to spare this young man's life. I will make myself personally responsible for his safe keeping, and undertake to send him out of the country at the first opportunity."

"It can't be done, Lord Dunseveric. I am sorry to disoblige in a small matter, but it can't be done."

"I ask it as a matter of justice," said Lord Dunseveric. "The man saved my life and my son's life to-day in the street at the risk of his own. He deserves to be spared."

"I've given my answer."

Lord Dunseveric hesitated. For a moment it seemed as if he were about to turn and leave the room. Then, with an evident effort, he spoke again.

"I ask this man's life as a personal favour. I am not one who begs often from the Government, or who asks favours easily, but I ask this."

"Anything else, my lord, anything in reason, but this I will not grant. This young man has a bad record--a damned bad record. He was mixed up with the hanging of a yeoman in the north-----"

"He was not," said Lord Dunseveric. "I hanged that man."

"You hanged him," said General Clavering, angrily, "and yet you come here asking favours of me. But there's more, plenty more, against this Neal Ward. He tried to choke a dragoon in the street of Belfast, he took part in a daring capture of some ammunition for the rebels' use, he helped to murder a loyal man at Donegore last night, he was in arms

to-day. There's not half a dozen deserve hanging more richly than he does, and hanged he'll be. Never you fret yourself about him, Lord Dunseveric; sit down here and drink a glass with us. We're going to make a night of it."

"I beg leave to decline your invitation," said Lord Dunseveric, stiffly. "I have asked for mercy and been refused. I have asked for justice and been refused. I have begged a personal favour and been refused. I bid you good night. If I thought you and your companions were capable of any feeling of common decency I should request you to restrain your mirth a little out of respect to Lord O'Neill, who lies dying within two doors of you. But I should probably only provide you with fresh food for your laughter if I did."

He bowed coldly, and left the room. The company sat silent for a minute or two. No man cared to look at his neighbour. Lord Dunseveric's last words had been unpleasant ones to listen to. Besides, Lord Dunseveric was a man of some importance. It is impossible to tell how far the influence of a great territorial lord may stretch. Promotion is sometimes stopped mysteriously by influences which are not very easily baffled. There were colonels at the table who wanted to be generals, and generals who wanted commands. There was a feeling that it might have been wiser to speak more civilly to Lord Dunseveric.

General Clavering himself broke the silence.

"These damned Irishmen are all rebels at heart," he said. "The gentry want their combs cut as much as the croppies. I'm not going to be insulted at my own table by a cursed Irishman even if he does put lord before his name. I'll write a report about this Lord Dunseveric. I'll make him smart with a sharp fine. You heard him boast, gentlemen, boast before a company of men holding His Majesty's commission, that he hanged a soldier in discharge of his duty."

"A yeoman," said Colonel Durham, "and some of the yeomen deserve hanging."

"God Almighty!" said Clavering, "are you turning rebel, too? I don't care whether a man deserves it or not, I'll not have the king's troops hanged by filthy Irishmen."

He looked round the table for applause. He got none. General Clavering had boasted too loudly--had gone too far. It was well known that in the existing state of Irish politics Pitt and the English ministers would probably prefer cashiering General Clavering to offending a man like Lord Dunseveric. There were plenty of generals to be got. A great Irish landowner, a man of ability, a peer who commanded the respect of all classes in the country, might be a serious hindrance to the carrying out of certain carefully-matured schemes. General Clavering attempted to laugh the matter off.

"But this," he said, "is over wine. Men say more than they mean when they are engaged in emptying mine host's cellar. Come, gentlemen, another bottle. We must hang the damned young rebel, but we'll do him this much grace--we'll drink a happy despatch to him, a short wriggle at the end of his rope, and a pleasant journey to a warmer climate."

Lord Dunseveric returned to his room and sat down again beside Lord O'Neill. He said nothing to Maurice.

"Well," said Lord O'Neill, "will they spare him?"

"No."

"More blood, more blood. God help us, Eustace, our lot is cast in evil times. Would it be any use if I spoke, if I wrote! I think I could manage to write."

"None, my friend, none. Keep quiet, you have enough to bear without taking my troubles and my friend's troubles on your shoulders."

For a long time there was silence in the room, broken only by an occasional groan from the wounded man and a word or two murmured low by Lord Dunseveric. Maurice took his place at the window again. He understood that his father's intercession for Neal had failed, but he was not hopeless. He did not know what was to be said or done next, but he waited confidently. It was not often that Lord Dunseveric was turned back from anything he set his hand to do. It was likely that if he wanted Neal Ward's release the release would be accomplished whatever General Clavering might think or say.

The evening darkened slowly. Lord O'Neill dropped into an uneasy dose. Lord Dunseveric rose, and crossed the room to Maurice.

"You heard what I said, son? They are to hang Neal Ward to-morrow."

Maurice nodded.

"I can do no more. Besides, I am tired. I want to rest."

Maurice looked at his father in surprise. He could not recollect ever having heard before of his being tired or wanting rest.

"I shall sleep here in your bed, Maurice, so as to be at hand if Lord O'Neill wants me. You must go down to the public room of the inn or to the tap-room. You can get James, the groom, to keep you company if you like. You cannot go to bed to-night, you understand. You must sit by the fire till those roisterers have drunk themselves to sleep. James will keep you company, There will be sound sleep for many in this inn to-night, but none for poor Neal, who's down in some cellar, nor the sentry they post over him, nor for you, Maurice, nor for James. Maybe after all Neal won't be hanged in the morning. That's all I have to say to you, my son. A man in my position can't say more or do more. You

understand?"

"I understand," said Maurice, "and, by God, they'll not hang----"

"Hush! hush! I don't want to listen to you. I'm tired. I want to go to sleep. Good night to you, Maurice."

With a curious half smile on his face Lord Dun-severic shook his son's hand. It appeared that he had the same kind of confidence in Maurice that Maurice had in him. Like father, like son. When these St. Clairs of Dunseveric wanted anything they generally got it in the end. And none of the race of them had ever been over-scrupulous in dealing with such obstacles as stood in their way, or particularly careful about what those glorified conventions that men call law might have to say about the methods by which they achieved their ends.

CHAPTER XIV

Men who have eaten sufficiently and drunk heavily are not anxious to admit into their company any one who has not dined, and whose last glass of wine was drunk the day before. The gentlemen in the public room of the Massereene Arms were not, most of them, drunk when Maurice St. Clair came among them, but they were gay. Their hearts, to use a Scripture phrase, were made glad with wine. They were in the mood in which men crack jokes and laugh loud at jokes which would not pass muster before dinner. They were ready to sing out of time and tune or to applaud the songs of others without criticising them. But they were, with the exception of one or two, men of feeble capacity, sober enough to be conscious of the fact that they were liable to make fools of themselves, and to resent the intrusion of a cool-headed stranger.

They stared angrily at Maurice St. Clair. They said in audible tones things which showed him plainly that his presence was most unwelcome, but Maurice remained unabashed. He crossed the room and sat down on the window seat--the same seat from which Neal had watched the piper and the dancers a week or two before. He beckoned to the harassed and wearied girl who waited on the party.

"Get me," he said, "something to eat--anything. I do not mind what it is, and bring a cup of milk. Then send my groom to me."

"The gentleman," said a young squire, who had certainly crossed the undefined line which separates sobriety from drunkenness, "is going to drink milk. Now, what I want to know is this--has any gentleman a right to drink milk on an evening like this, after the glorious victory which we have won?"

"It's damned little you had to do with winning it," said an officer who sat beside him. "You can drink, but----"

"The man that says I can't drink lies," said the other. "No offence to you, Captain; no offence meant or taken. I give you a toast, and I propose that the milky gentleman in the window--the milk-and-water gentleman--drinks it along with us. Here's success to the loyalists and a long rope and short shrift to the rebelly croppies. Now, Mr. Milk-and-Water----"

Maurice rose to his feet.

"I understand, gentlemen, that this is a public room in which any traveller may be supplied with what he calls for. I have no wish to push myself into your company. I trust that you will allow me to enjoy my own unmolested."

The intoxicated proposer of the toast laid his hand on his sword, blustered out an oath or two, and was pulled down again into his seat. There was good feeling enough left among the better class of his companions to understand that a stranger should be treated with civility. There was sense enough among the rest to recognise that Maurice was not the kind of man whom it would be safe to bully. The girl returned and informed Maurice that his groom was in the kitchen, but refused to attend him.

Maurice rose and sought the man himself. The reason of the refusal was sufficiently obvious. The kitchen was full of troopers who had advanced much further on the way to absolute drunkenness than their officers. James, Lord Dunseveric's groom, was decidedly the most drunken of the party, but Maurice wanted the man, and was prepared to take some trouble to reduce him to a condition of serviceableness again. He grasped him by the collar of the coat, and pushed him through the back door into the yard. A delighted stable boy worked the pump handle while Maurice held the groom under the stream of cold water. The cure was ineffective. Maurice walked him up and down the yard for half an hour, and then put him under the pump again. The man remained obstinately drunk. Maurice flung him down in a corner of a stable and left him.

He returned to the room where the feasters sat, and looked in. The company had advanced rapidly since he had seen them last. The squire who had proposed the toast was under the table. Several others were lying back helplessly in their chairs. Those who could talk were talking loud and all together. The amount of liquor still to be consumed was considerable. Maurice smiled. These officers and gentlemen were little likely to interfere with anything he chose to do at midnight. He went out of doors and sat on the stone bench in front of the inn.

He had no plan in his head for the rescue of Neal Ward, only he was quite determined to accomplish it somehow before morning. He did not even know where his friend was imprisoned, or how he was guarded. His father had spoken of a cellar somewhere in the inn. He supposed that foe would sooner or later be able to find it, overpower the sentry, and set Neal free. In the meanwhile, he had nothing to do but wait.

He felt a touch on his shoulder, and looked round to see the girl, the inn servant, standing beside him.

"You're the gentleman," she whispered, "that was speaking till the young man here the morn--the young man that I give the basket to, that is a friend o' Jemmy Hope's?"

Maurice recollected the incident very well.

"He's here the now," whispered the girl again. "He's down in the wine cellar, and the door's locked on him, and there's a man with a gun forinst the door, and, the Lord save us, it's goin' to hang him they are."

"Will you show me where the cellar is?" said Maurice.

"Ay, will I no? I'll be checked sore by the master, but I'll show you, I will."

The girl led him down a long passage, which was nearly dark, opened a door, and showed him a flight of stone steps.

"There's three doors," she said. "It's the one at the end forinst you that's the cellar door. Are ye going down? It's venturesome ye are. Whisht, then, and go canny, and dinna go ayont the bottom of the steps."

Maurice went cautiously. When he reached the bottom of the steps he saw before him a long passage, stone-flagged, low-roofed, narrow. From an iron hook at the far end hung a lamp. Beyond it stood a sentry, one of Captain Twinely's yeomen. The man was awake and alert. There was no sign of drunkenness about him. He was well armed. The light from the lamp was dim and feeble at Maurice's end of the passage, but it shone brightly enough for a space in front of the sentry. Maurice saw that it would be impossible to approach the man unseen, impossible to steal on him or rush at him without having a shot fired which would startle every one in the inn. He crept up the stairs again. The girl was waiting for him.

"Is the door of the cellar locked?" he asked.

"Ay, it is, I fetched the last bottles of wine out mysel', and I saw them put the man in--sore draggled he was, and looking like a body in a dwam. The master locked the door himsef, and the captain took the keys off with him. But there's no harm in that. There's another key that the mistress used to have afore she died, the creature. It's in a drawer in the master's room, but it's easy got at."

"Get it for me," said Maurice.

He looked into the public room again. The revel was far advanced now. It was nearly midnight, and only three or four of the most seasoned drinkers survived. Even they, as Maurice saw, were in no position to assert themselves, or to understand anything that was going on. A few minutes later even these veterans felt that they had had enough. Supporting each other, reeling against tables and chairs, they staggered upstairs to their beds. The greater part of the merry company lay on the floor in attitudes which were neither dignified nor comfortable, and snored. The rest of the inn was silent. From outside came the steady tramp of the soldiers who patrolled the town, and from far off their challenges to the sentries on watch at the ends of the streets.

The girl came back to Maurice with the key in her hand.

"I got it," she said. "The master's cocked up sleepin' by the kitchen fire. There was a man in his bed, or maybe twa, but I didna wake them."

"Come back to me in half an hour," said Maurice, "I may want your help. And listen, my lass, if you stand by me to-night I'll see you safe afterwards. You shan't want for a handful of silver or a bran new gown."

"I want none of your siller nor your gowns," said the girl. "I'll lend ye a han' because you're a friend of the lad that's the friend of Jemmy Hope."

At about half-past twelve the sentry who stood in front of Neal's cellar heard some one descend the stairs into the passage with shuffling steps. A slatternly girl with shoes so down at the heel that they clattered on the stone flags every time she lifted her feet, approached him. She rubbed her eyes and yawned like one lately wakened out of sleep. She carried a lantern in her hand.

"What do you want here?" said the man.

"The master sent me, sir, with another lamp. He was afeard the yin ye had would be out again the morn. There isna that much oil in it."

"Your master's civil," said the man. "I've no fancy for standing sentry here in the dark. He's a civil man, and I'll speak a good word for him to-morrow to the captain. I hope you're a civil wench like the man you serve."

"Ay, amn't I after fetchin' the lamp till ye?"

"And a kiss along with it," said the soldier. "Come now, you needn't be coy, there's none to see you."

He put his arms round her waist and pulled her towards him.

"Mind now, mind, will ye, have you neither sense nor shame? Ye'll have the lamp spilt and the house in a blaze this minute."

She escaped from him, and, standing on tip-toe, reached the lamp which hung from the roof and put it on the ground. The soldier caught her again, and this time succeeded in kissing her.

"Ye may hang the fresh lamp up yourself," said the girl. "I willna lay a finger on it for ye now."

Rubbing her mouth with her hand, as if to wipe away the kiss forced on her, she shambled down the passage, taking the first lamp with her. The sentry heard her shuffle up the stairs again, making a great deal of noise with her clattering shoes. Then he hung the fresh lamp on his hook and stood back again against the door of the cellar.

It was very dull work standing all night in the passage, but he was determined to keep awake. Neal Ward had slipped through the fingers of Captain Twinely's men twice. There was not much chance of his escaping this time, but the

sentry, for the honour of his corps, and for the sake of the personal ill-will that every member of it bore to the prisoner, was not going to run the smallest risk. Earlier in the night he had amused himself by shouting insults of various kinds through the door of the cellar. Later on he had given the prisoner a vivid and realistic description of the way in which men are hanged, but Neal had made no sign of hearing a word that was said to him, so the occupation grew uninteresting. Now he whistled a few of his favourite airs, speculating on the amount of the fifty pounds reward offered for Neal's capture which would fall to his share, and estimating his chances of taking some of the other United Irishmen for whom the Government had offered substantial sums. Then he began to count the flagstones on the floor of the passage. He had done this once or twice before, and had been able to distinguish as many as twenty-five, which brought him more than half way to the staircase, before the light failed him. This time he could only count twenty. Beyond that the floor lay dimly visible, but it was impossible to distinguish one stone from another.

"Damn it," He growled, "this isn't near as good a lamp as the first."

He counted again, and only reached a total of eighteen slabs of stone. He glanced down the passage, and found that he could not see the end of it. He looked at the lamp. It was burning very low. It occurred to him as an unpleasant possibility that the girl had taken away the wrong lamp--had taken the one with the oil in it and left him the empty one. He reassured himself. This lamp was a different shape from that which hung in the passage when he first took his post as sentry. He made up his mind that its wick must require to be turned up. Perhaps it had been badly trimmed. The girl who brought it was evidently sleepy; she would be very likely to forget to trim it. He stepped forward to where the lamp hung. He paused, startled by a slight noise at the far end of the passage. He listened, but heard nothing more. It was necessary to lift the lamp off the hook before he could trim the wick. He laid his musket on the ground and reached up to it. As he did so he heard swift steps, steps of heavy feet, on the flagged passage. They were quite close to him. He looked round and caught a glimpse of Maurice St. Clair in the act of springing on him. He was grappled by strong arms and flung to the ground before he could do anything to defend himself. Maurice, kneeling on him, put the point of a knife to his throat.

"If you speak one word or utter the slightest sound I cut your throat at once."

The unfortunate soldier lay still. Maurice, the knife still pricking the man's throat, crept slowly off him and knelt on the floor. With his left hand he unclasped the soldier's belt.

"Now," he said, "turn over on your face, and put your hands behind you."

The man obeyed, and felt the sharp point of the knife slip slowly round his neck until it rested behind his ear.

"Remember," said Maurice, "one good cut downwards now and you are a dead man. Put your hands together."

He pulled the leather belt clear with his left hand, then, dropping the knife, he knelt on the man's back and gripped his wrists.

In a moment he had them securely strapped together with the leather belt. Then he stuffed a cloth into the soldier's mouth and bound it there with a stout cord tied tight round his head. Another cord--Maurice had come well supplied with what he was likely to want--was made fast round the man's legs. Then Maurice stood up and surveyed his handiwork. He laughed softly, well satisfied. The lamp flickered and went out.

"It's a good job for you," said Maurice, "that the light lasted as long as it did. I couldn't have gagged and tied you in the dark. I should have been obliged to kill you."

He felt along the wall until he came to the cellar door and found the keyhole. After much fumbling he got the key in, turned it, and pushed open the door.

"Neal," he called. "Neal, are you there?"

"Yes. Who is that? Is it you, Maurice? It's like your voice."

Stumbling forward through the pitch dark, Neal gripped Maurice at last. Hand in hand they went cautiously along the passage and up the stairs.

"Come in here," said Maurice. "There's a light here, and I want to see if it's really you. Oh! you needn't be afraid. There are plenty of soldiers, but they won't hurt you. They're all dead drunk. Now, Neal, there's lots to eat and drink. Sit down and make the best of your time. You'll want a square meal. I'll just take a light and go down to that fellow in the passage. I've got a few fathom of good, stout rope--I'm not sure that it isn't the bit that they meant to hang you with in the morning--and I'll fix him up so that he'll neither stir nor speak till some one lets him loose."

In a quarter of an hour Maurice returned.

"The next thing, Neal, is to get you out of this town. It's full of soldiers, and there are sentries at every turn, but I've got the word for the night, and I think we'll be able to manage."

He walked round the room peering carefully at the drunken men who lay on the floor.

"Here's a fellow that's about your size, Neal. He seems to be a captain of some sort, a yeomanry captain by the look of him. I'm hanged if it isn't our friend Twinely again. We'll take the liberty of borrowing his uniform for you. There'll be a poetic justice about that, and he'll sleep all the better for having these tight things off him."

He knelt down and stripped Captain Twinely.

"Now then, quick, Neal. Don't waste time. Daylight will be on us before we know where we are. Take your own things with you in a bundle. Change again somewhere when you get out of the town, you'll be safer travelling in your own clothes. Take some food with you. Here, I'll make up a parcel while you dress. I'll stick in a bottle of wine. Now you're right. Walk boldly past the sentries. If you're challenged curse the man that challenges you. The word for the night is 'Clavering.' Travel by night as much as you can. Keep off the main roads. Strike straight for home. It'll be a queer thing if you can't lie safe round Dunseveric for a few days till we get you out of the country."

CHAPTER XV

Lord Dunseveric and Maurice breakfasted together at eight o'clock on the morning of Neal's escape. They sat in the room where Lord O'Neill lay, and had a table spread for them beside the window. It was impossible to eat a meal in any comfort elsewhere in the inn. Indeed, but for the special exertions of the master and his maid it would have been difficult to get food at all. Maurice was triumphant and excited. Since Neal had not been brought back it was reasonable to suppose that he had made good his escape out of the town, and there was every hope that he would get safe to the coast. Once there he had friends enough to feed him, and hiding-places known to few, and almost inaccessible to soldiers or yeomen.

Lord Dunseveric asked no questions about Maurice's doings in the night. He felt perfectly confident that Neal had got off somehow. The details of the business he would hear later on. For the present he preferred to know nothing about them.

An officer entered the room and handed a letter to Lord Dunseveric. It was a request, in civil language enough, that he would meet General Clavering in the public room of the inn at nine o'clock, and that Maurice would accompany his father.

General Clavering sat at the head of the table when Lord Dunseveric and Maurice entered. Three or four of the senior officers of the regular troops sat with him. Captain Twinely, in a suit of clothes he had borrowed from the master of the inn, and one of his men, stood near the fireplace. The room had been cleared of the drunken sleepers, but a good deal of the *debris* of their revel--empty bottles, broken glasses, and little pools of spilt wine--were still visible on the floor.

"I have to announce to you, Lord Dunseveric," said the general, "that the prisoner who was confined in the inn cellar last night, Neal Ward, has escaped."

Lord Dunseveric bowed, and smiled slightly. His eye lighted on Captain Twinely, and his smile broadened. The landlord's suit fitted the captain extremely ill.

"Indeed," he said, "Captain Twinely seems to be unfortunate with regard to this particular prisoner. This is, let me see, the third time that Neal Ward has--ah!--evaded his vigilance."

"The sentry who guarded the door of the cellar," said General Clavering, "was attacked, overpowered, bound, and gagged."

"By the prisoner?"

"No, my lord, by some one who assisted the prisoner to escape, who, after dealing with the sentry as I have described, unlocked the door of the cellar with a key, the duplicate of that which Captain Twinely had in his pocket. This man and the prisoner subsequently stripped Captain Twinely of his uniform, and, as I learn from my sentries, Neal Ward passed through our lines in the disguise of a captain of yeomanry."

"You surprise me," said Lord Dunseveric, "a daring stratagem; a laughable scheme, too. I trust you took no cold, Captain. I confess that I should have liked to have seen you in your shirt tails this morning. You were, I presume," he stirred a little heap of broken glass with his foot as he spoke, "*vino gravatus* when they relieved you of your tunic. But what has all this to do with me?"

"Merely this," said General Clavering, "that your son is accused of having effected the prisoner's escape."

Lord Dunseveric looked at Maurice, looked him quietly up and down, as if he saw him then for the first time.

"I can believe," he said, "that my son might overpower the sentry. He is, as you see, a young man of considerable personal strength, but I should be surprised to learn that he dressed the prisoner in the captain's uniform. I may be misjudging my son, but I have hitherto regarded him as somewhat deficient in humour. You must admit, General Clavering, that only a man with a feeling for the ridiculous would have thought of---"

"It will be better for you to hear what the sentry has to say, my lord, and I beg of you to regard the matter seriously. I assure you it will not bear joking on. The rescue of a prisoner is a grave offence. Captain Twinely, kindly order your man to tell his story."

"Since I am not a prisoner at the bar," said Lord Dunseveric, "I shall, with your permission, sit down. As to the seriousness of the business in hand, I confess that for the moment the thought of the worthy Twinely waking this morning not only with a splitting headache but without a pair of breeches on him keeps the humorous side of the situation prominent in my mind."

The sentry told his story. To Maurice's great relief, he omitted all mention of the girl who had supplied the lamp which so conveniently burnt low, but he had recognised Maurice and was prepared to swear to his identity.

"No doubt," said General Clavering, "you will wish to cross-question this man, my lord."

Lord Dunseveric yawned.

"I think that quite unnecessary," he said, "a much simpler way of arriving at the truth of the story will be to ask my

son whether he rescued the prisoner or not. Maurice, did you bind and gag this excellent trooper?"

"Yes."

"Did you subsequently release Neal Ward from the cellar?"

"Yes."

"Now, Maurice, be careful about your answer to my next question. Did you take the clothes off Captain Twinely?"

"Yes."

"And was that part of the scheme entirely your own? Did the idea originate with you or with the prisoner whom you helped to escape?"

"It was my idea."

"I apologise to you, Maurice. I did you an injustice. You have a certain sense of humour. It is not perhaps of the most refined kind, still you have, no doubt, provided a joke which will appeal to the officers' mess in Belfast, Dublin, and elsewhere; which will be told after dinner in most houses in the county for many a year to come. And now, General Clavering, I presume there is no more to be said. I wish you good morning."

"Stop a minute," said General Clavering, "you cannot seriously suppose that your son, simply because he is your son, is to be allowed to interfere with the course of justice?"

"Of justice?" asked Lord Dunseveric in a tone of mild surprise.

"With His Majesty's officers in the execution of their duty--that is, to release prisoners whom I have condemned--I, the general in command charged with the suppression of an infamous rebellion. Your son, my lord, will have to abide the consequences of his acts."

"Maurice," said Lord Dunseveric, "it is evident that you are going to be hanged. General Clavering is going to hang you. It is really providential that you didn't steal his breeches. He would probably have flogged you first and hanged you afterwards if you had."

"Damn your infernal insolence," broke out General Clavering furiously, "You think that because you happen to be a lord and own a few dirty acres of land that you can sit there grinning like an ape and insulting me. I'll teach you, my lord, I'll teach you. By God, I'll teach you and every other cursed Irishman to speak civil to an English officer. You shall know your masters, by the Almighty, before I've done with you."

Lord Dunseveric rose to his feet. He fixed his eyes on General Clavering, and spoke slowly and deliberately.

"I ride at once to Dublin," he said. "I shall lay an account of your doings and the doings of your troops before His Majesty's representative there. I shall then cross to England, approach my Sovereign and yours, General Clavering. I shall see that justice is done between you and the people you have outraged and harried. As to my son, I have work for him to do. I shall make myself responsible for his appearance before a court of justice when he is summoned. In the meanwhile, I neither recognise you as my master nor your will as my law. I appeal to the constitutional liberties of this kingdom of Ireland and to the right of every citizen to a fair trial before a jury of his fellow-countrymen. You shall not arrest, try, or condemn my son otherwise than as the law allows."

General Clavering grew purple in the face. He stuttered, cursed, laid his hand on his sword, and took a step forward. Lord Dunseveric, his hands behind his back, a sneer of contempt on his face, looked straight at the furious man in front of him.

"Do you propose," he said, "to stab me and then hang my son?"

This was precisely what General Clavering would have liked to do, but he dared not. He turned instead on Captain Twinely.

"Let me tell you, sir, that you're a damned idiot, an incompetent officer, a besotted fool, and your men are a lot of cowardly loons. You had this infernal young rebel safe and you let him go. You not only allowed him to walk off, but you actually provided him with a suit of clothes to go in. You're the cause of all the trouble. Get your troop to horse. Scour the country for him. Don't leave a house that you don't search, nor a bed that you don't run your sword through. Don't leave a dung-heap without raking it, or a haystack that you don't scatter. Get that man back for me, wherever he hides himself, or, by God, I'll have you shot for neglect of duty in time of war, and your damned yeomen buried alive in the same grave with you."

The general was still bent on teaching the Irish to know their masters and making good his boast of reducing them to the tameness of "gelt cats." With Captain Twinely, at least, he seemed likely to succeed.

"I can imagine, Maurice," said Lord Dunseveric, when they were alone together again, "that Captain Twinely and his men have at last got a job to suit them. Sticking swords through old wives feather beds is safer work than sticking them through rebels. Scattering haystacks will be pleasanter than scattering pikemen. Raking dung heaps will, I suppose, be an entirely congenial occupation."

His tone changed, He spoke rapidly and seriously.

"You will ride with me as far as Belfast. From there you must find some means of communicating with the captain of that Yankee brig of which you told me. If necessary, go yourself to Glasgow and find the man. Pay him what he asks and arrange that he lies off Dunseveric and picks up Neal. You must then go home and see to it yourself that Neal gets safe on board. It may not be easy, for the yeomen will be after him; but it has got to be done. I go to Dublin as I said. I shall have some trouble in settling this business of yours. It really was an audacious proceeding--your rescue of the prisoner. It will take me all my time to get it hushed up. Besides, I must use my influence to prevent bad becoming worse in this unfortunate country of ours. By the way, did you make any arrangement for the return of Captain Twinely's uniform when Neal had finished with it?"

"No, I never thought of that."

"You ought to have thought of it. Poor Captain Twinely looks very odd in the inn-keeper's clothes, which do not fit him in the least."

CHAPTER XVI

It was obvious to Captain Twinely that Neal Ward's instinct would be to make for Dunseveric. He spread the men under his command, and the members of a couple of corps similar to his own, in bands of five or six, across a broad belt of country. He arranged what he called a "drive," and pushed slowly northward, searching every possible hiding-place as he went. It seemed to him totally impossible that Neal could escape. Sooner or later he was sure to come on him, and then--Captain Twinely chuckled grimly at the thought that he would leave no chance of a fourth escape.

This excellently-planned search resulted in the discovery of Captain Twinely's clothes, damp and somewhat muddy, in a ditch about a mile out of the town. It did not end in the capture of the fugitive, because it was founded on a miscalculation. Neal did not make straight for Dunseveric. When he got out of the town and changed his clothes he went to Donegore Hill. M'Cracken and Hope were there with the remains of their army, and Neal was most anxious to join them. The murder of Peg MacIlrea had made him so furiously angry that he cared nothing about his own safety. His escape from Antrim was a matter of satisfaction mainly because it seemed to afford him another opportunity for fighting. He neither attempted to weigh the chances of success nor considered the uselessness of continuing the struggle. He wanted vengeance taken on men whom he hated, and he wanted to have some share himself in taking it.

He found the roads round Donegore Hill guarded by sentries. The camp on the top of the old rath had all the appearance of being held by disciplined troops. There was little sign of the disorganisation and panic which often follow defeat. The men were calm, self-possessed, and reasonable, but they were hopeless. Neal realised that this army, at least, would do no more serious fighting. The men were anxious to make terms for themselves and for their leaders. They were perfectly well aware that they were beaten, and could not expect to make any head against their enemies.

Neal found James Hope, and was warmly greeted by him.

"When I discovered that we'd left you behind," said Hope, "I made up my mind that you must have been shot down along with your uncle and the fine fellows who made a stand with him. Ah, Neal, we've lost many--your uncle, Felix Marier, poor Moylin, and many another. One killed here, another there, but all of them in doing their duty. But we mustn't talk of these things, lad. Tell me, what brings you here?"

"Need you ask?" said Neal. "I am come to fight it out to the last."

"Take my advice and slip off home. There's no good to be done by stopping with us. Things are desperate. Most of our people are going home to-day. M'Cracken and a handful--not more than a hundred--are going to Slievemis in the hope of being able to join Monro in County Down, or perhaps to get through to the Wexford men."

"I will go with you."

"No, no, lad, you've done enough. You've done a man's part. Go home now."

"What are you going to do?"

"I? Oh, I'm only a poor weaver. It doesn't matter what I do. I'm going on with M'Cracken."

"So am I. Listen to me, James Hope, till I tell you what is in my mind--till I tell you what has happened to me since yesterday."

They sat on the grassy slope of the old rath. The wide plain stretched before them--green, well wooded, beautiful. There lay Adair's plantations, the Six Mile Water winding like a serpent among the fields, the woods of Castle Upton, and the young trees on Lyle Hill, with the distant water of Lough Neagh glistening in the sunlight. Nearer at hand thatched farmhouses smoked, signs that the yeomen were enjoying the fruits of victory. Hope pointed to Farranshane, where William Orr's house was burning--a witness to a malignity so bitter that it wreaked the vengeance from which the dead man was safe on his widow and his orphans.

Neal told his story, and spoke of the passionate desire for revenge which burned in him. Hope listened patiently to every word. Then he spoke.

"If I were to tell you now, Neal, as I told you once before, that vengeance belongeth only unto the Lord, you would turn away and listen to me no more. Therefore, I shall not speak to you in that way at all, or appeal to those higher feelings which the great God has planted in the breasts of even the humblest of His servants. I will, instead, appeal to that which is lower and smaller than the religion of Christ, and which yet may be in its way a noble thing. I will speak to you as to a man of honour. I am not fond of the title of gentleman, but I think I know what is meant by honour. Sometimes it is no more than a fantastic image bred of prejudice and pride; but sometimes it is high and holy, next to God. I think, Neal, that you would like to reckon yourself a man of honour."

Already James Hope's words were producing an effect on Neal's mind. The extreme bitterness of his passion was dying away from him.

"You are right," he said, "I wish to act always as a man of honour, but my honour is engaged----"

"That is not what you said before. Before, you spoke of revenge and not of honour. But let that pass. I will try to

show you, as a truly noble man would, as your friend, Lord Dunseveric, would if he were here to advise you, how your honour really binds you. You were rescued from your imprisonment last night and from death this morning by your friend, Maurice St. Clair, and he bid you go home. He set you free in order that you might go home. I think he would not have done what he did unless he had believed that you would go home. You are in honour bound to him. You are in reality still a prisoner--a prisoner released on parole, although no formal promise was required of you. Do you understand what I mean?"

"Yes, I understand; but you are advising me to do a cowardly thing--to desert you, whom I reckon my friend, in the time of your extremity."

"Maurice St. Clair was your friend before I was, Neal. You are bound to him by earlier ties. Besides, he has given you your life."

"But he is in no danger."

"I am not sure of that. If it is discovered that he let you go last night he will surely suffer for it. They have hanged men for less, and imprisoned or exiled others."

"Oh," said Neal, "I could find it in my heart to wish they would hang Maurice. Hope, you know many men and many things, but you don't know Lord Dunseveric. Why, man, if they hanged Maurice the old lord would hang them--he would hang them in batches of a score at a time. If any escaped him he would wait for them till the resurrection morning. He would meet them as they stepped out of their graves and hang them then. He would hang them if there wasn't another tree in the whole universe to put the rope round except the tree of life which stands by the river in the New Jerusalem."

He laughed exultingly. Hope looked at him with pitying tenderness. He understood the hysterical passion which had dragged such words from him.

"I am glad," he said, "that your friend is in no great danger, but that does not alter the truth of what I say. You are his prisoner, released on your parole, and you must present yourself to him when he calls for you at Dunseveric. Besides, Neal, you owe a duty to your father and to those at home who love you. For their sakes you must not throw your life away."

The anger died out of Neal's heart. This last appeal left him with no feeling but tenderness. He thought of his father, a lone man, waiting for news of him, of Donald, of the battle, and the cause. He thought of Una St. Clair and the ever-new marvel of the love that she had confessed to him. Still he hesitated. Brought up in the stern faith of the Puritans, he believed that because a thing offered a prospect of great delight it must somehow be wrong. The longing to see Una again came on him, sweeping over all other thought and emotion as the flowing spring-tide in late September sweeps over the broad sands of the northern coast. To see her, to hear her, to touch her, perhaps to kiss her again, was the one thing supremely desirable in life. Therefore, he felt instinctively that it must be a tempter's voice which showed him the way to the fulfilment of such desire.

"Are you sure," he asked, "that you are not, out of love for me, advising me to do wrong?"

"I am sure," said Hope.

Afterwards they talked of how Neal might best accomplish his journey to Dunseveric. It was clear to Hope, as it had been to Maurice St. Clair, that the main roads must be avoided, and that all travelling must be done by night; but it was not very easy to go through an unknown country by night, and until Neal got as far as Ballymoney he could not be sure of being able to find his way.

"I might manage it," he said, "if I could keep to the main road. I have travelled it once and I think I should not miss it even at night, but how am I to get along lanes and across fields which I have never seen without losing myself?"

"Ah," said Hope, "that is a difficulty, and yet there is a way out of it. Phelim, the blind piper, is with us here. God knows how he got safe from the battle yesterday, and found his way to us. He will be no use to us any more, only a hindrance. We shall not march to battle again with our pipes playing and our colours flying. I think I shall be able to persuade him to act as your guide. The blind leading the ignorant, eh, Neal? But Phelim knows every lane and path in the country. How he does I don't know. Perhaps some new sense is developed in the blind. Anyway, night and day are alike to him. If he takes you as far as the neighbourhood of Ballymoney you'll be able to find the rest of the way afterwards yourself."

That night, while M'Cracken marched the remnant of his army to Slievemis, Neal and blind Phelim set off on their journey north. They travelled safely in the rear of the yeomen who were searching the country side. Neal lay hid all one day in a little wood while Phelim, who seemed to want little rest and no sleep, wandered in the neighbourhood and brought back tidings of the doings of the yeomen who had passed. Before daybreak the next morning Neal left his guide behind him and made his way to the sandhills near Port Ballin-trae. He lay in a hollow near the mouth of the river Bush. He understood from what Phelim had told him that Captain Twinely and his men had pushed northwards in pursuit of him, and that he had followed in their tracks. He realised that there must be a large force gathered in Bushmills and Ballintoy, and that the whole country would be scoured to find him. Therefore, though he was within a

few miles of his home, he dare not stir in the daytime. He lay in his sandy hollow through the long hot day, with the sound of the sea in his ears. He slept for an hour or two now and then. Once he crept among the dunes to a place where a little stream trickled down, in order to get a drink, but he did not venture to stay beside the stream. For some time he amused himself by plaiting the spiked grass into stiff green rods, and then, from a razor shell which he found in his hollow, he fashioned pike heads for the ends of the rods. Afterwards he picked all the yellow crow-toes within reach, and the broad mauve flowers of the wild convolvulus. He set them out in gay beds, like flowers growing in gardens, and edged them round with borders of wild thyme. Then, with great labour, he collected forty or fifty snail shells and laid them in rows, making each row consist only of those like each other in colouring. He had lines of dark brown shells, of pale yellow, and of striped shells. These again he subdivided according to the width and number of their stripes. Once he ventured to creep to a place from which he could watch the sea. He saw that the tide was flowing. Below him on the strand were a number of seagulls, strutting, fluttering, shrieking, splashing with wing-tips and feet in the oncoming waves. He supposed that the young fry of some fish must have drifted shorewards, and that the birds were feasting on them. Then, at the far end of the bay, he saw men's figures moving, near the Black Rock, among the boats hauled up on the shore in the creek from which he and Maurice and Una had set out to fish on Rackle Roy. A dread seized him that these might be yeomen. Since he had come within reach of home, since he had seen and heard the sea, since he had breathed the familiar salt-laden air, his courage had left him. He felt a very coward, desperately anxious not to be caught and dragged back again to the horror of death. He wanted to live now that he was back at home and almost within reach of Una. He eyed the distant figures anxiously, and then crept back and lay trembling in his hollow among his ordered snail-shells and the flowers, already withered, which he had plucked and planted in the sand.

At last the sun set. Neal waited for an hour while the June twilight slowly faded. He watched the sandhills round his lair turn from bright yellow to grey, watched them while they seemed in the fading light to grow loftier, and assume a weird majesty which was not their's in the daytime. The objects near at hand, the faded flowers, and the snail-shells, and the rods of woven bent, lost their bright colours and became almost invisible. The eternal roaring of the sea seemed to be subdued, as if even it felt awed by the stillness of the June night. The sand on which he lay was damped with dew. Only the sharp cry of the corncrake broke the solemnity of the night.

He rose, and, peering anxiously before him as each fresh stretch of his way became visible, crossed the sandhills. Avoiding the stepping-stones and the regular crossing-place, he waded through the brook which ran gurgling between the sandhills and the rough track beyond them. He crossed it, and, skirting the rear of a cottage, reached the top of the Runkerry cliffs. Far below him the sea rushed, white-lipped, against the rocks. The tide was almost full. The scene was as it had been ten days ago, ten years ago, a whole lifetime ago, when he walked this same way with Donald Ward. Still keeping close to the sea, he avoided the high road near the Causeway, plodded along the stony track past the Rocking Stone and the Wishing Well, climbed the Shepherd's Path, and once more walked along the verge of the cliff above Port na Spaniard and the Horse Shoe Bay and Pleaskin Head. He reached Port Moon, and saw far below him the glimmer of a light in the rude shelter where fishermen lodge in summer time. Avoiding the farmhouse near him on his right, and the lane which led past it to the high road, he went on, clinging close to the sea as if for safety. He rested a while in the shelter of the ruins of Dun-severic Castle, and then went on till his feet were stumbling among the graves of Templeastra, where the dust of his mother lay. It was dark now. He guessed that he must have been an hour and a half on his way. He came close to the manse--his home. Below him lay Ballintoy Strand, with its sentinel white rocks which keep eternal watch against invading seas. Between him and his home there was the road to cross and the meadow to wade through. It must, as he guessed, be eleven o'clock. His father and Hannah Macaulay would be in bed. He would have to rouse them with cautious tapping upon window panes.

He reached the back of the house at last, and saw, to his amazement, that a light burned in the kitchen, and that the door stood wide open. A dread seized him. Perhaps the house was occupied by soldiers. For a moment he thought of turning back again to the sea and the cliffs. But he wanted food, and it was absolutely necessary for him to communicate with some one. His plan was to lie hid in the Pigeon Cave, but he must have food brought to him day by day, and he must let his father or Hannah know where he was going.

Very cautiously he crept forward and peered through the window. There was a candle in its tall iron stand on the floor, and the peat fire burned brightly on the hearth. A row of brass candlesticks were on the mantel-board. Hannah Macaulay sat on a chair near the door knitting. The room, he saw, was neat and orderly as ever.

The lids of the pots and the metal dish-covers gleamed from the nails on which they hung round the walls. The pewter plates, bronze jugs, and upturned noggins stood in shining rows on the dresser shelves. Neal waited. Not a sound reached him from the house. He took courage and slipped through the open door.

"Is that you yoursel', Master Neal?" said Hannah, quietly, "I ha' your supper ready for ye. I was sitting up for you. You're late the night."

She rose from her seat and, without a sign of surprise or excitement, closed the door and bolted it.

"Hannah, how is it that you are expecting me? You can't have known that I was coming. How did you know?"

Hannah took plates from the dresser and food from the cupboard while she answered him.

"Master Maurice's groom, the lad they call James, rode in from Antrim the day afore yesterday with a note for Miss Una over by. She tell me that you'd be coming and that it was more nor like you'd travel by night. I've had your supper ready, and I've sat waiting for you these two nights, I knew rightly that it was here you'd come first."

"Where is my father?"

"He's gone, Master Neal. The sojers came and took him, but he bid me tell you not to be afeard or taking on about him. He was thinking they'd send him across the sea, maybe to Scotland, he said, but they wouldna hurt him. So eat your bit and take your sup, my bairn. You must be sore troubled with the hunger. How ever did ye thole?"

"I have your bed ready for you," she said as Neal ate, "and it's in it you ought to be by right. I'm thinking it's more than yin night since ye hae lain atween the sheets, judging by the looks of ye."

"It's five, Hannah, and it will be twice five more before I sleep in a bed again. I dare not stay here."

"Thon's what Miss Una said. But, faith, if it's the yeomen you're afeard of, I'll no let them near you."

"I daren't, Hannah; I daren't do it. I must away to-night and lie in the Pigeon Cave. I'll be safe there, and you must manage somehow to get food to me."

"Is it me that you look to be climbing down them sliddery rocks and swimming intil the cold sea among your caves and hiding holes? I'm too old for the like, but there's a lassie with bonny brown eyes that'll do that and more for ye. Don't you be afeard, Master Neal. She'd climb the Causey chimney pots and take the silver sixpence off the top if she thought you were wanting it. Ay, or swim intil them caves, that God Almighty never meant for man nor maid to enter, and if were waiting for her at the hinder end of one of them. She's been here an odd time or twa since ever she got the letter that the groom lad fetched. I've seen the glint in her eyes at the sound o' your name, and the red go out of her cheek at word of them dratted yeos, bad scran to them! I'm no so old yet, but I mind weel how a young lassie feels for the lad she's after. Ay, my bairn, it's all yin, gentle or simple, lord's daughter or beggar's wench, when the love of a lad has got the grip o' them. And there was yin with her--the foreign lady with the lang name. For all that she mocks and fleers as if there was nothing in the wide world but play-actin' and gagin' about. Faith, she's an artist, but she might be more help than Miss Una herself if it came to a pinch. She's a cunning one, that. I'm thinking that she's no unlike the serpent that's more subtle than any beast of the field. She has a way of glowerin' a body and giving a bit of a girm to her mouth. Man or woman or red-coated sojer itself, they'd need to be up gey an' early that would get the better o' her. A bird might be lang afore it could find time to build a nest in her ear, so it might. Eh! but, my poor lad, it's a sorry thing to think of ye lyin' the night through among the hard stones and me in my warm bed. Eh! but it grieves me sore---- whisht, boy, what's thon?"

Hannah started to her feet. Hand to ear, lips parted, with eager eyes and head bent forward she listened.

"It's the tread of horses; they're coming up the loany."

"I must run for it," said Neal, "let me out of the door, Hannah."

"Bide now, bide a wee, they'd see you if you went through the door."

She put out the lamp as she spoke.

"Do you slip through to the master's room and open the window. Go canny now, and make no noise. Get through and off with ye into your cave as hard as ever you can lift a foot, I'll cap them at the door, lad. I'm the woman can do it. Faith and I'll sort them, be they who it may, so as they'll no be in too great a hurry to come ridin' to this house again, the black-hearted villains. But I'll learn them manners or I'm done wi' them else my name's no Hannah Macaulay."

Neal, as he slipped silently from the room, was aware that Hannah meditated a vigorous attack upon her midnight visitors. She took the long kitchen poker in her hand, shook it with a grim smile, and thrust the end of it into the heart of the fire.

There was a knock at the door. Hannah, standing in a corner of the room, and hidden from any one looking in through the window, neither spoke nor stirred. The knocking was repeated, and again repeated. Hannah remained silent.

"Open the door," shouted a voice from without, "open the door at once."

Still there was no reply.

"We know you're within, Hannah Macaulay, we saw the light before you put it out. Open to us, or we'll batter in the door, and then it will be the worse for you."

"And who may be you that come knocking and banging the door of a dacent house at this time o' night, making a hullabaloo fit for to wake the dead; and it the blessed Sabbath too?"

"Sabbath be damned; it's Thursday night."

"Is it, then, is it? There's them that wouldn't know if it was Monday nor Tuesday, nor yet Wednesday, nor the blessed Sabbath day itself, and, what's more, wouldn't care if they did know. That just shows what like lads you are."

Away home out o' this to your beds, if so be that you have any beds to go to."

In fact the men outside were perfectly right. The day was Thursday, though it neared Friday. The Sabbath was a long way off yet, as Hannah knew quite well.

"You doited old hag, open the door."

"I'm a lone widow woman," said Hannah, plaintively, "I canna be letting the likes of ye in and me in my bed. It wouldna be dacent if I did. Where'd my good name be if I did the like and me not know ye?"

A savage kick at the door shook it on its hinges.

"Bide quiet, now," said Hannah, "and tell me who ye are afore I open to you. Would you have me let robbers intil the house, and the master awa?"

"We're men of the Killulta yeomanry, we're here to search the house by order of Captain Twinely. Open in the King's name."

"Why couldn't ye have tellt me that afore? There isn't a woman living has as much respect for the King as myself. Wait now, wait till I slip on my petticoat. You wouldna have a woman come to the door to you in her shift, would ye?"

There was a long pause--too long for the yeomen outside. Another kick, and then another, shook the door. Hannah went over to it and began to fumble with the bolt.

"I'm afeard," she said, "that the lock's hampered."

"I'll soon cure that; stand clear of the keyhole till I fire."

"For the Lord's sake, man, dinna be shootin' aff your guns, I canna abide the sound o' the like. It dizzens me. Dinna be hasty, fair and easy goes far in the day. Who is it you said you were?"

"The yeomen, you deaf old hag."

"The yeomen, God bless us, the yeomen. That's the kind of lads that dresses themselves up braw in sojers' coats and then, when there's any fighting going on, let's the real sojers do it, and they stand and look round to see the gommerels admiring them. Faith I'll let you in. There's no call even for a hirplin ould woman with one foot in the grave and the ither out of it to be afeard of the likes of you."

Hannah Macaulay's description of her bodily condition erred on the side of self-depreciation. The one foot which remained out of the grave carried her across the kitchen floor with remarkable speed. She took the poker now red, almost white, hot at the end, darted back to the door, and flung it open. With a wild whoop she rushed at the two yeomen who stood on the threshold. There were other yells besides her's, a smell of burning cloth and singed flesh, a hurried treading of feet, and a clattering of the hoofs of frightened horses. Hannah sent into the night a peal of derisive laughter, and then turned into the house and shut the door.

"I said I'd sort them," she chuckled, "and I've sorted them rightly. Yin o' them will carry a mark on his mug to the day of his death, and lucky if he hasn't lost the sight of an eye. There'll be a hole in the breeks of the other that'll tak a quare width of cloth to make a patch for it. And, what's more, thon man'll no sit easy on his horse for a bit. They'll not be for chasing Master Neal the night any way. But, faith, this house will be no place for me the morrow. I'll just tak my wee bit duds under my arm and away with me up to Dunseveric House. Miss Una'll take me in when she hears the tale I ha' to tell. I'd like to see the yeos or the sojers either that would fetch me out of the ould lord's kitchen. If they tak to ravishing and rieving the master's plenishins I canna help it. Better a ravished house nor a murdered woman."

Neal got out of the window, and once more crossed the meadow. He lay for a minute in the ditch beside the road listening intently. He feared that he might have been tracked home, that the house might be surrounded, and that escape might be difficult or impossible. But there was no sound of any sort on the road--neither voices of men, treading of horses, or jangling of accoutrements. Evidently the men at the door of the manse were no more than a patrol. They were entering the house out of wanton desire to annoy Hannah Macaulay or on the chance of discovering there something which might give them a clue--not because they actually suspected that he was within. He heard the crash of the first kick on the door, rose from the ditch, crossed the road, and took to the edge of the cliffs again. He walked quickly, frightened and shaken. He started into a breathless run when Hannah's battle whoop reached him on the still air. He heard distinctly the men's shrieks, and even the noise of the runaway horses galloping on the hard road. He went the faster--a mad terror driving him.

He passed Port Moon again, crossed the majestic brow of Pleaskin Head, skirted the Causeway, and reached the Runkerry cliffs. He went more slowly, ceased running, sat down, drawing deep laboured breaths. The food he ate in the manse had strengthened him. The assurance of the care and watchfulness of his friends cheered him, but his mind was like that of a hunted animal. He had no courage left, nothing but an overmastering desire to hide himself.

He rose, and went on again, reached the cliff above the Rock Pigeons' Cave, and found the place where descent to the sea was possible. There was no path, just a precipitous grass slope, and then steep rocks, and below them the dark, moaning sea. A timid man might shrink from the climb in daylight, a bold man would be rash to attempt it at night, but of this short, slippery grass and these sharp rocks Neal had no fear at all. He knew them all too well to fear them. He let

himself slide down, sure of the resting-place his feet would find. With firm hand-grips and confident steps he descended from rock to rock until he stood at last on a flat shelf, a foot or two above the sea. He saw the long channel, rock-bounded, narrow, dark, along which he and Maurice had piloted their boat. He saw beyond it the mouth of the cave--a space of actual blackness on the gloomy face of the cliff. He heard the water drop from the roof into the sea with heavy splashes. At his feet the long swell writhed between the walls of rock, reached up black lips and drew them down again with hollow, sobbing sound. From the extreme darkness of the cave came the dull moaning of the ocean, as of some inarticulate monster bowed with everlasting woe. A swim through this cold, lonely water, between the smooth walls which rose higher and higher on either side, into the impenetrable gloom of the echoing cavern and on to the extreme end of it, was horrible to contemplate. But for Neal there were worse horrors behind. His cowardice made him brave. He stripped and stood shivering, though the night air was warm enough. He wrapped his clothes into a bundle and, with his neck scarf, bound them firmly on his head. He slipped without a splash into the water and struck out towards the mouth of the cave.

The dull swell lifted him on its breast and drew him down again as if to wrap him with huge cold hands. An undertow of receding water pulled him to the rocks and he touched them with his hands. He reached the mouth of the cave, and felt the splash of the drops which fell from it. He moved very cautiously, fearing to strike suddenly on the sunken rocks. He felt for them with his feet, reached them, stood upright waist-deep. Then, with cold limbs and a numb terror in his heart, he plunged forward again into the deep water within the cave. He swam on, with set teeth, close-pressed lips, and eyes strained to see a foot in front of him into the blackness. Once he turned and looked back. Through the mouth of the cave he saw the dim grey of the June night--a framed space of sky which was not actually black. He felt as if he were looking his last at the familiar world of living things--as if he were on his way to some gloomy other world of moaning, forlorn spirits, of desolate, disappointed loves, of weary, spent souls floating aimlessly on chill, unfathomable sorrow. He swam on, and heard at last the splash of the waves on the shore. His feet touched bottom. He slipped and slid among large slimy stones, worn incredibly smooth by their age-long washing in this sunless place. He struggled forward breast-deep, waist-deep, knee-deep, in the black water. He reached dry ground, crawled upwards till he felt the boulders no longer damp, and knew that he lay above the reach of the tide. He unbound the bundle from his head, clothed himself, and felt the blood steal warm through his limbs again. He staggered further up, groped his way to the side of the cave, as if the touch of solid rock would give him some sense of companionship. Then, like a benediction from the God who watched over him, sleep came.

CHAPTER XVII

The next morning broke cloudless. As the day advanced the sun grew hot. The land at noon seemed to gasp for breath. The sea lay glowing in the light; the waves broke in slow rhythm on the sand and rocks, as if the warmth had imposed even on the Atlantic a mood of luxurious laziness.

Una St. Clair and the Comtesse de Tourneville, attended by Hannah Macaulay, walked shorewards from Dunseveric House. It appeared that they were going to bathe, for they carried bundles of white sheets and coloured garments, large bundles well wrapped together and strapped. Hannah Macaulay had, besides, a little raft made of the flat corks which fishermen use to mark the places where their lobster pots are sunk and to float the tops of salmon nets. It seemed as if one of the party were no great swimmer, and did not mean to venture into deep water without something to which to cling.

A hundred yards from the gate were two yeomen on horseback. The Comtesse greeted them cheerfully as she passed. The men followed the ladies along the road.

"What are we to do?" said Una, "they mean to watch us."

"Perhaps not," said the Comtesse, "let us make sure."

She motioned Una to stop, and sat down on the bank on the roadside. The men halted and waited also. It became obvious that they intended to keep the ladies in view.

"This is abominable," said Una. "How dare they follow us when we are going to bathe?"

"My dear," said the Comtesse, laughing, "they very likely think that we are not going to bathe. So far as I am concerned, their suspicions are quite just. I am certainly not going to undress on a nasty rock which would cut my feet, and then go into cold salt water to have my toes nipped by crabs and lobsters. The worthy Hannah is not going to bathe either. She has too much good sense. Even these stupid yeomen must guess that we are carrying something else besides towels."

"But I am going to bathe," said Una, "and it is intolerable that I should be spied upon and watched."

The Comtesse rose and approached the men.

"Where is Captain Twinely this morning?" she asked, smiling.

"Here he is, coming along the road forinst you, Miss."

The man spoke civilly enough. It was natural to be civil to the Comtesse when she smiled. She had fine eyes, and was not too proud to use them in a very delightful manner even when the man before her was no more than a trooper in a company of yeomen.

"So he is!" she said. "And my good gentleman trooper, how nice your manners are. I am, alas! no longer 'Miss,' though it pleases you to flatter me. I am 'Madam,' a widow, quite an old woman."

She left him and hurried forward to greet Captain Twinely.

"I am charmed to meet you, Captain Twinely. But why have you never been up to call on us? We hear that you have been two whole days in our neighbourhood and not even once have you come to see us. How rude and unkind you are. I would not have believed it of you. But perhaps you have been very busy chasing the odious rebels and had no time to visit us poor ladies."

"I didn't think I was wanted at Dunseveric House, my lady," said the captain.

Like his trooper, he was aware that the Comtesse smiled at him, and that she had beautiful eyes.

"I will not take that as an excuse," she said. "Surely you must know, Captain Twinely, that we are two lonely women, that my lord and my nephew are away. You must have guessed that we should suffer, ah, so terribly, from 'ennui'. Is it not the first duty of an officer to pay his respects to the ladies and to amuse them, especially in this terrible country where it is only the military men who have any manners at all?"

Captain Twinely was delighted and embarrassed. He wished that he had brushed his uniform more carefully in the morning, and that he had not been too lazy to shave. He would gladly have been looking his best now that the eyes of this elegant lady of title and fashion were on him.

"I am at your ladyship's service," he murmured.

"Now that is really kind of you. Please get down from your horse. How can I talk to you when you are so high above me?"

The captain dismounted and gave his horse to one of the troopers. The Comtesse laid her hand on his arm and smiled at him.

"We have a little *fete* planned for to-day," she said. "We are going to have a pic-nic by the sea. Will you not join us. It will be so kind of you. My niece wishes also to bathe. But I--I am not very anxious to go into the sea. Perhaps you

and I might wait for her in some pleasant spot and prepare the pic-nic while she and her maid go to the bathing-place. What do you say, captain?"

"I shall be delighted," he said, "quite delighted."

Captain Twinely had never before been so smiled on by a pretty woman. Never before had such fine eyes looked into his with such an unmistakable challenge to flirtation. He was almost certain that he felt the Comtesse's hand press his arm slightly. He grew pink in the face with pleasure.

"We must tell my niece."

She leaned towards Captain Twinely and whispered in his ear. Her breath touched his cheek. The delicate, faint scent of her clothes reached him.

A confidence, entailing the close proximity of this desirable lady, was an unlooked-for delight.

"My dear niece is very young--a mere child, you understand me, unformed, gauche, what you call shy. You will make excuse for her want of manner."

The apology was necessary. In Una's face, if he had eyes for it at all, Captain Twinely might have seen something more than shyness. There was an expression of loathing on the girl's lips and in her eyes when he stepped up to her, hat in hand.

"Una," said the Comtesse, "the dear captain will take pity on us. He will send one of his men back to the house to fetch a cold chicken and some wine--and all the delightful things we are to eat and drink. Give him a note to the butler, Una, we will go on with Captain Twinely."

Una, puzzled, but obedient to a quick glance from her aunt, wrote the note. The troopers, leading Captain Twinely's horse, rode back to Dunseveric House. The Comtesse, still leaning on the captain's arm, picked up her bundle of bathing clothes.

"Allow me to carry that for you," said the captain, "allow me to carry all the bundles."

"Oh, but no. Have we got a cavalier with such trouble and shall we turn him into a beast of burden, a--how do you say it?--a baggage ass? The good Hannah will carry my bundle."

The good Hannah became a baggage animal, but she was not an ass. She was, indeed, struggling with suppressed mirth. She was confirmed in her opinion that the Comtesse possessed a subtlety not unlike that of the serpent in Eden.

The Comtesse led the way, chatting to Captain Twinely, saying things more charmingly provocative than any which poor Twinely had ever heard from a woman's lips. Her eyes flashed on him, drooped before his gaze, sought his again with shy suggestiveness. She even succeeded, when his glance grew very bold, in blushing. They reached the little cove where Maurice's boat lay.

The Comtesse sat down, and then lolled back on the short grass. Her motions and her attitudes were the most easy and natural possible, yet her pose was charming. There was not a fold of her skirt but fell round her gracefully. From the challenging smile on her lips to the point of the little shoe which peeped out beneath her petticoat, there came an invitation to Captain Twinely--a suggestion that he, too, should sit gracefully on the grass.

"Now, Una," she said, "go and have your bathe, if you must do anything so foolish. We will wait for you here, the captain will amuse me till you return. Kiss me, child, before you go."

Una bent over her.

"I'll keep him," whispered the Comtesse, "I'll keep him, even if I have to allow the animal to embrace me. But, dear Una, do not be very long."

Una sped away. Hannah, heavily laden, and laughing now outright, followed her.

"I never seen the like," she said. "Didn't I say to Master Neal last night that she was an early one? Eh, Miss Una, did you no take notice of the eyes of her? She'd wile the fishes out of the sea, or a bird off a bush, so she would, just by looking sweet at them. It's queer manners they have where she comes from. I'm thinking that silly gowk of a captain's no the first man she's beguiled. I was counted a braw lass myself in me day, and one that could twine a lad round my thumb as fine as any, but I couldna have done thon, Miss Una."

Una gave a little shudder of disgust.

"How could she bear to? How could she touch such a man?"

"Ay, I was wondering that myself, her that's so high falutin' in her ways, and no like a common lassie. Not but what thon captain's a clever enough cut of a man for them as thinks of nothing but a clean figure and a good leg. He's no that ill-looking; but, eh, there's a glint in his eye I wouldna trust. I pity the lassie that loves him. But there's no fear of thon lady falling into sic a snare. She can mine herself well, I'm thinkin'."

They reached the cliff above the Pigeon Cave, and Una began her downward climb. Hannah stared at her in horror.

"Mind yourself, Miss Una. You're never going down there, are ye? And you expect me to break my old bones going after you, do ye? Faith and I willna avaw, I'd rather be back rolling my eyes at the captain and letting on to him that I

wanted a kiss than go down yon cliff."

"Come," said Una, "it looks worse than it is. Come, Hannah, you must come. Would you have the poor boy starve in the cave?"

The appeal was too strong to be resisted. Hannah, with much grumbling, climbed down. Una carried the bundles one by one to the shelf of rock from which Neal had slipped into the dark water the night before. She took the straps from them, and unwound the sheets and bathing clothes. Within was store of food--parcels of oatcake, baps, cold meat, butter, cheese, a bottle of wine, a flask of whisky and water, a package of candles. She had determined that Neal should feast royally in his hiding-place, and that he should not sit in the dark, though he had to sit alone. She floated the raft of corks, and very carefully loaded it with her good things. Then, with a piece of cord, she moored it to the rock.

"Are ye no afeard, Miss Una?" said Hannah. "Eh, but it's well to be young and strong, I wouldna go in there, not for all the gold and silver and the spices that King Solomon gave to the Queen of Sheba. I wouldna go in a boat, let alone swimming. Miss Una, could you no shout, and let him come for the food himself?"

Una looked at her with a wondering reproach in her eyes.

"Am I the only one that's to do nothing for him? Didn't Maurice get him free in the town of Antrim? Didn't you chase the yeomen from him last night? Isn't Aunt Estelle sitting with that Captain Twinely now? And may I not do something, too? I think mine's the easiest thing of the four."

"You're a venturesome lassie, so you are. I dinna like the looks of thon water. It's over green for me, so it is. I can see right down to the bottom of it, and that's no natural in the sea, and it so deep, too. And thon cave, Miss Una, with the smooth, red, clumpy sides to it. What call has the rocks to be red? I'm thinking when God made the rocks black, and maybe white, it's black and white he meant them to be and no red. I wouldna say but what there's something no just canny about a cave with red sides to it higher than a man can stretch. Eh, but you've the chiney white feet, Miss Una. Mind now you dinna scrab them on the wee shells. Bide now, bide like a good lassie, till I spread the sheet for you to tread on. You will no be for going right intil the cave? Would it no do you to shout when you got to the mouth of it? I dinna like that cave with the red sides till it. I'm thinking maybe there was red sides to the cave where the witch of Endor dwefit. Are you no sure that there isna something of that kind, something no right in the gloom beyond there?"

"Neal's in it," said Una, "what's to frighten me?"

"Ay, sure enough, he's there, the poor baim. Lord save us, and keep us! The lassie's intil the water, and it up ower her head, and she's drowned. No, but she's up again, and she's swimmin' along like as if she was a sea maiden with hair all wet. Eh, but she swims fine, and she's gotten hold of the wee boatie wi' the laddie's dinner on it. Look at the white arms of her moving through the water, they're like the salmon fish slithering along when the net is pulled in. She's bonny, so she is. See till her now! See till her if she hasna lighted on some kind of a rock. She's standing up on it, and the sea no more than up to the knees of her. The water is running off her, and she's shaking herself like a wee dog. She doesna mind it. She's waving her hand to me and her in the very mouth of thon awful cave. Mine yourself, Miss Una, take heed now, like a good lass. Dinna go further, you're far enough. Bide where you are, and shout till him. Lord save us, she's off again, and the wee boatie in front of her. I've known a wheen o' lassies in my time that would do queer things for the lads they had their hearts set on, but ne'er a one as venturesome as her. I'm thinking Master Neal himself would look twice e'er he swam into thon dark hole. Eh, poor laddie, but there'll be light in his eyes when he sees the white glint of her coming till him where he's no expecting her or the like of her."

Indeed, Una was not so brave as she seemed. Her heart beat quicker as she struck out into the gloom of the cave. The water was colder, or seemed colder, than it had been outside. The splashing of drops from the roof, and the echoing noise of the sea's wash awed her. She felt a tightening in her throat. She swam with faster and faster strokes. The sides of the cave loomed huge about her. The roof seemed immensely, remotely, high. The water was dark now. It was a solemn thing to swim through it. She began to wonder how far it was to the end of the cave. A sudden terror seized her. Suppose, after all, that Neal was not in the cave, suppose that she was swimming in this awful place alone. She shouted aloud--

"Neal, Neal, Neal Ward, are you there?"

The cave echoed her cries. A thousand repetitions of the name she had shouted came to her from above, from behind, from right, from left. The rocks flung her words to each other, bandied them to and fro, turned them into ridicule, turned them into thundering sounds of terror, turned them into shrill shrieks. The frightened pigeons flew from their rocky perches; their wings set new echoes going. Una swam forward, and, reckless with fright now, shouted again. She heard some one rushing down to meet her from the remote depths of the cave. The great stones rolled and crashed under his feet with a noise like the firing of guns. Then, amid a babel of echoes, came a shout answering her's.

"I'm coming to you, Una."

She felt the bottom with her feet. She stood upright. At the sound of Neal's voice all her fears vanished. She could see him now. He was stumbling down over the slippery stones which the ebb tide left bare. He reached the water and splashed in.

"Stay where you are, you must not come any further."

"Una," he said, "dear Una, you have come to me."

She laughed merrily.

"Don't think I've come to live with you here, Neal, like a seal or a mermaid. No, no. I've brought you something to eat. Here, now, don't upset my little boat." She pushed the raft towards him. "Isn't it just like the boats we used to make long ago when we were little? Oh! do you remember how angry the salmon men were when you and Maurice stole all the corks off their net? But I can't stay talking here, I'm getting cold, and you, Neal, go back to dry land. What's the use of standing there up to your knees in water? There's no sun in here to dry your clothes afterwards. No, you must not come to me, I won't have it. You'd get wet up to your neck. Keep quiet, now. I've something to say to you. Maurice has gone to Glasgow to see that funny Captain Getty, who made you both so angry the day we took your uncle from the brig. He is arranging for the brig to lie off here and pick you up. Maurice and I will take you out in the boat. We will come in to the mouth of the cave and shout to you unless it's rough. If it's rough, Neal, you must swim out and hide somewhere among the rocks. But I hope it will stay calm. Maurice may be back to-morrow or next day. I've given you enough to eat for two days. I may not be able to come to-morrow."

"Do come again, Una, it's very lonely here."

"I will if I can, Neal. Good-bye. Keep a good heart. Good-bye. Oh, but it's hard to be leaving you in this dark place, but I think it's safe, and the country is full of yeomen. Good-bye, Neal. God bless you."

When Una and Hannah reached the little cove again, they found luncheon spread out on the grass ready for them. The troopers who had brought the baskets from Dunseveric House sat on their horses at the end of the rough track which led to the strand. The Comtesse reclined on a cloak spread for her on the grass. Captain Twinely, a worshipper with bold eyes and stupid tongue, sat at her feet and gazed at her. He had ceased even to wonder at his own good fortune in captivating so fair a lady. He had forgotten all about the angular daughter of a neighbouring squire, who was waiting for him to marry her. He was hopelessly, helplessly, fascinated by the woman in front of him. Estelle de Tourneville had never made an easier conquest. And she was already exceedingly weary of the flirtation. The man bored her because he was dull. He disgusted her because he was amorous.

"Oh, Una," she cried, "how quick you've been! It hardly seems a moment since you left. Captain Twinely and I have had such a delightful talk. I was telling him about the Jacobins in Paris, and how they wanted to cut my head off in the Terror. My dear, your hair is all wet. You look just like a seal with your sleek head and your brown eyes. Just fancy, Una, Captain Twinely thought that we were in sympathy with the rebels here. He had actually told his men to watch us in case we should try to help some horrid *sans-culotte* who is hiding somewhere. Just think of his suspecting me--me, of all people."

She cast a glance at Captain Twinely. Her eyes were full of half serious reproach, of laughter and enticement.

"I'm very hungry after my swim," said Una, "let us have our lunch."

Captain Twinely, awkward but anxious to please, was on his feet in an instant. He waited on the ladies, waited even on Hannah, whom he supposed to be Una's maid. He did not notice that Una shrank from him. He probably would not have cared even if he had seen that she avoided touching his hand as she might have avoided some loathsome reptile. His thoughts and his eyes were all for the Comtesse. She did not shrink from him. Her wonderful eyes thrilled him again and again. He touched her hand, her hair, her clothes, as he handed her this or that to eat or drink. He grew hot and cold in turns with the excitement of her nearness. He was ecstatically, ridiculously happy.

He walked back to Dunseveric House with her. He promised to call on her the next day. He promised to leave troopers on guard round the house all night in case a fugitive rebel, wandering in the demesne, might frighten the Comtesse. He suggested another pic-nic. At last, reluctantly, lingeringly, he bade her farewell.

"Adieu, Monsieur le Capitaine," said the Comtesse, "we shall expect you to-morrow then."

She stretched out her hand to him. He stooped and kissed it. Then she turned from him and ran up the avenue after Una and Hannah. The captain watched her. He pulled himself together, reassumed his habitual swagger, tried to persuade himself that he looked on the Comtesse as he had long been accustomed to look on other women.

"A damned fine woman," he said, "and a bit smitten with me. Begad, these French women have a great deal to recommend them. Thy catch fire at once. A man does not have to spend a month dilly-dallying with them, dancing attendance and looking like a fool while they are as cold as ice all the time. Give me a good full-blooded filly like this one."

"Una," said the Comtesse, when she overtook her niece. "Una, I positively can't stand another day of that man. He's odious. You'll have to do him yourself to-morrow, and let me go to the young man in the cave."

"But, Aunt Estelle, I thought you--you liked it. You looked as if you liked it."

"*Mon dieu!*" said the Comtesse, laughing, "of course I looked as if I liked it. If I had looked as if I disliked it I could not have kept him for ten minutes, and then what would have happened to you, mademoiselle?"

"It was very, very good of you," said Una, penitently. "I can never thank you enough."

"Oh, it wasn't so very good of me, and I don't want to be thanked at all. I'll tell you a secret, Una, and Hannah shall hear it too. I did like it. Now, what do you think?"

"You would, my lady," said Hannah. "I know that finely, I'd have liked it myself when I was young and frisky like you."

"What would you have liked, Hannah?" asked the Comtesse.

"Eh! just what you liked yourself, my lady; just seeing a man making himself a bigger fool nor the Lord meant him to be for the sake of my bonny face. I'm thinking you're the same as another for a' you're a countess and have a braw foreign name. You just like what I'd have liked, and what all women ever I heard tell on liked in their hearts, though maybe they wouldna own up till it, from thon wench, that might have been a gran' lady, too, for a' I ken, who made the great silly gaby of a Samson lie still while she clipped the seven locks off of his head. She liked fine to see him sleeping there like the tap he was for all the strongness of him."

"You are right, Hannah, you are right. Oh, Una dear, if you could have seen him—but you wouldn't understand. What's the good of telling you? Hannah, if you'd seen him sitting there like a great woolly sheep, with the silliest expression in his eyes; if you'd seen him putting out his hand to touch me, pretending he did it by accident, and then pulling it away again like one of those snails that crawl about in the sandhills when you touch his horns with the end of a blade of grass. If you'd seen him. Oh, I wish you'd seen him!"

"Faith, I seen plenty."

"You did not, Hannah; you didn't see half. He was far, far better before you came back."

She burst into a peal of half hysterical laughter. She may have enjoyed the captain's company, but he had evidently tried her nerves.

"But, Una dear," she said, when she grew calm again, "I hope Maurice will come soon, or that American ship, or something. I won't be able to go on very long."

"There's been an easterly breeze since noon," said Una, "and there's a haze out at sea."

"Do talk sense, Una. Here I've been sacrificing myself for you all day, and when I ask you for a little sympathy you talk to me about an east wind."

"But the east wind will bring the brig, aunt. How could she get here from Glasgow without the wind?"

CHAPTER XVIII

The Comtesse underrated her powers of endurance. For two more whole days she encouraged Captain Twinely to make love to her. She sat with him in the sandhills, she walked with him along the strand, she flattered him, ogled him, enticed him, till the man was beside himself with the desire of her. But in private it was not safe to speak to her about the captain. Her temper, when the hours of her love-making were over for the day, was extremely bad. Even Hannah, who was a match for most women in the use of her tongue, shrank from the sharp gibes of the Comtesse. Una tried in vain to soothe the ruffled lady, and had to bear much from her, but Una could have borne anything patiently. The east wind blew gently day and night, bringing--surely bringing--the white sails of the brig. The sea remained calm and she was able to go twice more to the cave. She saw the yeomen spread over the country, searching everywhere, through fields and hills and along the river banks, by the shore, among the rocks, over the Causeway cliffs, through the sandhills, the ruins of Dunluce, among the white cliffs of Port-rush Strand, at high tide and low tide, everywhere except the one place--the nook where Una bathed. Estelle de Tourneville secured that spot from the searchers' gaze. No man dared go there. Una could forgive the worst of tempers to the woman who purchased such security. And the Comtesse was excusable. Doubtless, she paid a heavy price for a delicately-nurtured and fastidious lady. No one ever knew what she endured. Neither to Una nor any one else did she tell at the time or afterwards the details of the captain's courtship.

At last, one evening after dusk, Maurice rode in from Ballycastle. He brought glorious news. Captain Getty was on his way. He might be expected off the coast the next day. Maurice had left the brig at the quay at Greenock ready to sail. Next morning he was up early. He took bread and meat and went alone to Pleaskin Head, carrying his father's long telescope with him. All morning he lay on the edge of the cliff peering eastward across the sea. He was strangely nervous now that the critical moment had arrived. He understood that the coast was being carefully watched, that the sight of a ship lying--to a mile or two from the shore, would certainly excite suspicion; that it might be very difficult for him to take his boat round to the cave where Neal lay hidden without being followed. It was absolutely necessary for him to catch sight of the brig before any one else did, to get off from the shore before the brig lay to, to be well on his way to her before any other boat put out to chase him. He knew that his own movements were watched. He was followed from the house to Pleaskin Head by two yeomen. As he lay on the cliffs he saw them a few hundred yards inland keeping guard on him.

At ten o'clock he caught sight of the topsails of a ship far east, beyond the blue outline of the Rathlin hills. The wind, very feeble at dawn, was freshening slightly. The lower sails of the vessel rose slowly into view. Maurice guessed her to be a brig--to be the brig he looked for. He lay still, watching her intently, till he was sure. Then he went home. He found Una and the Comtesse in the breakfast room. Captain Twinely, on the lawn outside, leaned on the window sill and talked to them. Maurice, uncontrollably excited, whispered to Una--

"Now."

She rose, and followed him from the room. Captain Twinely eyed them sharply. He had ceased to distrust the Comtesse, but he was keenly suspicious of Maurice. Since he had been robbed of his clothes in Antrim he hated Maurice nearly as bitterly as he did Neal, and was determined to have him strictly watched.

"Pardon me, dear lady," he said, "I must give some orders to the patrol."

"Don't be long, then," she said, "I want you to-day, Captain Twinely. Come back to me."

Their eyes met, and the Comtesse felt certain that her victim would return to her. She leaped from her chair the moment he left her and ran from the room.

"Una," she cried. "Una, Maurice, where are you?"

She found them; they were packing clothes in a hand-bag--clothes, she supposed, for Neal.

"He's gone to give orders to his men about you, Maurice. I know he has. I haven't a moment to explain. Leave everything to me. I'll manage him, only trust me and do what I say. Una, are you a born idiot? Take those things out of the bag. How can you go about with that travelling-bag in your hand and not excite suspicion? If you must have clothes wrap them in a bathing-sheet. Oh, what a fool you are!"

She left them no time to answer her, but fled back to the breakfast-room. A moment later Captain Twinely found her, lounging--a figure of luxurious laziness--among the cushions of Lord Dunseveric's easy chair.

"We are going on the sea to-day," she said, "my nephew, Maurice, has promised to take us in a boat to the Skerries. I have never been there, but I hear they are delightful. I hope you will come with us. Please say yes. I should feel so much safer in a boat if you were there. My nephew is very rash. He frightens me. I do not trust him. I shall not feel secure or easy in my mind unless you come, too. Besides"--her voice sank to a delicious whisper--"I shall not really enjoy myself unless you are there."

She stretched her hand out and laid it with the tenderest motion of caress on his hand. Captain Twinely could not hesitate, he promised to go with her. In the back of his mind was a feeling that if he were of the party Maurice St. Clair

could not attempt to communicate with the fugitive.

"Maurice," said the Comtesse, "Maurice, are you ready? Captain Twinely is coming with us to the Skerries for a picnic. Won't that be nice? Come along quickly, we are starting."

She took the captain with her, and walked down to the cove where the boat lay. Una and Maurice, with their bundles of clothes, followed.

"Una," said Maurice, "what does she mean? I can't take this man in the boat, and I won't. What does she mean by inviting him?"

"I don't know, but we must trust her. We can trust her. She's been wonderful all these last three days. Only for her I could never have got food to Neal."

"Well," said Maurice, "I suppose if the worst comes to the worst it will only be a matter of knocking him on the head with an oar. I don't want to do that if I can help it. My lord will be angry if he has to get me out of a fresh scrape. It will be a serious matter to assault this captain in cold blood. I'll do it, of course, if necessary, but I would rather not."

The boat was dragged down the beach. The Comtesse looked at it, and protested.

"Maurice, surely you are not going in that little boat. It's far too small. It's not safe."

"Oh, it's safe enough," said Maurice, "and anyway there's no other."

"There is," said the Comtesse. "There, look at that nice broad, flat boat. I'll go in that."

"The cobble for lifting the salmon net!" said Maurice, with a laugh. "My dear aunt, you couldn't go to sea in that. She can't sail, and it takes four men to pull her as fast as a snail would crawl. Who ever heard of going off to the Skerries in a salmon cobble?"

"Well," said the Comtesse, angrily, "I won't go in the other. I know that one is too small. Isn't she too small, Captain Twinely? Look at the size of the sea. Look how far off the island is! No, I won't go. If you persist in being disobliging, Maurice, you and Una can go by yourselves. Captain Twinely and I will stay on shore."

The boat was already in the water and Una sat in the stern. Maurice, ankle deep in water, held her bow. Maurice laughed aloud. He began to understand his aunt's plan.

"Come, Captain Twinely, we will go for a walk along the cliffs."

Her hand was on his arm. She held him. He looked at the boat. A swift doubt shot through his mind. Something in the way Maurice laughed aroused his suspicion. He took a step forward. The Comtesse clung tightly to his arm. Maurice gave a vigorous shove and leapt forward over the bow. The boat shot out and floated clear of the land.

"Isn't he a disagreeable boy?" said the Comtesse. "You wouldn't have refused to do what I asked you, would you, Captain Twinely?"

Her eyes sought his, but he was watching the boat uneasily. Maurice had the oars out, and was pulling round the Black Rock.

"He's not going to the Skerries," he said, "he's going in the other direction."

"What does it matter where he goes? Besides, you know what stupid things boats are. They always turn away from the place they want to go to. It's what they call tacking. Maurice must be tacking now. Let him manage his horrid boat himself. We needn't trouble ourselves about him. We will go for a walk on the tops of the cliffs."

"I thought you did not like walking on the cliffs, you never would walk there with me before."

"Please don't be cross with me. May I not change my mind?"

She stroked his hand and looked up into his face with eyes which actually had tears in them. "I shall be so miserable if you are cross. I shall feel that I have spoiled your day. I wish now that I had gone in the little boat. I wish I had been upset and drowned. Then perhaps you would have been sorry for me."

She was crying in earnest now. Captain Twinely yielded, yielded to her tears, to the fascination of her presence, to the passion of his love for her. Very tenderly and gently he led her up the steep path to the top of the cliffs. Holding her hands in his he walked silently beside her. He was a bad man, revengeful, cruel, cowardly, but he really loved the woman beside him. His was no heroic, spiritual love, but it was the best, the strongest, of which his nature was capable. He could never for her sake have lived purely and nobly, or learned self-denial, but, cowardly as he was, he would have died for her.

Suddenly she stood still, snatched her hand from his grasp, and stepped away from him.

"Now," she cried, "at last! at last! There, Captain Twinely, there is the boat with the sail spread, shooting out to sea. Look at her; look carefully; look well. How many people are there in her? Can you see? I can see very well. There are three, and who is the third?"

The tears were gone out of her eyes now. They blazed with triumph and satisfaction. She laughed aloud, exultingly, bitterly.

"Who is the third? Can you see? He is Neal Ward, the man you've chased, the man you've been seeking day and night. There"--she pointed further eastwards--"there is the American brig which will bear him away from you. Do you understand?"

Captain Twinely followed her gaze and her pointing finger. He began to understand.

"And I did it. I fooled you. I blinded your eyes while my niece fed him in his hiding-place. I encouraged you to seek everywhere, and kept you back from the place where he was. I--I made pretence of tolerating your hateful presence. I made you think that I cared for you, loved you, you, you--I would rather love a toad."

"You have deceived me, then, all the time, played with me."

"Yes," she laughed wildly, "deceived you, played with you, fooled you, cheated you, and hated you--yes, hated, hated the very sight of you, the abominable sound of your voice, the sickening touch of your hand."

"And I loved you," he said, simply. "I loved you so well that I think I would have done anything for you. There was no need for you to fool me. I would have let the man go if you had asked me. I would have let him go, though I hate him, and I could not have asked leave even to kiss your hand for my reward. I would have been content just to have pleased you. Why did you cheat me?"

The Comtesse had no pity for him. The memory of the words he had spoken to her, of his foolish face, of his amorous ways, of the touchings of his hands which she had endured, thronged on her. Her lips curled back over her teeth. Her eyes were hard like shining steel.

"I hate you," she hissed at him. "I have always hated you since the night when you seized me and dragged me into the meeting-house. I would have revenged myself for that even if there had been no prisoner to save from you."

"I did not do that," said Captain Twinely, "and I did not know who you were at the time. Be just to me even if you hate me. God knows that I would have died to save you from the smallest hurt."

He fell on the ground before her.

"Oh," he cried, "have some pity for me. I love you with all my soul. Let me serve you, let me wait on you. Let me see you sometimes and hear your voice. Have you no pity for me? I do not ask for love, or friendship, or the meanest gift. Only do not hate me. I have led an evil life, I know it, but for your sake, for your sake, if you will pity me, I will do anything. I will be anything you bid me. But do not hate me. For the love of God, by the mercy of Christ the Saviour, do not cast me utterly away from you. Do not hate me."

He crawled forward, and clutched the bottom of her skirt with his hand. With a swift movement she snatched it from his grasp.

"I do hate you," she cried, "and I shall always hate you. From this out I shall always hope and pray and strive to get to heaven when I die, not for the love of the saints or because I think that I shall be happy there, but just because I shall be safe from the sight of you, for you will surely be in hell."

She turned and walked down the path they had ascended together. She left him grovelling on the ground, his face slobbered with tears and grimy with the clay his hands rubbed over it.

CHAPTER XIX

The boat sped seawards. The wind had freshened since the morning, and worked round after the sun, as the wind does in settled weather. It blew now from the south-east, and the boat reached out with a free sheet. Una sat in the stern and held the tiller. Her eyes glistened with excitement and delight. At her feet, on the floor boards of the boat, sat Neal, dripping after his swim out of the cave. The sun shone warm on him, and he had Una close to him. He was safe at last, freed from the terrible anxiety and fears. He had life before him—a glad, good thing, yet there was more sorrow than joy in his face. In an hour, or less than an hour, he must say farewell to Una. He felt that he would gladly have gone back to the gloom of the cave for the sake of a brief visit from her every day. He would have accepted the life of a hunted animal rather than part, for years perhaps, from Una. He was sure that he had never known the fulness of his love for her until this hour of parting. His eyes never left her face. Now and then, when she could spare attention from her steering, she answered his glances. In her face there was no sorrow at all, only merry delight and the anticipation of more joy. "I have brought you a suit of my clothes, and some change of linen," said Maurice. "I have them in a bundle here, done up in a great sheet. Hullo! there are two bundles. I didn't notice that you had brought a second one, Brown-Eye. You'll not leave me a rag to my back if you give Neal two suits."

"It's all right, Maurice," said Una, "the second bundle has my clothes in it."

"Your clothes, Brown-Eyes! Why have you brought clothes?"

"I'm going with Neal, of course."

Neal sat upright suddenly and stared at her with a new expression in his eyes. He was the prey of sheer astonishment, then of a rapture which set his heart beating tumultuously.

"You are going with Neal! Nonsense, Brown-Eyes. How can you?"

"I've money to pay my passage," she said, "and if I hadn't I'd go just the same. I shall climb up into the brig, and I won't be turned out of her."

"You can't," said Maurice.

"Oh, but I can, and I will. Do you think you and father are the only two in the family that have wills of your own. You'll take me, Neal, won't you? We'll be married as soon as ever we get to America. I'm like the girl in the song--

*"I'll dye my petticoat, I'll dye it red,
And through the world I'll beg my bread,
but I won't leave you now, Neal."*

She began to sing merrily, exultingly--

*"Though father and brother and a' should go mad,
Just whistle and I'll come to you, my lad."*

"Well," said Maurice, "if you go I may as well take my passage, too. I daren't go home and face my lord with the news that you've run off from him. But steady, Brown-Eyes, watch what you're doing. We're close on the brig now. We'll neither go to America nor back home if you upset us now."

He took in the sprit of the sail as Una rounded the boat under the brig's stern. A rope was flung to them and made fast. Another rope, a stouter one, was lowered to Neal. Una seized it and climbed up. Willing hands caught her, lifted her over the bulwarks, and set her on the deck.

"Am I to ferry you across, too, young lady?" asked Captain Getty.

"Yes," said Una, "I am going with you."

Neal leaned across the thwarts of the boat to Maurice.

"Stay you here," he said, "leave this to me."

He gained the deck of the brig. Una met him with outstretched hands and sparkling eyes.

"Isn't this glorious?" she said. "You never guessed, Neal. Confess that you never guessed."

Then she shrank back from him, frightened by what she saw. His face was ashy grey, save for two flaming spots on his cheek bones. His lips were trembling. His eyes told her of some desperate resolution, of some counsel adopted with intense pain.

"What is the matter, Neal! Do you not want me after all? Will you not take me?"

"No, I will not take you."

It was all he succeeded in saying before a sob choked him. Una stared at him in terrified surprise; but even then, even with his own words in her ears, she did not doubt his love for her. She waited.

"Una," he said at last, "I cannot take you with me."

She gazed at him with wide, pitiful eyes, like the eyes of a little child struck suddenly and inexplicably by the hand of some trusted friend. Neal trembled and turned away from her. He could not look at her while he spoke.

"Una, dearest, it is not that I do not love you. I love you. Oh, heart of my heart, I love you. I would give----"

He sobbed again. Then, with an effort, he mastered himself, and spoke slowly in low, tender tones.

"Una, your father has trusted me. He has helped me, saved me. He has been my friend. I am bound in honour to him. I cannot take you from him like this."

"Ah!" she said. "Honour! Is your honour more than love?"

"Una, Una, can't you understand? It's because I love you so well that I cannot do this. Wait, dearest, wait a little while. I shall come back to you. The world is not so wide that it can keep me from you. The time will not be long."

He turned to her, and saw again the intolerable stricken sadness of her eyes.

"My darling," he said, "I cannot bear it. I will take you with me. Come. What does it matter about honour or disgrace? What have we to do with right or wrong? Will you come, Una?"

"Her eyes dropped before his gaze. Her hands clasped and unclasped, the fingers of them sliding close-pressed against each other. She trembled.

"If it is wrong----," she whispered. "Oh, Neal, I do not understand, but what you think wrong is wrong for me, too. I will not do what you say is wrong. But, oh! come back to me, come back to me soon. I cannot bear to wait long for you."

All the joy was gone from her. Forgetful of the strangers who stood round her, she covered her face with her hands and wept bitterly.

Maurice's voice reached them from the boat.

"Be quick, Neal. I must cast off and let you get under way. They've got the old salmon cobble out, and they're coming after us. Captain Twinely must have managed to tear himself away from the Comtesse. They are pulling six oars, and the cobble is full of men. Be quick."

Una stopped crying on the instant. She cast a terrified glance at the approaching boat. Then she ran across the deck to Captain Getty. She seized his hand, and fell on her knees before him.

"Keep him safe, Captain Getty. Keep him safe. The soldiers, the yeomen, are after him. Do not give him up to them. They will hang him if they get him. Keep him safe. Do not let them take him."

"Young lady, Miss," said Captain Getty, "stand up and dry your eyes. Your sweetheart's safe while he stands on my deck. Safe from them. For tempests and fire and the perils of the deep, and the act of God"--he lifted his cap from his head--"I can't swear, but as for darned British soldiers of any kind--such scum set no foot on the deck of Captain Hercules Getty's brig--the *Saratoga*. You see that rag there, young lady, that rag flying from the gaff of the spanker, it's not much to look at, maybe, not up to the high-toned level of the crosses and the lions that spread themselves and ramp about on other flags, but I guess a man's free when that flies over him. You take my word for it, Miss--the word of Captain Hercules Getty--the Britisher will knuckle under to that rag. He's seen the stars and stripes before now, and he knows he's just got to slip his tail in between his hind legs and scoot, scoot tamation quick from the place where that rag flutters on the breeze."

CHAPTER XX

In the summer of 1800 the Act of Union was passed. The Irish Constitution ceased to exist. The country lay torpid and apathetic under the blow. Blood had been let in Antrim and Down, in Wexford and Wicklow. The society of United Irishmen was broken. The Protestant gentry were frightened or bribed. They, or the greater part of them, surrendered their birthright without even Esau's hunger for excuse. Roman Catholic ecclesiastics, deluded by the promise of emancipation, which was not kept for many a long year afterwards, offered a dubious welcome to the English power. The people, cowed, helpless, expectant of little any way, waited in numb indifference for what the new order was to bring. There was little joy and little cause for joy in Ireland then.

From the gate of Dunseveric House, in the twilight of the short October afternoon, came a young man who seemed to feel no sense of depression or sadness. He strode briskly along the muddy road, swinging his stick in his hand, whistling a merry tune. After a while, for very exuberance of spirits, he broke into song. His voice rang clear through the damp, misty air--

*"Oh, my love's like a red, red rose,
That's newly sprung in June:
Oh, my love's like the melody
That's sweetly played in tune."*

A hundred yards or so further along the road walked another traveller. He carried a knapsack on his shoulders and a stout staff in his hand. When the song reached his ears he stopped, listened carefully, and then waited for the singer to overtake him. It seemed as if the young man was too glad at heart to sing through one song. He began again, and his voice was full of passion, as if he had abandoned himself to the inspiration of his words--

*"Oh, wert thou in the cauld blast,
On yonder lea, on yonder lea,
My plaidie to the angry airt,
I'd shelter thee, I'd shelter thee."*

"Neal Ward," said the man who waited.

The singer paused.

"I'm Neal Ward, my friend, who ever are you? And I know your voice. I know it. Let me see your face, man. You're Jemmy Hope. As I'm a living man, you're Jemmy Hope. I couldn't have asked a better meeting."

He seized Hope's hand and wrung it heartily. He held it firm.

"There's no man in the world I'd rather have met to-night. But I might have guessed I'd meet you. When a man's happy every wish of his heart comes to him. It's only the poor devils who are sad that have to wait and sigh for what they want and never get it."

"So you are happy, Neal. I am right glad of it. It makes me happy, too, for all that's come and gone, to listen to your singing. Give me a share of your good news, Neal. We want good news in Ireland now-a-days. What makes you happy?"

"I'm to be married to-morrow, Jemmy Hope. To-morrow, to-morrow, man. Isn't that enough to make me happy?"

He put his arm round Hope, and led him along the road. He walked as if there were music in his ears which made him want to dance.

"She's the best girl in all the world," he said, "the bravest and the truest and the sweetest--

*'Or were I a monarch o' the globe,
With thee to reign, with thee to reign,
The brightest jewel in my crown
Wad be my queen, wad be my queen.'*

Haven't I the right to be happy, James Hope? Tell me that."

"You have the best gift that God has got to give to man," said Hope, "and I that speak to you know. I have my own dear Rose. I have found that the love of a good woman made all my trouble easy, turned sorrow of heart into a kind of gladness, brought joy out of disappointment, made poverty sweet to bear."

"But I'm not poor," said Neal, "I have a home to offer her, a home not unworthy of her. I have money to give her what she wants. I shall take her across the sea in a fine ship that I own myself, in a cabin I have fitted out for her, fine enough for a crowned queen, but not fine enough for her--

*"'Blair in Athol's mine lassie,
Fair Dunkeld is mine lassie,
St. Johnston's bower and Hunting Tower,
And a' that's mine is thine, lassie.'*

Oh, man, but I have cause for my happiness. I have the world before me, good work to do, good money to earn, and her love like a "perpetual sun-shine to make life fair to me."

Then suddenly his voice changed.

"Ah, but my happiness is not complete. There are two things I want yet. I want my father to come out with me, and I want you, too, my friend."

"And will your father not go? I heard that they had released him at last from the prison in Scotland, when they kept him since the year of the break at Antrim. He's home again."

"Ay, he's home, and it's little cause he has to stay here. They have put a new minister in his place. The Synod, the conscienceless villains, declared it vacant. Castlereagh, through his satellite Black, has corrupted them, too. He'll preach no more in the old meeting-house, nor sit over his bodes in the old manse. He's at the Widow Maclure's now, the woman whose husband was hanged. He'll not want his bit while I've money in my pocket. But I'd like to bring him with me, to give him a better home."

"And will he not go?"

"He will not. He says he's too old to go to a new land now; but you'll help me to persuade him. I think, maybe, if you'd come with me that he'd come, too. And you will come, won't you?"

Hope shook his head.

"Don't shake your head at me that way, James Hope. You don't know what you're refusing. I can give you work to do out there, and money to earn, and a fine house to live in. It's a good land, so it is; it's a land of liberty. We've done with the tyrannies of this worn-out old world. A man may speak his mind out there, and think his own thoughts and go his own way. We doff our hats and make our bows to no man living, only to him who shows himself by fine deeds to be our better. It's the land for you and the land for me, and the land for every man that loves freedom. Will you not come?"

They reached the door of the Maclures' house and entered. A bright fire burned on the hearth. The Widow Maclure was busy spreading a white cloth on the table. Her eldest girl, a child of twelve years old, stood near at hand with a pile of wooden porridge bowls in her arms. The two other children, holding by their mother's skirts, followed, smiled on and chidden as they impeded her work, and babbled questions about this or that. Beside the fire, in the chair that had once belonged to the master of the house, sat Micah Ward. He looked very old now and infirm. The months in a prison hulk in Belfast Lough and the long weariness of his confinement in bleak Fort George had set their mark upon him. On his knees lay a Greek lexicon, but he was pursuing no word through its pages. It was open at the fly-leaf inside the cover. He was reading lovingly for the hundredth time an inscription written there--

"This book was given to Rev. Micah Ward by his fellow-prisoners in Fort George, in witness of their gratitude to him for his ministrations during their captivity, and as a token of their admiration for his fortitude, his patience, and his unfailing charity."

There followed a list of twenty names. Four of them belonged to men of the Roman Catholic faith, six of them were the names of Presbyterians, ten were of those who accepted the teaching of that other Church which, trammelled for centuries by connection with the State, hampered with riches secured to her by the bayonets of a foreign power, dragged down very often by officials placed over her by Englishmen, has yet in spite of all won glory. Out of her womb have come the men whose names shine brightest on the melancholy roll of the Irish patriots of the last two centuries. She has not cared to boast of them. She has hidden their names from her children as if they were a shame to her, but they are hers.

Thus far off in a desolate Scottish fortress, after the total failure of every plan, in the hour of Ireland's most hopeless degradation, the great dream which had fired the imagination of Tone and Neilson and the others, the dream of all Irishmen uniting in a common love of their country, a love which should transcend the differences of rival creeds, found a realisation. The witness, written in crabbed characters on the fly-leaf of a lexicon, lay on the knees of a broken old man in the cottage of a widow within earshot of the perpetual clamour of the bleak northern sea.

"Well, father," said Neal, "here I am back again. And here's Jemmy Hope, whom I picked up on the road. He's come to see you. He's going to persuade you to cross the sea with me. You and I and he together, and Hannah Macaulay, who's coming, too. Una will make you all welcome on her sturdy ship. It's her ship now. All that I have is her's."

Micah Ward looked at his son with a gentle, sad smile on his face. Then he turned to welcome his visitor.

"So you have come to see me, James Hope. It was good of you. Ah, man, there's not so many of us left now. Orr, they hanged him; M'Cracken, they hanged him; Monroe, they hanged him; Porter, they hanged him. And many another, many another. And the rest are gone across the sea. You and I are left, with one here and there besides--a very small remnant, a cottage in a vineyard, a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, a besieged city."

"It's hard to tell," said Hope, "why they did not hang me, too. There were times when, only for my wife, who would have grieved after me, I could have found it in my heart to wish they would."

"Father," said Neal, "Hope is coming to America with me."

"Nay, lad, nay. I was born in Ireland, I've lived my life in Ireland, I'll die in Ireland when my time comes. Maybe before the end I'll find a chance to strike another blow for her."

"Doubtless," said Micah Ward, "such a blow will be stricken, but not in our time, James Hope. The fighting spirit is gone from us. The men are laid low or scattered or broken. The people speak about the 'break.' They call it well. 'Shall iron break the northern iron and the steel?' Yea, but iron hath broken us. It hath entered into our souls. And if one look unto the land, behold darkness and sorrow and the light is darkened in the heavens thereof."

"But there is another land," said Neal, "where the sun shines, where neither palaces of kings, nor haughty churches, nor the banners and cannon smoke of England's soldiers, nor yet the gallows, casting shadows over the green fields, and overtopping every village, can come between the people and the good light which the Lord God made for them. That's the land for you and me."

"For you, Neal," said Micah Ward, "and for the girl you love. But there is no other land except only this lost land for me and him."

He took Hope's hand and held it. Then, with his other hand, he drew his son down beside him. Neal knelt on the earthen floor of the cottage. He felt hands laid upon his head--his father's hands and James Hope's. The benediction came from both of them, though it was Micah Ward's voice which spoke the words--

*"The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble, Neal;
The name of the God of Jacob defend thee;
Send thee help from the sanctuary,
And strengthen thee out of Zion;
Remember all thy offerings,
And accept thy burnt sacrifice;
Grant thee according to thine own heart,
And fulfil all thy counsel."*

THE END