

FICTION

George A Birmingham

The Red Hand of Ulster

A PUBLIC DOMAIN BOOK

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FICTION

THE RED HAND OF ULSTER

BY

G. A. BIRMINGHAM

AUTHOR OF "SPANISH GOLD," "THE MAJOR'S NIECE,"
"PRISCILLA'S SPIES," ETC.



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THE RED HAND
OF ULSTER

GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

NEW YORK

PREFATORY NOTE

In a book of this kind some of the characters are necessarily placed in the positions occupied by living men; but no character is in any way copied from life, and no character must be taken as representing any real person. Nor must the opinions of Lord Kilmore of Errigal, the imaginary narrator of the tale, be regarded as those of the Author.

G. A. B.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

BY

LORD KILMORE OF ERRIGAL

The events recorded in this chapter and the next did not fall under my own observation. I derived my knowledge of them from various sources, chiefly from conversations with Bob Power, who had, as will appear, first-hand knowledge. In the third chapter I begin my own personal narrative of the events which led up to the final struggle of Ulster against Home Rule and of the struggle itself. Accidents of one kind or another, the accidents of the situation of Kilmore Castle, the accident of Bob Power's connection with my daughter Marion, the accidents of my social position and personal tastes, have placed me in a position to give a very full account of what actually happened. The first two chapters of this book will therefore be written in the impersonal manner of the ordinary history; I myself occupying the position of unseen spectator. The rest of the book is largely founded upon the diary which I actually kept.

THE RED HAND OF ULSTER

CHAPTER I

It was in 1908 that Joseph Peterson Conroy burst upon London in the full magnificence of his astounding wealth. English society was, and had been for many years, accustomed to the irruption of millionaires, American or South African. Our aristocracy has learnt to pay these potentates the respect which is their due. Well-born men and women trot along Park Lane in obedience to the hooting calls of motor horns. No one considers himself degraded by grovelling before a plutocrat.

It has been for some time difficult to startle London by a display of mere wealth. Men respect more than ever fortunes which are reckoned in millions, though they have become too common to amaze. But Joseph Peterson Conroy, when he came, excited a great deal of interest. In the first place his income was enormous, larger, it was said, than the income of any other living man. In the next place he spent it very splendidly. There were no entertainments given in London during the years 1909, 1910, and 1911, equal in extravagance to those which Conroy gave. He outdid the "freak dinners" of New York. He invented freak dinners of his own. His horses--animals which he bought at enormous prices--won the great races. His yachts flew the white ensign of the Royal Yacht Squadron. His gifts to fashionable charities were princely. English society fell at his feet and worshipped him. The most exclusive clubs were honoured by his desire of membership. Women whose fathers and husbands bore famous names were proud to boast of his friendship.

It cannot be said that Conroy abused either his position or his opportunities. He had won his great wealth honestly--that is to say without robbing any one except other robbers, and only robbing them in ways permitted by American law. He used what he had won honourably enough. He neither bought the favours of the women who thronged his entertainments; nor degraded, more than was necessary, the men who sought benefits from him. For a time, for nearly four years, he thoroughly enjoyed himself, exulting with boyish delight in his own splendour. Then he began to get restless. The things he did, the people he knew, ceased to interest him. It was early in 1911 that the crisis came; and before the season of that year was over Conroy had disappeared from London. His name still appeared occasionally in the columns which the newspapers devote to fashionable intelligence. But the house in Park Lane--the scene of many magnificent entertainments--was sold. The dinner parties, balls and card parties ceased; and Conroy entered upon what must have been the most exciting period of his life.

Bob Power--no one ever called him Robert--belonged to an old and respected Irish family, being a younger son of General Power of Kilfenora. He was educated at Harrow and afterwards at Trinity College. He was called to the Irish bar and might have achieved in time the comfortable mediocrity of a County Court judgeship if he had not become Conroy's private secretary. The post was secured for him by an uncle who had known Conroy in New York in the days before he became a millionaire, while it was still possible for an ordinary man to do him a favour. Bob accepted the post because everybody said he would be a fool to refuse it. He did not much like writing letters. The making out of schemes for the arrangements of Conroy's guests at the more formal dinner parties worried him. The general supervision of the upper servants was no delight to him. But he did all these things fairly well, and his unflinching good spirits carried him safely through periods of very tiresome duty. He became, in spite of the twenty-five years' difference of age between him and his patron, the intimate friend of Joseph Peterson Conroy.

It was to Bob that Conroy confided the fact that he was tired of the life of a leader of English society. The two men were sitting together in the smoking room at one o'clock in the morning after one of Conroy's most magnificent entertainments.

"I'm damned well sick of all this," said Conroy suddenly.

"So am I," said Bob.

Bob Power was a man of adventurous disposition. He had a reputation in Connacht as a singularly bold rider to hounds. The story of his singlehanded cruise round Ireland in a ten tonner will be told among yachtsmen until his son does something more extravagantly idiotic. The London season always bored him. The atmosphere of Conroy's house in Park Lane stifled him.

"Is there any one thing left in this rotten old world," said Conroy, "that's worth doing?"

In Bob's opinion there were several things very well worth doing. He suggested one of them at once.

"Let's get out the *Finola*," he said, "and go for a cruise. We've never done the South Sea Islands."

The *Finola* was the largest of Conroy's yachts, a handsome vessel of something over a thousand tons.

"Cruising in the *Finola*," said Conroy, "is no earthly good to me. What I want is something that will put me into a nervous sweat, the same as I was when I was up against Ikenstein and the railway bosses. My nerves were like damned

fiddle strings for a fortnight when I didn't know whether I was going to come out a pauper or the owner of the biggest pile mortal man ever handled."

Bob knew nothing of Ikenstein or the methods by which the pile had been wrested from him and his companions, but he did know the sensations which Conroy described. He, himself, arrived at them by hanging on to a sea anchor in a gale of wind off the Galway coast, or pushing a vicious horse at a nasty jump. Nervous sweat, stretched nerves and complete uncertainty about the immediate future afford the same delight however you get at them. He sympathized with Conroy.

"You might fit out a ship or two and try exploring round the South Pole," Bob said. "They've got the thing itself of course, but there must be lots of places still undiscovered in the neighbourhood. I should think that hummocking along over the ice floes in a dog sledge must be pretty thrilling."

Conroy sighed.

"I'm too fat," he said, "and I'm too darned soft. The kind of life I've led for the last four years isn't good training for camping out on icebergs and feeding on whale's blubber."

Bob smiled. Conroy was a very fat man. A camping party on an iceberg would be likely to end in some whale eating his blubber.

"I didn't mean you to go yourself," said Bob.

"Oh! I see. I'm to fit out the expedition and you are to go in command. I don't quite see where the fun would come in for me. It wouldn't excite me any to hear of your shooting Esquimaux and penguins. I shouldn't care enough whether you lived or were froze to get any excitement out of a show of that kind."

"We'd call it 'The Joseph P. Conroy Expedition,'" said Bob; "and the newspapers--"

"Thanks. But I'm pretty well fed up with newspaper tosh. The press has boosted me ever since I landed in this country, and I'd just as soon they stopped now as started fresh."

Bob relinquished the idea of a Polar expedition with a sigh.

It was Conroy himself who made the next suggestion.

"If politics weren't such a rotten game--"

Bob did not feel attracted to political life; but he was loyal to his patron.

"Clithering," he said, "was talking to me to-night. You know the man I mean, Sir Samuel Clithering. He's not in the Cabinet, but he's what I'd call a pretty intimate hanger on; does odd jobs for the Prime Minister. He said the interest of political life was absorbing."

"I shouldn't care for it," said Conroy. "After all, what would it be worth to me? There's nothing for me to gain, and I don't see how I could lose anything. It would be like playing bridge for counters. They might make me a lord, of course. A title is about the only thing I haven't got, but then I don't want it."

"I quite agree with you," said Bob. "I merely mentioned politics because Clithering said--"

"Besides," said Conroy, "it wouldn't be my politics. England isn't my country."

"It would be rather exciting," said Bob, "to run a revolution somewhere. There are lots of small states, in the Balkans, you know, which could be turned inside out and upside down by a man with the amount of money you have."

"There's something in that notion," said Conroy. "Get a map, will you?"

Bob Power did not want to go wandering round the house at half-past one o'clock in the morning looking for a map of the Balkan States. It seemed to him that the idea--the financing of a revolution was of course a joke--might be worked out with reference to some country nearer at hand, the geographical conditions of which would be sufficiently well known without the aid of a map.

"Why not try Ireland?" he said.

Then a very curious thing happened. Conroy's appearance, not merely his expression but his actual features seemed to change. Instead of the shrewd face of a successful American financier Bob Power saw the face of an Irish peasant. He was perfectly familiar with the type. It was one which he had known all his life. He knew it at its best, expressive of lofty

idealisms and fantastic dreams of things beyond this world's experience. He knew it at its worst too, when narrow cunning and unquenchable bitterness transform it. The change passed over Conroy's face and then quickly passed away again.

"By God!" said Conroy, "it's a great notion. To buck against the British Lion!"

Bob remembered the things which he had heard and half heeded about Conroy's ancestry. In 1850 another Conroy, a broken peasant, the victim of evil fate and gross injustice, had left Ireland in an emigrant ship with a ragged wife and four half starved children clinging to him, with an unquenchable hatred of England in his heart. The hate, it appeared, had lived on in his son, had broken out again in a grandson, dominating the cynical cosmopolitanism of the financial magnate. Bob was vaguely uneasy. He did not like the expression he had seen on Conroy's face. He did not like the tone in which he spoke. But it was obviously absurd to suppose that any one could take seriously the idea of financing an Irish revolution.

Then Conroy began to talk about Ireland. He knew, it appeared, a great deal about the history of the country up to a certain point. He had a traditional knowledge of the horrors of the famine period. He was intimately acquainted with the details of the Fenian movement. Either he or his father had been a member of the Clan na Gael. He understood the Parnell struggle for Home Rule. But with the fall of Parnell his knowledge stopped abruptly. Of all that happened after that he knew nothing. He supposed that the later Irish leaders had inherited the traditions of Mitchel, O'Leary, Davitt and the others. Bob laughed at him.

"If you're thinking of buying guns for the Nationalists," he said, "you may save your money. They wouldn't use them if they had arsenals full. They're quite the most loyal men there are nowadays. Why wouldn't they? They've got most of what they want and Clithering told me the Home Rule Bill was going to knit their hearts to the Empire. Awful rot, of course, but his very words."

"What do you mean?" said Conroy.

Bob laughed again. He had all the contempt common in his class for those of his fellow-countrymen who professed to be Nationalists. But he had rather more intelligence than most Irish gentlemen. He quite realized the absurdity of supposing that the Irish Parliamentary party consisted of men who had in them the makings of rebels.

"Read their speeches," he said. "Since this talk of Home Rule began they've been cracking up the glories of the British Empire like--like the Primrose League."

"To-morrow morning," said Conroy, "you'll fetch me along all the books and pamphlets you can lay hands on dealing with the present state of the Irish question."

"I want a small cart," said Bob.

"Get a four-horse waggon, if you like," said Conroy.

CHAPTER II

For nearly a week Conroy remained shut up in his study. Bob was kept busy. He spent a good deal of time in writing plausible explanations of Conroy's failure to keep his social engagements. He ransacked the shelves of booksellers for works dealing with contemporary Irish politics. He harried the managers of press-cutting companies for newspaper reports of speeches on Home Rule. These were things for which there was little or no demand, and the press-cutting people resented being asked for them. He even interviewed political leaders. These gentlemen received him coldly at first, suspecting from his appearance that he wanted to get a chance of earning PS400 a year as a member of Parliament, and hoped to persuade them to find him a constituency. When they discovered that he was the private secretary of a famous millionaire their manner changed and they explained the policies of their various parties in such ways as seemed likely to draw large cheques from Conroy.

Bob reported what they said, summarized the letters of the disappointed hostesses, and piled Conroy's table with books, pamphlets, and newspaper cuttings. The whole business bored and worried him. The idea that Conroy actually contemplated organizing a rebellion in Ireland never crossed his mind. He hoped that the political enthusiasm of his patron would die away as quickly as it had sprung up. It was therefore a surprise to him when, after a few weeks' hard reading, Conroy announced his decision.

"I'm going into this business," he said.

"Politics?" said Bob.

"Politics be damned! What I'm out for is a revolution."

"You can't do it," said Bob. "I told you at the start that those fellows won't fight. They haven't it in them to stand up and be shot at."

"I'm thinking of the other fellows," said Conroy.

"What other fellows?" he asked.

"Belfast," said Conroy.

Bob whistled.

"But," he said, "but--but--" The extraordinary nature of the idea made him stammer. "But they are Loyalists."

"As I figure it out," said Conroy, "they mean to rebel. That's what they say, anyhow, and I believe they mean it. I don't care a cent whether they call themselves Loyalists or not. It's up to them to twist the British Lion's tail, and I'm with them."

"Do you think they really mean it?" said Bob.

"Do you?"

"Well," said Bob, after a slight hesitation, "I do. You see I happen to know one of them pretty well."

Bob showed political discernment. It was the fashion in England and throughout three-quarters of Ireland to laugh at Belfast. Nobody believed that a community of merchants, manufacturers and artisans actually meant to take up arms, shoot off guns and hack at the bodies of their fellow-men with swords and spears. This thing, at the beginning of the twentieth century, seemed incredible. To politicians it was simply unthinkable. For politics are a game played in strict accordance with a set of rules. For several centuries nobody in these islands had broken the rules. It had come to be regarded as impossible that any one could break them. No one expects his opponent at the bridge table to draw a knife from his pocket and run amuck when the cards go against him. Nobody expected that the north of Ireland Protestants would actually fight. To threaten fighting is, of course, well within the rules of the game, a piece of bluff which any one is entitled to try if he thinks he will gain anything by it. Half the politicians in both countries, and half the inhabitants of England, were laughing at the Belfast bluff. The rest of the politicians and the other half of the inhabitants of England were pretending to believe what Belfast said so as to give an air of more terrific verisimilitude to the bluff. Conroy, guided by the instinct for the true meaning of things which had led him to great wealth, believed that the talk was more than bluff. Bob Power, relying on what he knew of the character of one man, came to the same conclusion.

"Who is the man you know?" said Conroy. "Not Babberly, is it?"

"Oh Lord! no," said Bob. "Babberly is--well, Babberly talks a lot."

"That's so," said Conroy. "But if it isn't Babberly, who is it?"

"McNeice," said Bob, "Gideon McNeice."

"H'm. He's something in some university, isn't he?"

Conroy spoke contemptuously. He had a low opinion of the men who win honours in universities. They seemed to him to be unpractical creatures. He had, indeed, himself founded a university before he left America and handsomely endowed several professorial chairs. But he did so in the spirit which led Dean Swift to found a lunatic asylum. He wanted to provide a kind of hospital for a class of men who ought, for the sake of society, to be secluded, lest their theories should come inconveniently athwart the plans of those who are engaged in the real business of life.

"McNeice," said Bob, "is a Fellow of Trinity College, Dublin. He was my tutor."

Then he told Conroy the story of Gideon McNeice's life as far as he knew it at that time. It was a remarkable story, but not yet, as it became afterwards, strikingly singular.

Gideon was the son of Ebenezer McNeice, a riveter in one of the great shipbuilding yards in Belfast. This Ebenezer was an Orangeman and, on the 12th of July, was accustomed to march long distances over dusty roads beating a big drum with untiring vigour. His Protestantism was a religion of the most definite kind. He rarely went to church, but he hated Popery with a profound earnestness. Gideon was taught, as soon as he could speak, to say, "No Pope, no Priest, no Surrender, Hurrah!" That was the first stage in his education. The second was taken at a National school where he learned the multiplication table and the decimal system with unusual ease. The master of a second-rate intermediate school heard of the boy's ability. Being anxious to earn the fees which a generous government gives to the masters of clever boys, this man offered to continue Gideon's education without asking payment from Ebenezer. The speculation turned out well. Gideon did more than was expected of him. He won all the exhibitions, medals and prizes possible under the Irish Intermediate system. At last he won a mathematical sizarship in Trinity College.

Belfast--perhaps because of the religious atmosphere of the city, perhaps because of the interest taken by its inhabitants in money-making--has not given to the world many eminent poets, philosophers or scholars. Nor, curiously enough, has it ever produced an eminent theologian, or even a heretic of any reputation. But it has given birth to several mathematicians of quite respectable standing. Gideon McNeice was one of them. After the sizarship he won a scholarship, and then, at an unusually early age, a fellowship. It is generally believed that the examination for fellowship in Trinity College in Dublin is so severe that no one who is successful in it is ever good for anything afterwards. Having once passed that examination men are said to settle down into a condition of exhausted mediocrity. Gideon McNeice proved to be an exception to the rule. Having won his fellowship and thereby demonstrated to the world that he knew all that there is to know about the science of mathematics, he at once turned to theology. Theology, since he lived in Ireland, led him straight to politics. He became one of the fighting men of the Irish Unionist party. He also, chiefly because of his very bad manners, became very unpopular among the fellows and professors of the College.

It must not be supposed that he had the smallest sympathy with the unfortunate Irish aristocracy, who, having like the Bourbons failed either to learn or to forget, still repeat the watch-words of long-past centuries and are greatly surprised that no one can be found to listen to them. Gideon McNeice's Unionism was of a much more vigorous and militant kind. He respected England and had no objection to singing "God save the King" very much out of tune, so long as England and her King were obviously and blatantly on the side of Protestantism. He was quite prepared to substitute some other form of government for our present Imperial system if either the King, his representative the Lord Lieutenant, or the Parliament of Westminster, showed the smallest inclination to consider the feelings of the Roman Catholic hierarchy.

It was thus that Bob Power, who was by no means a fool, described McNeice's character. Conroy was interested.

"I should like," he said, "to see that man and talk to him. Suppose you go over to Dublin to-morrow and bring him here."

"You won't like him," said Bob. "He's--well, domineering is the only word I can think of."

"For that matter," said Conroy, "I am domineering too."

This was true. Conroy had good manners, unusually good manners for a millionaire, but underneath the manners lay a determination to get his own way in small matters as well as great. Bob, who knew both men, expected that they would become deadly enemies in the course of twenty-four hours. He was mistaken. To say that they became friends would be misleading. They probably disliked each other. But they certainly became allies, planned together and worked together the amazing scheme which ended in the last--we are justified in assuming that it really was the last--rebellion

of Irishmen against the power of England.

Conroy supplied the money and a great deal of the brains which went to the carrying through of the plan. He had, as a financier with world-wide interests, a knowledge of European markets and manufactures which was very useful if not absolutely necessary. He had, as his inspiration, an extraordinarily vivid hatred of England. This was partly an inheritance from his Irish ancestors, men who had been bullied for centuries and laid the blame of their sufferings on England. Partly it was the result of the contempt he learned to feel for Englishmen while he held his leading position in London society. With McNeice's violent Protestantism he never can have had the smallest sympathy. His ancestors were probably, almost certainly, Roman Catholics. If he professed any form of Christianity it must have been that of some sect unrepresented in England. No one ever heard of his attaching himself, even temporarily, to either church or chapel. McNeice also supplied brains and enthusiasm. His intelligence was narrower than Conroy's, but more intensely concentrated. He knew the men with whom he intended to deal. By birth and early education he belonged to that north Irish democracy which is probably less imaginative and less reasonable but more virile than any other in the world. He believed, as his fathers had believed before him and his relations believed along with him, that the Belfast man has a natural right to govern the world, and only refrains from doing so because he has more important matters to attend to. He believed, and could give excellent reasons in support of his belief, that the other inhabitants of Ireland were meant by providence to be Gibeonites, hewers of wood and drawers of water for the people of Antrim and Down. He had quite as great a contempt for the Unionist landlords, who occasionally spoke beside him on political platforms, as he had for the Nationalist tenants who were wrestling their estates from them.

Bob Power went to Dublin, and with great difficulty persuaded McNeice to pay Conroy a visit in London. For a fortnight the two men remained together, discussing, planning, devising. Others, among them James Crossan, manager of the Kilmore Co-operative Stores, and Grand Master of the Orangemen of the county, were summoned to the conference.

Then the first steps were taken. McNeice went back to Ireland and began, with the aid of James Crossan, his work of organization. Conroy sold his house in London, realized by degrees a considerable part of his large fortune, placed sums of money to his credit in French and German banks and gave over the command of his yacht, the *Finola*, to Bob Power. From this time on Conroy disappeared from London society. Stories were told in clubs and drawing-rooms about the sayings and doings of "His Royal Magnificence J. P. C.," but these gradually grew stale and no fresh ones were forthcoming. The newspapers still printed from time to time paragraphs which had plainly been sent to them by Conroy himself, but no one at the time took very much interest in them.

"Mr. J. P. Conroy"--so people read--"has gone for a cruise in Mediterranean waters in his steam yacht, the *Finola*." It did not seem to matter whether he had or not. "Among his guests are--" Then would follow a list of names; but always those of people more eminent than fashionable. The Prime Minister went for a short cruise with him. The Chancellor of the Exchequer went twice. Several admirals, a judge or two, and three or four well-known generals were on board at different times. Once he had two bishops, an Anglican who was known as a profound theologian, and a Roman Catholic prelate from the west of Ireland. The names of women rarely appeared on the list, but the Countess of Moyne was advertised as having accepted Conroy's hospitality twice. She was well placed among the notable men. She was a young woman of singular beauty and great personal charm. She might have been if she had chosen a leader of the society which lives to amuse itself. Her husband's great wealth and high social position would have secured her any place in that world which she chose to take. Being a woman of brains as well as beauty she chose to work instead of play, and had become a force, real though not formally recognized, in political life.

It is a curious instance of the careful way in which Conroy worked out the details of his plans, that he should have used the *Finola* in this way. The cruises which he took with his eminent guests were always well advertised and always short. But the *Finola* was kept continually in commission. Her voyages when there were no great people on board were longer, were never advertised, and were much more exciting. But no one suspected, or could have suspected, that a millionaire's yacht, and it the temporary home of the leading members of the governing classes, could have been engaged in a secret trade, highly dangerous to the peace and security of the nation. It is difficult even now to imagine that after landing the Prime Minister and couple of bishops at Cowes the yacht should have started off to keep a midnight appointment with a disreputable tramp steamer in an unfrequented part of the North Sea; that Bob Power, after making himself agreeable for a fortnight to Lady Moyne, should have sweated like a stevedore at the difficult job of transhipping a cargo in mid-ocean.

CHAPTER III

Now reach the time when I myself came for the first time in touch with Conroy's plans and had my first meeting with Gideon McNeice.

I am an insignificant Irish peer, far from wealthy, with a taste for literature, and, I think, a moderate amount of benevolent feeling towards those of my fellow-men who do not annoy me in any way. I sold the estate, which had long before ceased to be in any real sense my property, immediately after the passing of the Land Act of 1903. I have lived since then chiefly in Kilmore Castle, a delightfully situated residence built by my grandfather, which suits me very well indeed. I have occupied my time for years back in gathering materials for a history of all the Irish rebellions there have ever been. My daughter Marion used to help me in this work, by filing and classifying the various slips of paper on which I made notes. Now that she has got married and cannot help me any more I have given up the idea of finishing my great work. I am satisfying my evil itch for writing by setting down an account of the short struggle between north-eastern Ulster and the rest of the British Empire.

The 5th of June was the day on which I first met Bob Power, first came into contact with McNeice, and first set eyes on the notorious *Finola*. It was the day fixed by my nephew Godfrey D'Aubigny for the first, for that year, of the series of garden-parties which I give annually. I detest these festivities, and I have every reason to believe that they must be quite as objectionable to my guests as they are to me. It is Godfrey who insists on their being held. He holds that I am bound to do some entertaining in order to keep up my position in the county. I am not in the least interested in my position in the county; but Godfrey is, and, of course, the matter is of some importance to him. He is heir to my title. I used to think and he used to think that he would ultimately enjoy my income too, securing it by marrying my daughter Marion. I am glad to say he has not succeeded in doing this. Marion has married a much better man.

I was sitting in my study after breakfast, fiddling with my papers, but unable to settle down to work. The prospect of the party in the afternoon depressed and irritated me. Godfrey entered the room suddenly through the window. The fact that he is my heir does not seem to me to entitle him to come upon me like a thief in the night. He ought to go to the door of the house, ring the bell, and ask if I am willing to see him.

"Good morning, Excellency," he said, "glorious day, isn't it?"

Godfrey always addressed me as "Excellency." I cannot imagine why he does so. I have never been and never hope to be a Lord Lieutenant or a Colonial Governor. The title is not one which belongs to the office of a deputy lieutenant of a county, the only post of honour which I hold.

"I expect we'll have a pretty good crowd this afternoon," he said. "Lady Moyne is motoring over. But that's not what I came to say to you. The fact is that something rather important has just happened."

"The people in the gate lodge have burst the new boiler I put in for them, I suppose?" This is the kind of thing Godfrey considers important.

"Not that I know of," he said; "but I'll go down and inquire if you think--"

"I don't think anything about the matter," I said. "If it isn't that, what is it that you've come to tell me?"

"A big steam yacht has just anchored in the bay," he said, "the *Finola*. She belongs to Conroy, the millionaire."

Godfrey is intensely interested in millionaires. He always hopes that he may be able in some way to secure for himself some of their superfluous cash.

"I think," he said, "you ought to go down and leave a card on him. It would only be civil."

"Very well," I said, "you can go and leave my card, if you like."

This was evidently what Godfrey expected me to say. He seemed grateful.

"Very well, Excellency, I'll go at once. I'll invite him and his party to your menagerie this afternoon. I dare say it will amuse them to see the natives."

Godfrey always calls my parties menageries, and my guests natives. Lady Moyne and her husband, who sometimes comes with her, are not counted as natives. Nor am I. Nor is Marion. Nor is Godfrey himself. This illustrates the working of Godfrey's mind. As a matter of fact the Moynes and my own family are about the only people of social importance in the locality who ought to be called natives. My other guests are all strangers, officials of one kind or another, stipendiary magistrates, police officers, bank managers, doctors, clergymen and others whom an unkind fate has

temporarily stranded in our neighbourhood; who all look forward to an escape from their exile and a period of leisure retirement in the suburbs of Dublin.

Godfrey left me, and I went on fidgetting with my papers until luncheon-time.

Marion and I were just finishing luncheon when Godfrey came in again.

"Well," I said, "have you captured your millionaire?"

"He wasn't on board," said Godfrey. "There were two men there, Power, who's Conroy's secretary, and a horrid bouncer called McNeice. They were drinking bottled stout in the cabin with Crossan."

"Under those circumstances," I said, "you did not, I suppose, leave my cards."

Godfrey has a standing feud with Crossan, who is not a gentleman and does not pretend to be. Godfrey, judged by any rational standard, is even less of a gentleman; but as the future Lord Kilmore he belongs to the ranks of an aristocracy and therefore has a contempt for Crossan. The two come into very frequent contact and quite as frequent conflict. Crossan manages the co-operative store which I started, and Godfrey regards him as one of my servants. Crossan, who has a fine instinct for business, also manages the commercial side of our local mackerel fishing. Godfrey thinks he would manage this better than Crossan does. Their latest feud was concerned with the service of carts which take the fish from our little harbour to the nearest railway station. Crossan is politically a strong Protestant and an Orangeman of high attainment. Godfrey has no particular religion, and in politics belongs to that old-fashioned school of Conservatives who think that the lower orders ought to be respectful to their betters. Crossan having been taught the Church Catechism in his youth, admits this respect as theoretical duty; but gets out of performing it in practice by denying that Godfrey, or for the matter of that any one else, is his better. Godfrey's constant complaints about Crossan are the thorns which remind me that I must not regard my lot in life as altogether pleasant. I felt justified in assuming that Godfrey had not left my cards on men who degraded themselves so far as to drink bottled stout in company with Crossan.

I was wrong. Godfrey did leave my cards. I can only suppose that his respect for the private secretary of a millionaire was stronger than his dislike of Crossan. He had even, it appeared, invited both Power and McNeice to view my "menagerie." For this he felt it necessary to offer some excuse.

"He is one of the Powers of Kilfenora," he said, "so I thought it would be no harm. By the way, Marion, what are you going to wear? I should say that your blue *crepe de chine*--"

Godfrey is something of an expert in the matter of woman's clothes. Marion, I know, frequently consults him and values his opinion highly. Unfortunately the subject bores me. I cut him short with a remark which was intended for a snub.

"I hope you have a new suit yourself, Godfrey. The occasion is an important one. If both Lady Moyne and Conroy's private secretary are to be here, you ought to look your best."

But it is almost impossible to snub Godfrey. He answered me with a cheerful friendliness which showed that he appreciated my interest in his appearance.

"I have a new grey suit," he said. "It arrived this morning, and it's a capital fit. That's the advantage of employing really good tailors. You can absolutely trust Nicholson and Blackett."

I have often wondered whether Nicholson and Blackett could absolutely trust Godfrey. I have several times paid his debts, and I do not intend to do so any more. If they were debts of an intelligible kind I should not mind paying them occasionally. But Godfrey has no ostensible vices. I have never heard of his doing anything wild or disreputable. He does not gamble or borrow money in order to give jewels to pretty actresses. He owes bills to shop-keepers for ties and trousers. His next remark showed me that Nicholson and Blackett were becoming uneasy.

"By the way, Excellency," he said, "I'd be glad if you'd be civil to the Pringles this afternoon. Get her tea or something."

Mr. Pringle is the manager of the branch of the bank in which Godfrey keeps his account. I imagine that he and his wife owe their invitations to my garden parties to the fact that Godfrey's account is always overdrawn. This demand that I should be especially civil to the Pringles suggested to me that Godfrey contemplated sending a cheque to Nicholson and Blackett. I have no particular objection to being civil to the Pringles. I have to be civil to some one. I readily promised to get both tea and an ice for Mrs. Pringle; hoping that Godfrey would go away. He did not. He began talking again about Marion's blue dress. It was with the greatest difficulty that I got him out of the house half an hour later by saying that if he did not go home at once he would not have time to dress himself with the care which the new grey suit deserved.

It annoys me very much to think Godfrey is heir to my title. It used to annoy me still more to think that Marion meant to marry him. She assures me now that she never intended to; but she used to take an interest in his talk about clothes and he certainly intended to marry her.

CHAPTER IV

There are some churches in which it is considered desirable to keep the sexes apart. The men are placed on one side of the central aisle, the women on the other. At my garden-parties this separation takes place naturally without the intervention of any authority. The men gather in a group under a certain chestnut-tree and talk to each other gloomily in low tones. The women--there are always more women than men--seat themselves in three distinct rows round the sides of the tennis-court. The short row across the top of the tennis-court is reserved by an unwritten, but apparently very strict law for the ladies of the highest social position. The Dean's wife, for instance, sits in that row. The seats at the other end of the court are occupied by people like the Pringles, those who are just eligible for invitations to my parties, but have, so to speak, no social position to spare. They always remind me of St. Paul's "righteous" who "scarcely are saved." The long side of the tennis-court opposite the chestnut-tree, which forms a kind of male seraglio, is given over to those of middling station, ladies who are, perhaps, in a position to shake hands with Lady Moyne, and who do not, perhaps, call on Mrs. Pringle.

To this strictly observed etiquette there are two exceptions. My nephew Godfrey does not stand under the chestnut-tree, but keeps close to the side of Lady Moyne. The other men make it quite clear that they do not want him. No man whom I have ever met can tolerate Godfrey's company. He follows Lady Moyne about because he believes her to be a lady of political influence, and he hopes she will get him a well-paid post under the government. He is one exception. The other is Lady Moyne herself. She declines to sit in a row. She walks about, sometimes walks away from the rest of the party.

My daughter Marion's duty on these occasions is to drag young men from the shelter of the chestnut-tree and make them play tennis with young women called from one or other of the rows in which their mothers have planted them. Marion finds this a difficult duty, requiring her utmost tact. My own duty, which I fulfil in the most conscientious manner, is to make as many complete journeys round the tennis-court as possible, saying something to every lady in all three rows, and giving a kind of general address of a friendly and encouraging kind to the men under the chestnut-tree.

On this particular afternoon two unusual incidents broke the monotony of my party. Lady Moyne refused to be satisfied with the company of Godfrey. She sat down beside the Dean's wife and made herself extremely agreeable for nearly ten minutes. Then she crossed the corner of the tennis-court, seriously interfering with the game in progress, and "cut out" the Dean from the middle of the group of men under the chestnut-tree. "Cut out" is strictly the right phrase to use. It is applied or used to be applied to the operation of capturing and carrying off ships at anchor under the protecting guns of friendly forts. It requires great dash and gallantry to "cut out" a ship. The whole audience gaped in astonishment at Lady Moyne's daring when she captured the Dean. She walked off with him, when she got him, to the shrubbery at the far end of the lawn. They were a singularly ill-assorted pair. Lady Moyne is invariably exquisite, a small woman with dainty ways and great vivacity. The Dean is an ecclesiastic as different as possible from the suave dignitaries who lead lives of scholarly leisure in cathedral closes. We picture the ideal dean, a slender man, slightly stooped, thin-lipped, with a suggestion of mild asceticism in his face. He steps slowly through the long window of his study. He paces the closely shaven lawn. The crows caw reverently in lofty trees. He holds a calf-bound volume of Plato in his hand. From time to time he glances from the cramped Greek text to the noble, weatherworn towers of his cathedral. His life is delicately scented with a fine mixture of classical culture and Tallis' ferial responses. Our Dean--he is also rector of our parish--is a man of a wholly different kind. He is, for one thing, wholly unconnected with any cathedral and has probably never paced a lawn beneath the shadow of historic towers in all his life. This kind of detached, independent dean is not found, I believe, anywhere except in Ireland. He is tall, cadaverous, rugged, and he can open his eyes so wide that the whites of them show all round the irises. Besides being a dean and the rector of our parish, he is honorary Grand Chaplain to the Black Preceptory of the Orange Order. Crossan, a stern judge of ecclesiastics, has the highest opinion of him. It was surmised by a lady in the second row to whom I happened to be talking at the time, that Lady Moyne wanted to consult with him about the best way of defeating the Home Rule Bill. Lady Moyne is, of course, a strong Unionist.

The second unusual incident of the afternoon followed the arrival of Bob Power. He came late, and Godfrey, driven from the side of Lady Moyne, fastened on to him at once. Bob shook him off and joined Marion. Marion, who had her duties to do and could not allow Bob to take possession of her, introduced him to a humble maiden who sat with her mother in the third row. Bob, it appears, selected the damsel himself after looking all round the tennis-court. To the great scandal of every one present he led her away from the tennis-court, and found his way to the garden. There--I judged by the condition of her gloves when they returned--they picked strawberries. I have every reason to believe that Miss Pringle--the girl was the daughter of Godfrey's banker--enjoyed this garden-party as she had never enjoyed one before. She was actually laughing, and was looking very pretty when Bob brought her back to the refreshment tent for tea.

I felt so pleased with Bob for his audacity that I asked him to dine with us. He refused, saying that he would be busy

on the yacht, but he promised to call on us next morning.

The garden-party wore itself to an end as even the dreariest festivities always do. Marion and I dined together in a condition of irritable exhaustion. After dinner we played Patience for an hour in the library. Then Marion took a novel, and I settled down to read *The Times*. The night was very close and we sat with both windows wide open.

The Times had articles and letters on two subjects, the Home Rule Bill, which was a menace to the Empire and a danger to Irish Loyalists; and the German Navy, which was also a menace to the Empire and a danger to every one in the United Kingdom whether loyal or not. After reading the leading articles I passed on to the letters addressed to the editor. These are always, in my opinion, the most interesting part of any newspaper. The editor and leader writers are no doubt abler men than most of their correspondents; but then they write because they must, and they write in a hurry. The correspondents on the other hand write because they have something in them--something foolish as a rule, but none the less interesting--which is struggling for expression in print. They also--being for the most part retired military officers--have abundant leisure and are able to take days, perhaps weeks, in the preparation of their compositions.

In that particular number of *The Times*, two retired colonels had written letters. One of them was disquieted by the growth of the German Navy. He was uninteresting. The other--a Colonel Malcolmson, whom I meet occasionally at my club--had delivered himself of a plan of campaign, an actual fighting programme, which he recommended to the Ulstermen, supposing that they meant to declare war against any one who wanted them to govern themselves. This letter interested me very much. Malcolmson offered his lawn as a parade and drill ground for volunteers. He also said that he thoroughly understood modern guns, and was prepared to take command of any artillery which Ulster might happen to possess. I lay back in my chair and tried to form a mental picture of Malcolmson, who is stout and has a bristly white moustache, aiming an immense cannon at an income tax collector. The vision was a pleasant one to linger over, and I added to the scene before my mind the figure of an athletic policeman threatening to smash Malcolmson's cannon with a baton. The Nationalist leaders then appeared in the background waving Union Jack flags, and urging the policeman to fresh exertions in the cause of law and order. I even seemed to hear them denouncing Malcolmson as one of those who march through rapine and bloodshed to the dismemberment of an Empire.

I was aroused from my agreeable reverie by Marion. She was standing at the window looking out across the bay on the far shore of which stands the little town of Kilmore, from which my ancestor, who was a Union peer, took his title.

"I wonder what they're doing in the village to-night," she said. "There are a lot of lights moving about in the harbour and on the quay."

I shook myself free of the vision of Malcolmson's artillery duel with the tax collector, and joined Marion at the window. A half moon lit the scene before me dimly, making patches of silver light here and there on the calm waters of the bay. The *Finola*, looking very large, lay at anchor, broadside on to us, opposite the pier. On her deck lights moved to and fro, yellow stars in the grey gloom. On the pier were more lights, lanterns evidently, some stationary, others flickering in rapid motion. The night was so still that I could hear distinctly the rattle of oars in rowlocks. Boats were plying between the *Finola* and the shore.

"Can they be landing anything from the yacht?" said Marion.

"I don't think so," I said. "Yachts do not carry cargoes, and if they did they wouldn't land them in the middle of the night."

I looked at my watch. It was almost twelve o'clock. Then another noise was added to the rattling of oars. A cart, unmistakably a cart, lumbered across the stones at the end of the pier. After a while this cart emerged from the black shadows of the houses and we could see it toiling up the hill which leads out of the town. A very slight southerly breeze was setting across the bay from the town to us. We could hear the driver shouting encouragement to his horse as he breasted the hill. The cart was evidently heavily loaded.

"The boats haven't been out," said Marion. "There cannot have been a catch of mackerel."

When there is a catch of mackerel the fish are packed in boxes on the pier, and carts, laden like the one we watched, climb the hill. There is a regularly organized service of those carts under the control of Crossan.

"It can't be fish," I said, "unless the *Finola* has been making a catch and has come in here to land them."

Another cart bumped its way off the pier, and in a minute or two we saw it climbing the hill. Then the lights on the *Finola's* deck went out one by one. The boats ceased plying between the yacht and the shore.

"I don't see why they should land fish in the middle of the night," said Marion.

The activity of the people on the pier increased. More lights appeared there and moved very rapidly to and fro.

"Unless they're landing what they're ashamed of," said Marion, "I don't see why they're doing it at night."

Mysteries always irritate me. I answered Marion impatiently.

"You can't be so foolish as to suppose that Conroy is smuggling. It wouldn't be any temptation to a millionaire to cheat the revenue out of the duty on a few pounds of tobacco."

Several more carts followed each other in a slow procession up the hill. It seemed as if Crossan's entire staff of men and horses was engaged in this midnight transport service.

"Mr. Conroy might not know anything about it," said Marion. "It may be done--"

"I don't suppose Bob Power--"

"There was another man on board," said Marion, "and Godfrey seemed to think that he was--well, not a very nice kind of man."

"The fact that Godfrey called him a cad," I said, "rather goes to show that he is a man with a great deal of good in him. Besides, as it happens, I know all about him. His name is McNeice and he is a Fellow of Trinity College. It's ridiculous to suppose that he's landing a cargo of port wine for consumption in the common room. Fellows of College don't do that kind of thing. Besides, he's a good scholar. I had some correspondence with him when I was writing my article on St. Patrick's birthplace. I mean to ask him to dinner to-morrow."

That disposed of Marion and her smuggling theory. She gave me a dutiful kiss and went to bed.

I stood at the window and watched until the last cart had mounted the hill. The lights on the pier went out. A solitary boat rowed back to the *Finola*. The town and bay were still again.

I shut the window and went back to my chair. I had some thoughts of working up my vision of Malcolmson and his artillery into a short article of a light kind, slightly humorous, with a vein of satire running through it. I sometimes contribute articles of this kind, under a pseudonym, to a London evening paper. Unfortunately my mind refused to return to the subject. I was worried by the impossibility of finding any explanation of the curious proceedings of the *Finola*. The more I thought about the matter the less I was able to understand it. Marion's smuggling hypothesis I dismissed as inherently absurd. It is true that the government has withdrawn most of the coastguards from our shores. We used to have twelve of them at Kilmore, and they were pleasant fellows, always ready to chat on topics of current interest with any passer-by. Now, having lingered on for some years with only two, we have none at all. But, as I understand, coastguards are not the real obstacle to smugglers and never were. The safety of the revenue depends upon the perfection of the organization of its inland officers which makes it impossible to dispose of whisky which cannot show a respectable past history.

I was driven back finally on my own theory--inherently very improbable--that the *Finola* had, in the course of her voyage, netted an immense catch of mackerel and had come into Kilmore harbour to get rid of them.

CHAPTER V

Bob Power called on me next morning. Marion and I were busy at my history of Irish rebellions when Bob was shown into the library. The sun, I recollect, was shining so brightly outside that I had the blinds pulled down in order to soften the light. Bob's entrance had much the same effect as pulling up the blinds again. He brought the sunshine with him, not in the trying form of heat and glare, but tempered with a sea breeze, and broken, so it seemed to me, into the sparkle of leaping waves. His work, the night before, whatever it was, had not affected his spirits.

As a rule I dislike being interrupted when I am engaged in my literary work. I always absolutely hate it when Godfrey is the interrupter. But I found myself quite pleased when Bob Power said that we ought not to sit indoors on so fine a day. Marion ran off to get her hat and joined us on the lawn. Bob Power led us straight to the garden, and when we got there, made for the strawberry bed. He owned to a pleasant recollection of the feast he had enjoyed the day before.

There is a good deal of the school-boy about Bob Power, and Marion is quite young enough to enjoy gorging herself with ripe strawberries. I, alas! am nearly sixty years of age. A very small number of strawberries satisfies me, and I find that stooping to gather them from beneath their nets tires me after a short time. Bob Power and Marion wandered far into the remoter parts of my strawberry bed. I stayed near the pathway. Their voices reached me and their laughter; but I could not hear what they were saying to each other. I felt suddenly lonely. They were getting on very well without me. I went on by myself and inspected my melon frames. I left them after a while and took a look at my poultry yard.

The rearing of poultry is one of the things which I do in order to benefit my country. Quite ordinary chickens satisfy my personal needs, and the egg of the modest barndoor fowl is all I ask at breakfast-time. But an energetic young lady in a short tweed skirt and thick brown boots explained to me two years ago that Ireland would be a much happier country if everybody in it kept fowls with long pedigrees. She must have been right about this, because the government paid her a small salary to go round the country saying it; and no government, not even ours, would pay people to say what is not true. Her plan for introducing the superior hens into the homes of the people was that I should undertake the care of such birds as she sent me, and give their eggs, under certain conditions, to any one who asked for them. This I agreed to do, and my new fowl yard, arranged exactly as the young lady in thick boots wished, is my latest effort in patriotism.

The hens which inhabited it were very fine-looking birds, and the cock who dominated them was a credit to any government. I watched them with real pleasure for some time. Then it occurred to me as curious that a government which recognized the value of good blood in birds, bulls, boars, horses, and even bees--if bees have blood--should be not only indifferent but actually hostile to our human aristocracy. For years past animals of pedigree have been almost forced upon Ireland. Men of pedigree have as far as possible been discouraged from remaining in this country. This idea struck me as very suitable for one of my light newspaper articles. I was unwilling to lose grip of it and allow it to fade away as Malcolmson and his cannons had faded the night before. I took a sheet of paper and a pencil from my pocket and sat down on a stone to make a rough draft of the article. Before I had written three sentences I heard Marion's voice.

"Oh, there you are, father. We were looking for you everywhere. Mr. Power and I want you to come and play tennis with us."

I rose and stuffed my paper into my pocket. I felt quite glad that they had found me, although I do not care for playing tennis, and, as a rule, enjoy writing articles.

"You will get on much better without me," I said.

"Oh no," said Marion; "Mr. Power is sure to beat me in a single; but I think I'd have a pretty good chance if you are on his side."

I was to act as a handicap. My efforts to help Power were reckoned to be worth one, perhaps two strokes in every game for Marion. This was not complimentary to me; but I dare say my tennis deserves no more respectful treatment. I agreed to be a handicap, and I was a good one. Marion won the first set. I got exceedingly hot, but, up to the middle of the second set, I enjoyed myself. Then Godfrey appeared. He watched my efforts with an air of cold superiority and contemptuous surprise. My heart failed me and I was obliged to ask to be allowed to stop.

Bob Power invited us to lunch on the *Finola*. Marion accepted the invitation joyfully. Godfrey also accepted, although I do not think Power meant to ask him. But Godfrey is not the kind of man to miss the chance of getting into touch, however remotely, with any one as rich as Conroy. Power eyed him with an expression of frank dislike. Godfrey, it seemed to me, did not much like Power. He was probably annoyed at the way in which Power made himself agreeable to Marion. Godfrey regarded Marion as, in a sense, his property, although there was nothing in the way of an engagement

between them.

McNeice, whom I had hoped to meet, was not on the yacht. The steward explained to us that he was spending the day with Crossan. I could see that the thought of any one spending the day with Crossan outraged Godfrey's sense of decency. By way, I suppose, of annoying Power, he asked what had been happening on the *Finola* at twelve o'clock the night before.

"I was awakened up," he said, "by the noise of carts going along the street and I looked out. I could see lights on the yacht and on the pier. What on earth were you doing at that time of night?"

"Coaling," said Power, shortly.

It was plain to me that he disliked being asked questions. It must have been plain to Godfrey, too, for he immediately asked another.

"How did you get coal in a place like this?"

"Dear me," said Marion, "how very unromantic! I thought you were smuggling!"

Godfrey's face assumed an expression of quite unusual intelligence. He suspected Power of evil practices of some sort. Marion's suggestion of smuggling delighted him.

"But where did you get the coal?" he persisted.

"My dear Godfrey," I said, "for all you or I know there may be hundreds of tons of it piled up in the co-operative store. Crossan has a wonderful business instinct. He may have speculated on a visit from some large steamer and be making a large profit. I am the principal shareholder, and nothing pleases me better than to see the store succeeding."

I knew, as a matter of fact, that Crossan had no coal. I also knew that the *Finola* was not coaling. The carts were loaded when they were going up the hill. They would have been empty if they had been going to get coal for the *Finola*. I made my remark in the hope of discouraging Godfrey from asking more questions.

"I wish you would smuggle something," said Marion. "I should love to have some French lace laid at my door in a bale in the middle of the night."

Marion reads novels, and the smugglers in these import French lace. In real life the only people who try to cheat the nation out of its duty on lace are tourist ladies, and they would not share their spoils with Marion.

"But why did you coal in the middle of the night?" said Godfrey.

One of Godfrey's most striking characteristics is his persistent curiosity. There is hardly anything in the world which Godfrey will not find out if he is given time. A secret has the same attraction for him that cheese has for a mouse. Some day, I hope, he will find a trap baited with a seductive mystery.

"We always coal at night," said Power.

"Of course," said Marion, "the dirt shows so much less at night than it would in daylight."

"But," said Godfrey, "I don't understand why you--"

I rose and said that we must go ashore. I invited Power to dinner, and urged him to bring McNeice with him if possible. I made it quite plain that I was not inviting Godfrey. Power accepted the invitation, and sent us off in a boat. I said good-bye firmly to Godfrey at the end of the pier. I was annoyed with him for cross-questioning our host at his own table. Marion and I walked home. Godfrey walked up the hill towards the co-operative store. I am sure he did not want to see Crossan. I cannot suppose that he would venture to catechise McNeice. I expect he meant to prowl round the premises in hopes of discovering casks of smuggled brandy or cases full of tobacco.

McNeice came to dinner, and I am bound to say that I found myself very nearly in agreement with Godfrey's opinion of him. He was a singularly ill-mannered man. Power devoted himself to Marion, and I felt at once that their conversation was not of a kind that was likely to be interesting either to McNeice or me. They were talking about ski-ing and skating in Switzerland. McNeice made no effort to talk at all. He sucked his soup into his mouth with a loud hissing noise, and glared at me when I invited him to admire our scenery. His fish he ate more quietly, and I took the opportunity of reminding him of our correspondence about St. Patrick. The subject roused him.

"There are," he said, "seventeen different theories about the place of that man's birth."

I knew nine myself, my own, of which I was a little proud, being the ninth. I did not expect McNeice to deliver a

harangue on the whole seventeen, but that is what he did. Having bolted his fish, he began in a loud, harsh voice to pour contempt on all attempts at investigating the early history of our national saint. He delayed our progress through dinner a good deal, because he would neither refuse nor help himself to the *entree* which my butler held at his elbow. It was not until he had finished with the whole seventeen theories about the saint that he turned his attention to dinner again. I ventured to suggest that he had not even mentioned my own theory.

"Oh," he said, "you have a theory too, have you?"

My theory, at the time of its first appearance, occupied ten whole pages of the *Nineteenth Century*, and when republished, with notes, in pamphlet form, was reviewed by two German papers. I felt hurt by his ignorance of it, and reminded him again that we had corresponded about the subject while I was writing the article.

"If you've time to waste on that sort of thing," he said, "why not devote it to living bishops instead of one who has been dead over a thousand years?"

The idea of investigating the origins of our existing bishops was new to me but not in the least attractive.

"Wouldn't it be rather waste of labour," I said, "to build up an hypothesis about the birthplace of a living bishop when--"

"It's certainly waste of labour to build up an hypothesis about a dead one."

"I meant to say," I added, "that if one did want to know such a thing--"

"Nobody does," said McNeice.

"It would," I went on, "be much simpler to write and ask him."

I gathered from the way in which he spoke that McNeice did not like bishops; but I was not prepared for the violence of the speech which he made to me after dinner. Marion and Power were at the piano, which stands in a far-off corner of my rather oversized drawing-room. McNeice settled himself in front of the fire, his long legs straddled far apart, the bow of his white tie twisted under his ear. He is a man of singularly ferocious appearance. He has very bushy eyebrows which meet across the bridge of his nose, shining green eyes, a large jaw heavily underhung, and bright red hair.

He addressed me for more than half an hour on the subject of bishops in general. I should be very sorry to write down the things he said. Some of them were quite untrue. Others were utterly unjust. It is quite wrong, for instance, to impute it as a crime to a whole class of men that their heads are bald. Nobody can help being bald if his hair will not grow any more than he can help being fat if his stomach will swell. Fatness was another of the accusations which McNeice hurled against the bishops. I suppose this violent hatred of an inoffensive class of men was partly the result of McNeice's tremendous Protestantism. The poet Milton, I think, felt in the same way about the prelates of his day. Partly it may have been the expression of his naturally democratic temperament. Bishops like to be called "my lord" by servants and clergymen. McNeice, I imagine, has a quite evangelical dislike of such titles. I dare say that it was the fact of my being a lord which made him so rude to me.

On the afternoon of my garden-party I happened to be standing close beside Lady Moyne when she was saying good-bye to the Dean. Her final remark was addressed quite as much to him as to me.

"What we have got to do," she said, "is to make use of this virile democracy of ours; to mould it into an instrument for the preservation of social order. The introduction of the Home Rule Bill gives us just about the chance we want."

I found myself wondering, while the diatribe against the bishops was in full swing, whether Lady Moyne would succeed in moulding McNeice into a weapon for her hand. It seemed to me more probable at the moment that McNeice would in the end tumble her beautiful head from the block of a guillotine into the basket of sawdust which waited underneath.

Marion and Bob Power were singing songs from Gilbert and Sullivan's operas while McNeice preached to me. They at least were having an enjoyable evening. I dare say McNeice enjoyed himself too. If so, my dinner-party was not given in vain. One cannot reasonably expect more than three out of every four people to be happy at the same time. It was my misfortune that I happened to be the fourth.

CHAPTER VI

The *Finola* steamed out of our bay next morning. Marion saw her go, and became quite lyrical at breakfast about the beauty of her "lines," a word which, as applied to the appearance of a yacht, she can only have learned from Bob Power. I was not able to share her rapture because the *Finola* went out at 6 a. m., an hour at which I make it a settled rule to be in bed. Marion is generally in bed at 6 a. m. too. She made an exceptional effort that morning.

For a week I enjoyed almost unbroken peace, and accumulated quite a large sheaf of notes for my work on the Irish Rebellions. Even Godfrey refrained from worrying me. But such happiness was too good to last long. On Saturday morning three things happened, every one of them of a disturbing kind. I received a letter from Lady Moyne in which she invited me to spend three days during the following week at Castle Affey. Castle Affey is Lord Moyne's chief Irish place. He has three others in various parts of the country and one in England. It is about ten miles from my home. Lady Moyne invited Marion too; but this was evidently an after thought, and she discounted the value of the invitation by saying that her party was to consist almost entirely of men and might be dull for Marion. I suspected politics at once, and advised Marion to refuse the invitation. I accepted it. Politics bore me a good deal; but it is interesting to watch politicians at their game. It is also pleasant, very pleasant, to be in the company of Lady Moyne. The prospect of the visit was as I have said disturbing. I prefer monotony. But if things must fall splashing into the pool of my life, I would as soon they took the form of visits to Castle Affey as any other.

The next thing which happened that morning was a deputation. It consisted of six out of the twenty carters whom Crossan has organized in the interests of our fishing industry. They made the modest request that I should drive my nephew Godfrey out of the neighbourhood. I felt the strongest possible sympathy with them. If I were a carter, a fisherman, a shopkeeper, or a farmer, and lived in Kilmore, I should certainly wish Godfrey to live somewhere else. I did not even question the members of the deputation about their special reasons for wanting to get rid of Godfrey. They told me in general terms that he was interfering in business which was "none of his." I wanted no evidence in support of such a statement. Godfrey always interferes in everything. A very freckled young man who seemed to be junior member of the deputation, added that Godfrey "spied" upon them. Of course Godfrey spied on them. He spies on me.

Strong as my sympathy was with the perfectly reasonable request of the deputation, I could not act as I was asked. Godfrey is, of course, in my employment. He collects the head rents still payable to me from some parts of the town which were not sold when I parted with the rest of my estate. For this I pay him PS200 a year. I could, I suppose, dismiss him if I chose; but the plain fact is that if I dismissed Godfrey he would immediately starve or go to the workhouse. He is quite unfit to earn his living in any way. Once, after great exertions, I secured for him a kind of minor clerkship in a government office. His duties, so far as I was able to learn, were to put stamps on envelopes, and he was provided with a damp sponge to prevent any injury which might happen to his tongue through licking the stamps. At the end of a year he was dismissed as hopelessly incompetent. He came back to me, beautifully dressed, with a small despatch-box full of tradesmen's bills, and a grievance against the government. It was plain to me after that experiment that Godfrey could never earn his own living. I did not see my way to let him drift into the workhouse. He is, little as I like him, the heir to my title, and, in mere decency, I could not allow the cost of his support to fall on the rates.

This is just one of the ways in which the democratic spirit of independence has affected us all without our knowing it. In the seventeenth century any member of the aristocracy who was afflicted with an heir like Godfrey had him shut up in the Bastille, or the Tower, by means of *lettres de cachet* or whatever corresponded to such instruments in England. There the objectionable young man ate bread and drank water at the expense of the public funds. Nobody seems to have suffered any discomfort at the thought that the cost of the support of his relative was falling either on the rates or the taxes. (I am not sure which it was but it must have been one or the other.) Nowadays we are horribly self-conscious in such matters. The debilitated labourer began it, objecting, absurdly, to being fed by other people in the workhouse. His spirit spread to the upper classes, and it is now impossible, morally, for me, a peer, to send my heir to the workhouse. Fortunately public opinion is swinging round again. The latest type of working-man has no objection to receiving an Old Age Pension, and likes to hear of his children being given free breakfasts at school. In time this new feeling will soak through to the class to which I belong. Then I shall be able, without a qualm, to send Godfrey to the workhouse. At present, I regret to say, I cannot.

I explained all this carefully to the deputation. It pained me to have to say no to their request, but I said it quite firmly. My decision, I think, was understood. My feelings I fear were not.

Very soon after the deputation left, Godfrey himself arrived. He wanted me to dismiss Crossan. I am not at all sure that I could dismiss Crossan even if I wanted to do so. He is the manager of our co-operative store, and although most of the money which went to the starting of that enterprise was mine there is a considerable number of small shareholders. Crossan also runs the fishing business and our saw mill. I capitalized both these industries, lending money to the men

to buy nets and good boats, and buying the various saws which are necessary to the making of planks. This no doubt gives me some hold over Crossan, but not enough to enable me to dismiss him as I might a cook. Besides, I do not want to dismiss Crossan. He is managing these different enterprises in such a way that they earn fair interest on the capital I put into them.

"I've been looking into things a bit, Excellency," said Godfrey.

I quite believed that. The deputation of carters said the same thing in other words.

"And you'll find yourself in an awkward place one of these days if that fellow Crossan is allowed to go on as he's going."

"I hope you're not going to drag up that dispute about the carters, Godfrey. I'm sick of it."

The dispute about the carters is really an unpleasant business. As originally organized there were eight Protestant carters and four Roman Catholics. A year ago Crossan dismissed the four Roman Catholic carters, and one of the Protestants who was suspected of religious indifference. Their places were filled by five Orangemen of the most determined kind. Now the profits of this carting business are considerable. The five men who were dismissed appealed to Godfrey. Godfrey laid their case before me. I gathered that Godfrey had a high opinion of the outcasts who always spoke to him with the respect due to his position. He had a low opinion of the five interlopers who were men of rude speech and democratic independence of manner. I was foolish enough to speak to Crossan about the matter. He met me with a blunt assertion that it was impossible to trust what he called "Papishes." There, as a lover of peace rather than justice, I wanted to let the matter rest; but Godfrey took up the subject again and again in the course of the following year. He persisted, not out of any love for justice though this once he was on the side of justice, but simply out of hatred of Crossan.

"It's not only the dismissal of those carters," said Godfrey. "There's a great deal more behind that. There's something going on which I don't understand."

"If you don't understand it," I said, "you can't expect me to."

"Look here, Excellency, you remember the time that yacht of Conroy's, the *Finola*, was in here?"

"Of course I do. You went and left my cards on Bob Power."

"I'm very sorry now that I did. There's something fishy about that yacht. What was she doing on the night she was here?"

"Coaling," I said; "I don't see why I should dismiss Crossan because Conroy's yacht came in here for coal."

"She wasn't coaling," said Godfrey.

I knew that, of course; so I said nothing, but left Godfrey to develop his grievance whatever it was.

"Ever since that night," said Godfrey, "there has been something or other going on in the yard behind the stores. Those carters are in it, whatever it is, and a lot more men, fishermen and young farmers. They're up there every night."

"Probably dancing," I said.

"Much more likely to be drinking."

"I wish you wouldn't talk nonsense, Godfrey. You know perfectly well that the store has not got a licence, and there's no drink sold there. Besides Crossan is a fanatical teetotaler."

"That wouldn't stop him," said Godfrey, "if he could sell the stuff cheap and make money on it; if"--here he sank his voice--"if it hadn't paid duty."

Now Crossan is one of those Christians who has added to the original Ten Commandments a Mohammedan prohibition of alcohol in any form. Godfrey, I have no doubt, would break any of the commandments which he recognized, if he saw his way to making a small profit on the sin. But I did not think that even a 25 per cent. dividend would tempt Crossan to disregard his self-imposed prohibition of alcohol.

"That's all nonsense," I said. "In the first place the *Finola* didn't come in here to land a cargo of smuggled goods."

"Then what did she come for?"

I did not know, so I ignored Godfrey's question.

"And in the second place Crossan wouldn't debauch the whole place by making the men drunk night after night on smuggled spirits. Why, only three weeks ago he spoke to me seriously about the glass of claret I drink at dinner. He did it quite respectfully and entirely for my good. I respected him for it."

"He's up to some mischief," said Godfrey, sulkily, "and it won't be too pleasant for you, Excellency, when the Inland Revenue people find out, and you are let in for a prosecution. I tell you that every night for the last week men have been going up to that store after dark, twenty or thirty of them, truculent, disrespectful blackguards out of the Orange Lodge. I've watched them."

"Did you watch them coming out again?"

"I did, twice," said Godfrey. "They didn't go home till nearly one o'clock in the morning. I couldn't stop up every night, so I only saw them twice."

"Well," I said, "were they drunk?"

"No," said Godfrey, unwillingly, "they were not. They walked quite straight."

"That explodes your theory then. If they had been drinking smuggled spirits for hours and hours, they would have been drunk."

"They were at some mischief," said Godfrey.

"They were probably getting up a concert," I said.

"No, they weren't, for--"

"Look here, Godfrey," I said, "I've listened to you pretty patiently for a long time; but I really cannot spare you the whole morning. If you have anything to do I wish you'd go and do it. If you haven't you'd better go to bed and sleep off your absurd suspicions."

One has to speak very plainly to Godfrey. Hints are simply wasted on him. Even after my last remark he hesitated for a moment. Then he turned and went.

I felt in the mood to write a short story which I have had in my mind for some time. I very often write short stories; but have never yet got an editor who cares to print any of them. The one I had in my mind when Godfrey left me was, however, likely to be particularly good. It was to be the autobiography of a murderer; not an ordinary murderer who slays through desire of gain or in obedience to an inborn criminal instinct. My murderer was to be a highly respectable, God-fearing man, a useful citizen, a good father, a man of blameless life and almost blameless thoughts, generous, high-principled, beloved. He was to slay his victim with one of the fire-irons on his hearth. The murderous impulse was to take possession of him quite suddenly but with absolutely irresistible force. He was to kill a man who had been boring him for hours. My intention was to write the story in such a way as to win public sympathy for my murderer and to make every one feel that the dead man deserved his fate. I meant to model the dead man on my nephew Godfrey.

I still think that a very good short story might be written along those lines, but I doubt whether I shall ever write it. I wrote about two thousand words that morning before I was interrupted by the luncheon gong. I was unable to go on writing after luncheon because the conversation I had with Marion distracted my mind and turned my thoughts to another subject.

"Father," she said, "do you think that Mr. Power could really have been smuggling things in that yacht?"

"No," I said; "he couldn't possibly."

"It's very queer," said Marion.

"What's queer?"

"Oh, nothing. Only this morning Rose had a new gold brooch, quite a handsome one."

Rose is Marion's maid, a pleasant and I believe efficient girl of agreeable appearance.

"Even if Mr. Power was smuggling," I said, "it's exceedingly unlikely that he'd bring in a cargo of gold brooches to give to the servants in the district."

"Oh, I didn't mean that," said Marion. "In fact Rose told me that her young man gave her the brooch. He's a very nice, steady young fellow with a freckly face and he drives one of the carts for Crossan."

He must, I suspect, be the same young man who accused Godfrey of being a spy. If so he is evidently a judge of character, and his selection of Rose as a sweet-heart is a high compliment to her.

"He promised her a gold bracelet next week," said Marion, "and Rose is very mysterious about where he gets the money."

"As long as he doesn't steal it from me," I said, "I don't care where he gets it."

"It's very queer all the same. Rose says that a lot of the young men in the village have heaps of money lately, and I thought it might have something to do with smuggling."

This is what distracted my mind from the story of the man who murdered Godfrey. I could not help wondering where Rose's young man and the others got their money. They were, I assumed, the same young men who frequented the co-operation store during the midnight hours. It was, of course, possible that they might earn the money there by some form of honest labour. But I could not imagine that Crossan had started one of those ridiculous industries by means of which Government Boards and philanthropic ladies think they will add to the wealth of the Irish peasants. Besides, even if Crossan had suddenly developed symptoms of kindly idiocy, neither wood-carving or lace-making could possibly have made Rose's freckly faced young man rich enough to buy a gold brooch. The thing puzzled me nearly as much as did the *Finola's* midnight activity.



CHAPTER VII

All competent critics appear to agree that art ought to be kept entirely distinct from moral purposes. A picture meant to urge us on to virtue--and there are such pictures--is bad art. A play or a novel with a purpose stands condemned at once. The same canon of criticism must, I suppose, apply to parties of all kinds, dinner-parties, garden-parties, or house-parties. A good host or hostess ought, like the painter and the novelist, to aim at making her work beautiful in itself; and should not have behind the hospitality a cause of any kind, charitable or political.

I myself dissent, humbly, of course, from this view. Pictures like *Time, Death and Judgment*--I take it as an example of the kind of picture which is meant to make us good because I once saw it hung up in a church--appeal to me strongly. I do not like novels which aim at a reform of the marriage laws; but that is only because sex problems bore me horribly. I enjoy novels written with any other purpose. I hate parties, such as those which Godfrey instigates me to give, which have no object except that of merely being parties, the bare collection together of human beings in their best clothes. I was, therefore, greatly pleased when I discovered that my original guess was right and that Lady Moyne's party was definitely political. I found this out when I arrived in the drawing-room before dinner. I was a little too early and there was no one in the room except Moyne. He shook hands with me apologetically and this gave me a clue to the nature of the entertainment before me. He dislikes politics greatly, and would be much happier than he is if he were allowed to hunt and fish instead of attending to such business as is carried on in the House of Lords. But a man cannot expect to get all he wants in life. Moyne has a particularly charming and clever wife who enjoys politics immensely. The price he pays for her is the loss of a certain amount of sport and the endurance of long periods of enforced legislative activity.

"I ought to have told you before you came," he said, "that--well, you know that my lady is very strongly opposed to this Home Rule Bill."

Moyne is fifteen years or so older than his wife. He shows his respect for her by the pretty old-fashioned way in which he always speaks of her as "my lady."

"The fact is," he went on, "that the people we have with us at present--"

"Babberly?" I asked.

Moyne nodded sorrowfully. Babberly is the most terrific of all Unionist orators. If his speeches were set to music, the orchestra would necessarily consist entirely of cornets, trumpets and drums. No one could express the spirit of Babberly's oratory on stringed instruments. Flutes would be ridiculous.

"Of course," said Moyne, still apologetically, "it really is rather a crisis you know."

"It always is," I said. "I've lived through seventy or eighty of them."

"But this is much worse than most," he said. "A man called Malcolmson arrived this afternoon, a colonel of some sort. Was in the artillery, I think."

"You read his letter in *The Times*, I suppose?"

"Yes, I did. But I needn't tell you, Kilmore, that that kind of thing is all talk. My wife--"

"I fancy Lady Moyne would look well as *vivandiere*," I said, "marching in front of an ambulance waggon with a red cross on it."

Moyne looked pained. He is very fond of Lady Moyne and very proud of her. This is quite natural. I should be proud of her too if she were my wife.

"Her idea," said Lord Moyne, "is--"

Just then our Dean came into the room. His presence emphasised the highly political nature of the party. Unless she had asked Crossan, Lady Moyne could not have got hold of any one of more influence with our north of Ireland Protestant democracy. The Dean cannot possibly be accustomed to the kind of semi-regal state which is kept up at Castle Affey. I should be surprised to hear that he habitually dresses for dinner. It was only natural, therefore, that he should be a little overawed by the immensity of the rooms and the number of footmen who lurk about the halls and passages. When he began explaining to me the extreme iniquity of the recent Vatican legislation about mixed marriages, he spoke in a quite low voice. As a rule this subject moves the Dean to stridency; but the heavy magnificence of Castle Affey crushed him into a kind of whisper. This encouraged me. If the Dean had been in his usual condition of vigour, I should not have ventured to do anything except agree with him heartily. Feeling that I might never catch him in a subdued mood again, I seized a chance of expressing my own views on the mixed marriage question. It seems to me

that the whole difficulty about the validity of these unions might be got over by importing a few priests of the Greek Church into Ireland. The Vatican, I believe, recognizes that these Orientals really are priests. The Protestants could not reasonably object to their ministrations since they refuse to acknowledge the jurisdiction of the Pope. A mixed marriage performed by one of them would, therefore, be valid in the opinion of the ecclesiastical advisers of, let us say, the bridegroom. It would be quite unobjectionable to those responsible for the soul of the bride. I put my plan as persuasively as I could; but the Dean did not seem to see any merit in it. Indeed I have never met any one who did. That is the great drawback to trying to help the Irish nation out of its difficulties. No one will ever agree to a reasonable compromise.

I took Lady Moyne in to dinner and enjoyed myself very much. She was--as indeed she always is--beautifully dressed. Although she talked a good deal to Babberly who sat on the other side of her, she left me with the impression that I was the person who really interested her, and that she only turned occasionally to her other neighbour from a sense of duty. Babberly talked about Unionist clubs and the vigorous way in which the members of them were doing dumb bell exercises, so as to be in thoroughly good training when the Home Rule Bill became law. The subject evidently interested him very much. He has a long white beard of the kind described as patriarchal. When he reaches exciting passages in his public speeches, and even when he is saying something emphatic in private life, his beard wags up and down. On this occasion it rose and fell like a foamy wave. That was what convinced me that he was really interested in the activity of the Unionist clubs. Lady Moyne smiled at him in her bewilderingly bewitching way, and then turned round and smiled at me.

"But," I said, "do you actually mean to go out and do battle?"

"It won't be necessary," said Babberly. "Once the English people understand that we mean to die rather than see our lives and liberties--"

"Nowadays," said Lady Moyne, "when the industrial proletariat is breaking free from all control, it is a splendid thing for us to have a cause in which we take the lead, which will bind our working classes to us, and make them loyal to those who are after all their best friends and their natural leaders."

I quite saw Lady Moyne's point. Crossan would not be at all likely to follow her or regard her as his best friend in ordinary matters. He might even resent her interference with his affairs. But on the subject of Home Rule Crossan would certainly follow any one who took his side of the great controversy. If Lady Moyne wore an orange sash over her pretty dresses Crossan would cheer her. While Home Rule remained a real danger he would refrain from asking why Lord Moyne should spend as much on a bottle of champagne for dinner, as would feed the children of a labourer for a week. It did not surprise me to find that Lady Moyne was clever enough to understand Crossan. I wanted to know whether Babberly understood.

"But," I said to him, "suppose that the men you are enrolling take what you say seriously--"

"I assure you, Lord Kilmore," said Babberly, "we are quite serious."

I could hear Malcolmson at the other end of the table explaining to Moyne a scheme for establishing a number of artillery forts on the side of the Cave Hill above Belfast Lough. His idea apparently, was to sink any British warship which was ill-advised enough to anchor there with a view to imposing Home Rule on us. Malcolmson, at all events, was quite serious.

"It will never come to fighting," said Babberly again. "After all, the great heart of the English people is sound. They will never consent to see their brethren and co-religionists handed over--"

Lady Moyne turned to me and smiled again. I am sixty years of age, but her smile gave me so much pleasure that I failed to hear the rest of what Babberly said.

When at the end of dinner Lady Moyne left us, we congregated round the other end of the table, and everybody talked loud; everybody, that is, except Moyne and me. Moyne looked to me very much as if he wanted to go to sleep. He blinked a good deal, and when he got his eyes open seemed to hold them in that state with considerable effort. I did not feel sleepy, and became more and more interested as the conversation round me grew more violent. Babberly talked about a campaign among the English constituencies. He had a curious and quite pathetic faith in the gullibility of the British working-man. Nobody listened much to Babberly. The Dean prosed on about the effects of the *Ne Temere* decree. We all said that we agreed with him, and then stopped listening. Malcolmson got on to field guns, and had an elaborate plan for training gunners without actual practice. Babberly did not like this talk about artillery. He kept on saying that we should never get as far as that. A Mr. Cahoon, who came from Belfast, and spoke with the same kind of accent as McNeice, prophesied doleful things about the paralyzing of business under a Home Rule Parliament. What interested me was, not the conversation which beat fiercely on my ears, but the personal question, Why had Lady

Moyne invited me to this party?

I am constitutionally incapable of becoming excited about politics, and have therefore the reputation, quite undeserved, of being that singular creature, a Liberal peer. Why, being the kind of Gallio I am, I should have been, like a second Daniel, thrown among these lions, I could not understand. They were not the least likely to convert me to their own desperate intensity of feeling. If Lady Moyne wanted to convert me a far better plan would have been to invite me to her house after the politicians had gone away. Circe, I imagine, did not attract new lovers by parading those whom she had already turned into swine. Nor could I suppose that I had been brought to Castle Affey in order to convert people like Malcolmson to pacific ways of thought. In the first place, Lady Moyne did not want him converted. He and his like were a valuable asset to the Conservative party. And even if she had wanted them converted I was not the man to do it. I am mildly reasonable in my outlook upon life. To reason with Malcolmson is much the same as if a man, meaning well, were to offer a Seidlitz powder to an enraged hippopotamus.

It was not until next day that I found a solution of my problem. Moyne buttonholed me after breakfast, and invited me, rather wistfully I thought, to go round the stables with him. He wanted my opinion of a new filly. I went, pursued by the sound of the Dean's voice.

He was telling the story of a famous case of wife desertion brought about by the *Ne Temere* decree. He was telling it to Cahoon, the Belfast manufacturer, who must, I am sure, have heard it several times before.

I used, long ago, to be a good judge of horses. I still retained my eye for a neat filly. Moyne's latest acquisition was more than neat. I stroked her neck, and patted her flanks with genuine appreciation. Moyne looked quite cheerful and babbled pleasantly about hunting. Then Lady Moyne came through the door of the stable. I was very glad to see her. Her dress, a simple brown tweed, suited her admirably, and her smile, less radiant, perhaps, than it was the night before when set off by her diamonds, was most attractive. Moyne, too, though I knew that he did not want to talk politics, was glad to see her. She came into the horse-box, and fondled the filly. Then she sighed.

"What a lot we have to go through for a good cause!" she said. "Those terrible men!"

"Heavy going," said Moyne, "that kind of thing at breakfast. Let's take out the new car, and go for a spin."

"I should love to," she said, "but I must not. I only ran out to speak to you for a minute, Lord Kilmore."

Her eyes led me to believe at dinner the night before that I was the one man among her guests that she really wanted to talk to. Now her lips said the same thing plainly. I did not believe it, of course; but I felt quite as much gratified as if it had been true.

"Mr. Conroy comes this afternoon," she said.

"That millionaire fellow?" said Moyne, who was evidently not well up in the list of his visitors.

"And I want you to take him in hand," said Lady Moyne to me--not to her husband. "He's very clever, and it's most important to get him interested in our movement."

"You'd much better take him in hand yourself," I said. "If any one could interest him--"

"I shall, of course; but I can't always be with him. I'm dreadfully afraid that if Mr. Babberly talks to him--but you know what Mr. Babberly is. He's splendid in Parliament and on a platform; perfectly splendid. We've nobody like him. But he might not quite suit Mr. Conroy. Then poor dear Colonel Malcolmson does talk such nonsense. Of course it's very good in its way, and I do hope the Liberals will lay to heart what he says about fighting before it's too late--"

"Mr. Conroy is a business man," I said, "and has a reputation for shrewdness."

"That's just it," said Lady Moyne, "and the others--the Dean and that curious Mr. Cahoon. They're dears, perfect dears in the way they stand up for the Union and the Empire, but--" She shrugged her shoulders, and smiled.

"I quite understand," I said; "but, after all, I'm rather an old bore, too."

"You!" said Lady Moyne. "You're a literary man, and that's so rare, you know, in our class. And, besides, you're a Liberal. I don't mean in any offensive sense of the word; only just that you're not a party man. I must run away now; but you will do your best with Mr. Conroy, won't you? We want a big subscription from him."

The Dean caught me a little later in the morning, and, though I told him I had letters to write, he insisted on explaining to me that, as a clergyman, he considered it wrong to take any active part in politics.

"The Church," he said, "cannot allow herself to become attached to any party. She must stand above and beyond

party, a witness to divine and eternal righteousness in public affairs."

I am, on the whole, glad that I heard the Dean say this. I should certainly have believed he was taking a side in politics, if he had not solemnly assured me that he was not. I might even have thought, taking at their face value certain resolutions passed by its General Synod, that the Church was, more or less, on the side of the Unionists, if the Dean had not explained to me that she only appeared to be on their side because they happened to be always in the right, but that she would be quite as much on the side of the Liberals if they would only drop their present programme which happened in every respect to be morally wrong. This cleared my mind for me, and I felt quite ready to face Conroy at luncheon, and dispel any difficulties he might feel about the Church and politics.



CHAPTER VIII

Mr. Conroy arrived at luncheon-time, and Lady Moyne took him in hand at once. I watched her talking to him during the meal and afterwards when they walked together round the lawn. I came to the conclusion that Lady Moyne would have no difficulty in obtaining any subscription she wanted from the millionaire. They were, of course, intimate with each other. Lady Moyne had been Conroy's guest in the days when his London house was a centre of social life. She had sailed with him on the *Finola*. But this was the first time she had him at Castle Affey; and therefore the first time he had seen Lady Moyne in her character as hostess. It is not to be wondered at that he yielded to her charm. Like all women of real capacity Lady Moyne was at her best in her own house.

But she was too clever a hostess to devote herself entirely to one guest. She took Babberly for a drive later in the afternoon and I felt that my time had come. I determined to be true to my trust and to make myself agreeable to Conroy. Unfortunately he did not seem to want my company. He went off for a long walk with Malcolmson. This surprised me. I should have supposed beforehand that talk about artillery would have bored Conroy; and Malcolmson, since this Home Rule struggle began, has talked of nothing else.

I spent the afternoon with Mr. Cahoon, and we talked about Home Rule, of course.

"What those fellows want," he said, "is to get their hands into our pockets. But it won't do."

"Those fellows" were, plainly, the Nationalist leaders.

"Taxation?" I said.

"Belfast will be the milch cow of the Dublin Parliament," said Cahoon. "Money will be wanted to feed paupers and pay priests in the south and west. We're the only people who have any money."

I had never before come in contact with a man like Cahoon, and I was very much interested in him. His contempt, not only for our fellow-countrymen in Leinster, Munster and Connacht, but for all the other inhabitants of the British Isles was absolute. He had a way of pronouncing final judgment on all the problems of life which fascinated me.

"That's all well enough in its way," he would say; "but it won't do in Belfast. We're business men."

I think he said those words five times in the course of the afternoon, and each time they filled me with fresh delight. If the man had been a fool I should not have been interested in him. If he had been a simple crude money maker, a Stock Exchange Imperialist, for instance, I should have understood him and yawned. But he was not a fool. A man cannot be a fool who manages successfully a large business, who keeps in touch with the swift vicissitudes of modern international commerce, who has organized into a condition of high efficiency an industrial army of several thousand working-men and women. And Mr. Cahoon, in a curious hard way, was touched with idealisms; I discovered, accidentally, that he devotes his spare time on Saturdays to the instruction of young men in cricket and football. His Sunday afternoons he gives to an immense Bible-class for boys of fifteen or sixteen. He has built and maintains, on the sole condition that he does not actually lose money by it, a kind of model village in a suburban district of Belfast. In order to look after this village properly he gets up at five o'clock in the morning on three days in the week. In winter, when his social work is in full swing, he spends almost all his evenings at a large Working-Men's club. He spends his summer holidays in the seaside camp of The Boys' Brigade. It would be difficult to find a man who crams more work into what are supposed to be his leisure hours. He has, of course, little time for reading and he never travels. His devotion to good works leaves him no opportunity for culture, and accounts for the fact that he believes the things which Babberly says on platforms. He would, I did not actually try him with the subject, but I have no doubt he would, have brushed the philosophy of Emmanuel Kant into the world's waste-basket with his unvarying formula: It wouldn't do in Belfast. They are business men there.

We worried on about his fear of the over-taxation of Belfast and the industrial North. I tried to get from him some definite account of the exact taxes which he feared. I tried to get him to explain how he proposed to fight, against whom he intended to fight, who might be expected to fight on his side. I do not think he got angry with me for my persistency, but his contempt for me steadily increased. I am not a business man and so I could not possibly, so he hinted, understand how they feel about the matter in Belfast.

"But do you think," I said, "that your workmen will go out and be shot in order to save you from paying an extra penny in the pound income tax? That's what it comes to, you know, and I don't see why they should do it. They don't pay income tax, or for that matter death duties."

Cahoon looked me full in the face for nearly half a minute without replying. Then he took out his watch and looked at it. Then he took me by the arm and led me towards the yard.

"Did you ever see the Green Looney Scutching Mill?" he said.

I had never seen any scutching mill. I have only a vague idea of what a scutching mill is.

"It'll not be more than twenty miles from this," said Cahoon. "And in my car we'll do it and be back for dinner."

I did not particularly want to spend the rest of the afternoon rushing about the country in Cahoon's motor car. I preferred to stay quietly on the Castle Affey lawn and talk about Home Rule.

"But about the working-man," I said, "and the prospect of his fighting--"

"You'll be better able to talk about that," said Cahoon, "when you've seen the man I'm going to take you to. Seeing's believing."

I was, of course, quite willing to go with Cahoon if he would really show me a citizen soldier in a scutching mill. We got out the motor car and started.

"He's a man by the name of McConkey," said Cahoon.

"A good name," I said. "One expects something from a McConkey."

Cahoon did not say anything for about ten minutes. Then he went on--

"McConkey is foreman in the mill."

"The scutching mill?" I asked.

It was, of course, the scutching mill. I only asked the question in order to keep up the conversation. The long silences were embarrassing. Cahoon did not answer me. At the end of another quarter of an hour of furious driving he gave me a little further information about McConkey.

"He neither drinks nor smokes."

This led me to think that he might be some relation to my friend Crossan, possibly a cousin.

"I happen to know," said Cahoon a little later, "that he has upwards of PS500 saved."

Undoubtedly McConkey and Crossan are close relations, brothers-in-law perhaps.

We reached the Green Looney Scutching Mill at about half-past five o'clock. Cahoon, who seemed to know all about the establishment, led me through some very dusty purlieus. McConkey, when we came upon him, did not seem particularly pleased to see Cahoon. He looked at me with suspicious malignity.

"There's a gentleman here," said Cahoon, "who wants to know whether you mean to fight rather than submit to Home Rule."

"Aye," said McConkey, "I do."

Then he looked me square in the face without winking. Cahoon did the same thing exactly. Neither of them spoke. It was clearly my turn to say something; but with four hard grey eyes piercing my skin I found it difficult to think of a remark. In the end I said:

"Really?"

They both continued to stare at me. Then McConkey broke the silence again.

"You'll no be a Papist?" he said.

"Certainly not," I replied. "In fact I am a church-warden."

McConkey thrust his hand deep into a hip pocket in the back of his trousers and drew out a somewhat soiled packet of yellow tracing paper.

"Look at thon," he said.

I unfolded the tracing paper and found on it drawings of a machine gun. Cahoon peered over my shoulder.

"She's a bonny wee thing," said McConkey.

She looked to me large and murderous. Cahoon expressed his admiration for her, so I said nothing.

"I'll no be that badly off for something to fight with," said McConkey, "when the time comes."

"Do you mean to say," I said, "that you've bought that weapon?"

"I haven't her bought yet," said McConkey; "but I have the money by me."

"And you actually mean--" I said.

"Ay, I do."

I looked at Cahoon. He was still studying the drawings of the gun.

"It'll be queer," said McConkey, slowly, "if she doesna' land a few of them in hell before they have me caught."

I turned to Cahoon again.

"Do you really think," I said, "that he--?"

"We're business men," said Cahoon, "and we don't throw away our money."

"But," I said, "who are you going to shoot at? It would be silly to attack a tax collector with a gun like that. I don't see who--"

"Oh," said Cahoon, "don't fret about that. We'll find somebody to shoot at."

"There'll be plenty," said McConkey, "when the time comes."

"The real difficulty," said Cahoon, "is that--"

"They'll no be wanting to stand up till us," said McConkey.

The relations of Capital with Labour are, I understand, strained in other parts of the United Kingdom. Here, with Home Rule on the horizon, they seem to be actually cordial. There is certainly a good deal to be said for Lady Moyne's policy. So long as Cahoon and McConkey have a common taste for making domestic pets of machine guns they are not likely to fall out over such minor matters as wages and hours of work.

I had a good deal to think of as Cahoon drove me back to Castle Affey. My main feeling was one of great personal thankfulness. I shall never, I hope, take part in a battle. If I do I hope I shall be found fighting against some properly organized army, the men and officers of which have taken up the business of killing in a lofty professional spirit. I cannot imagine anything more likely to shatter my nerve than to be pitted against men like McConkey, who neither drink nor smoke, but save and spend their savings on machine guns. The regular soldier has his guns bought for him with other people's money. He does not mind much if no gory dividend is earned. McConkey, on the other hand, spends his own money, and being a business man, will hate to see it wasted. He would not be satisfied, I imagine, with less than fifty corpses per cent. as a return on his expenditure.

At dinner that evening Conroy made a suggestion for our evening's entertainment.

"Lady Moyne," he said, "ought to read us the speech which she is to make next week to the Unionist women."

I had never heard of the Unionist women before, and knew nothing of their wish to be spoken to. The Dean assured me that they were numerous and quite as enthusiastic as their husbands and brothers. Cahoon said that he was giving his mill hands a half holiday in order that the girls might go to listen to Lady Moyne. Babberly struck in with a characteristic speech.

"The influence of women," he said, "can hardly be over-estimated. We must never forget that the most impressionable years of a man's life are those during which he is learning to say his prayers beside his mother's knee."

This, as I recognized was a mere paraphrase of the proverb which states that the hand which rocks the cradle rules the world. The secret of Babberly's great success as an orator is that he has a striking power of putting platitudes into new words.

I ventured to suggest that, so far as the present political situation was concerned it was hardly worth while trying to get at the children who were learning to say their prayers. The Home Rule Bill would be either rejected or passed long before any of that generation had votes. Lady Moyne was good enough to smile at me; but Babberly felled me at once.

"The women whom we expect to influence," he said, "have fathers, brothers and husbands as well as young children."

After dinner we had the speech. A secretary, who had once been Lady Moyne's governess and still wore pince-nez,

brought a quantity of type-written matter into the drawing-room. Moyne wanted me to slip away with him to the billiard room; but I refused to do so. I wanted to watch Lady Moyne making her speech. I am glad that I resisted his appeal. Lady Moyne not only read us the speech. She delivered it to us, treated us, indeed, to a rehearsal, I might even call it a dress rehearsal, for she described at some length the clothes she intended to wear. They must have been the most sumptuous in her wardrobe.

"The poor dears," she said, "want something to brighten their lives. Besides, they'll take it as a compliment to them if I'm like Solomon in all his glory."

I gathered from this remark that the audience was to consist mainly of the wives and sisters of McConkey and other men of the same class. Cahoon's wife, if he had one, would not require a display of Lady Moyne's best clothes to seal her attachment to the Union.

The speech was an uncommonly good one. A phrase in it frequently repeated, appealed to me very strongly. Lady Moyne spoke about "our men." I do not know why it is, but the phrase "our women" as used for instance by military officers who have been to India, always strikes me as singularly offensive. It suggests seraglios, purdahs and other institutions by which Turks, and Orientals generally, assert and maintain the rights of property with regard to the other sex. "Our men," on the other hand, is redolent of sentimental domesticity. I never hear it without thinking of women who are mothers and makers of men; who sew on trouser buttons and cook savoury messes for those who are fighting the battle of life for them in a rough world, sustained by an abiding vision of noble womanhood and the sanctity of home. It is an extraordinarily appealing phrase and Lady Moyne used it for all it was worth. As addressed by her to wives and sisters of the Belfast working-men, it had a further value. The plural possessive pronoun bracketed McConkey with Lord Moyne. McConkey's wife, assuming for the moment that he had not abstained from matrimony as he had from tobacco, shared his joys and sorrows, his hopes and fears, heartened him for his daily toil, would join no doubt in polishing the muzzle of the machine gun. So Lady Moyne in her gorgeous raiment, sustained Lord Moyne, her man. That was the suggestion of the possessive pronoun, and the audience was not allowed to miss it. Poor Moyne did miss it, for he was nearly asleep in a chair. But McConkey's wife would not. Her heart would glow with a sense that she and Lady Moyne were sisters in their anxious care for the men entrusted to them.

That single phrase made such a violent emotional appeal to me that I missed all the rest of the speech. Each time I began to recover a little from hearing it and was prepared to give my attention to something else, Lady Moyne used to repeat it, and then I was hypnotized again. I have no doubt, however, that the speech was a powerful appeal for the maintenance of the Union. Conroy said so afterwards and Babberly entirely agreed with him. The Dean suggested that something might be put in about the sanctity of the marriage tie, a matter of particular importance to women and likely to be seriously affected by the passing of a Home Rule Bill. Lady Moyne thanked him for calling her attention to the omission. The secretary, who had once been a governess, adjusted her pince-nez and took a note.

In the smoking-room that evening Conroy took command of the conversation, and for the first time since I arrived at Castle Affey we got off politics. He told us a good deal about how he made his fortune. Most men who have made fortunes enjoy talking about how they made them. But their stories are nearly always most uninteresting. My impression is that they do not themselves understand how they came to be rich. But Conroy understood, or at all events thought he understood, his own success. He believed that he was rich because he had, more than other men, a love of the excitement which comes with risk. He had the spirit of the true adventurer, the man who pursues novelty and danger for their own sakes. Every story he told us illustrated and was meant to illustrate this side of his character. He despised the rest of us, especially me perhaps. We, Cahoon, the Dean, even Malcolmson, though he was a bristly fighting man, certainly Moyne who had gone quietly to bed—we were tame barndoor fowls, eating the sordid messes spread for us by that old henwife, civilized society. Conroy was a free bird of the wild. He snatched golden grain for nutriment from the hand of a goddess. These were not his words or his metaphors, but they represented the impression which his talk and his stories left on my mind.

At twelve o'clock I rose to say good night. As I did so a servant entered the room and told Conroy that his motor was ready for him at the door. Conroy left the room at once, and left the house a few minutes later.

I suppose we ought, all of us, to have been surprised. Motor drives in the middle of the night are an unusual form of amusement, and it was impossible to suppose that Conroy could have any business requiring immediate personal attention in the neighbourhood of Castle Affey. But his talk during the evening had left its impression on other minds as well as mine. We bid each other good night without expressing any astonishment at Conroy's conduct. Cahoon refrained from saying that inexplicable midnight expeditions were not the kind of things they cared for in Belfast. Even he recognized that a man who had accumulated as large a fortune as Conroy's must not be judged by ordinary standards.

I, unfortunately, failed to go to sleep. I tried to read the works of Alexander Pope, of which I found a well-bound copy

in my bedroom. But my mind only became more active. I got up at last and covered six sheets of the Castle Affey note paper with a character sketch of Conroy. I maintained that he was wrong in supposing that a capacity for daring is the secret of becoming rich. Bob Power, for instance, is as daring as any man living and certainly loves risk for its own sake, but Bob will not die a rich man. Nor will Conroy. Wealth falls into the hands of such men occasionally, as vast hoards of gold did one hundred and fifty years ago into the holds of pirate ships. But no one ever heard of a buccaneer who died with a large fortune safely invested. Before Conroy dies his fortune will have taken to itself wings and fled back to that goddess of his who gave it. This was the substance of my article. Marion typed it out for me when I went home, but neither of the editors who usually print my articles would have it. I suppose that they did not know Conroy personally. If they had known him they would have appreciated my character sketch. I called it, I remember, "Our Contemporary Pirates," a title which ought to have been attractive.

At three o'clock, just as I was finishing my article, I heard Conroy's motor on the gravel outside my window.

He appeared at breakfast looking fresh and cheerful. None of us asked him where he had been the night before, and he did not offer us any information.

After breakfast he asked me to go for a walk with him. Lady Moyne, who heard the invitation given, looked pleased, and I recollected at once that I had promised to interest Conroy in the Unionist cause and lead him on to the point of giving a large subscription to our funds.

These party funds have always been rather a puzzle to me. I have never understood why it should be necessary for rich Liberals, rich Conservatives and American Irishmen to spend enormous sums of money in persuading people to vote. The theory of democratic government is, I suppose, that the citizen expresses his opinion freely in a polling booth. If he has not got an opinion it would surely be better to leave him alone. If he has an opinion and attaches any importance to it he will go to the polling booth without being dragged there by a kind of special constable hired for the purpose. If the money of the party funds were given to the voters in the form of bribes, the expenditure would be intelligible. It might even be justified; since an occasional tip would be most welcome to nearly every elector. But to spend tens of thousands of pounds on what is called organization seems very foolish. However I am not a practical politician, and my immediate object was not to explain the theory of political finance to Conroy, but to work him up into the frame of mind in which he would sign cheques.

I cannot flatter myself that I did this or even helped to do it. Conroy did not give me a chance. He began to talk about the Irish land question, a thing in which I no longer take any but an academic interest. He asked me if I still owned a small estate in Co. Galway which had belonged to my father. I told him that I had long ago sold it and was uncommonly glad to do so.

"Not a paying proposition?" said Conroy.

"Oh," I said, "it paid very well; but the fact is, what with the agitation about grazing lands, and the trouble about people in congested districts--"

"I reckon," said Conroy, "that your ancestors mismanaged the property some."

I expect they did. But I did not expect to have their misdeeds brought home to me in a vigorous personal way.

"Your father," said Conroy, "or your grandfather, turned my grandfather off a patch of land down there in 1850."

My grandfather had, I have heard, a theory that small holdings of land were uneconomic. He evicted his tenants and made large grass farms. Nowadays we hold the opposite opinion. We are evicting large tenants and establishing small holdings. Our grandsons, I dare say, will go back again to the large farms. I explained to Conroy that he ought not to blame my grandfather who was acting in accordance with the most advanced scientific theories of his time.

Conroy was very nice about the matter. He said he had no grudge against either me or my grandfather. He had, however, so he told me frankly, a prejudice against everything English; an inherited prejudice, and not quite so irrational as it looked. It was after all the English who invented the economic theories on which my grandfather acted. He talked so much about his dislike of England and everything English that I did not like to introduce the subject of the subscription to Lady Moyne's political fund. He did, in the end, subscribe largely. When I heard about his PS1000 cheque I supposed that he must have counted the Union with us a misfortune for England and so wished to perpetuate it. Either that was his motive, so I thought, or else Lady Moyne had captivated him as she always captivates me.

CHAPTER IX

I had no sooner settled down quietly at home and got to work again on my history than I was assailed by Godfrey. I wish very much that he was Conroy's nephew and not mine. Conroy goes driving in a motor in the middle of the night, so he must like disturbances. I hate them.

"I'm sorry, Excellency, but I am afraid I shall have to interrupt you."

Godfrey, besides being objectionable in other ways, is a liar. He is not sorry, he is very glad, when he gets the chance of interrupting me. I should resent the disturbance less if he acknowledged frankly that he enjoyed annoying me.

"It can't be time," I said, "for another garden-party yet; but, if it is, I'd rather you made out the invitation list yourself. I'm busy. Besides making out lists is one of the things you're good at. I should be sure to leave out somebody."

"I don't want to talk about garden-parties," said Godfrey. "This is something much more serious."

"There's no use coming to me about it," I said. "I told you last time that your tailor could bring you into the County Court if he liked. I shan't pay him again."

The inference was a natural one. Godfrey had said that he wanted to talk about something more important than a garden-party. But the inference was wrong. Godfrey looked offended.

"I sent Nicholson and Blackett a cheque last week," he said.

I waited patiently. If Godfrey's business had nothing to do with garden-parties or tailors' bills, I could only suppose that he meant to make some fresh complaint about Crossan.

"Pringle cashed it all right," said Godfrey, after a short pause. "I went in there the day after your party and played tennis with his daughter. They were awfully pleased."

I dare say they were. People attach a surprising amount of importance to Godfrey's social patronage. I myself should be more inclined to cash his cheques for him if he stayed away from my house. But I did not want to argue with Godfrey about Pringle's taste in guests.

"What's Crossan been doing to you?" I asked at last.

"He hasn't been doing anything to me."

"Then for goodness' sake, Godfrey, let the man alone."

"I don't like the way he's going on."

"You never did. There's nothing fresh about that. You've complained about him regularly every week for five years."

This was an exaggeration. I am sometimes away from home for more than a week at a time and Godfrey does not always complain about Crossan in his letters.

"Look here, Excellency," said Godfrey, "it's far better for you to know what Crossan's doing. He's going about all over the country day after day. He's got a motor car."

I can quite understand that Crossan's owning a motor car must have a very irritating effect on Godfrey. I cannot afford to keep one. That any one else in the district over which I ought, according to Godfrey's theory, to be a kind of king, should assume a grandeur impossible for me is simply an aggravated kind of insolence. No wonder that Godfrey, with the honour of the family at heart, resented Crossan's motor car. I tried to soothe him.

"It's probably quite an inferior machine," I said. "It will break down soon."

"It's not only that," said Godfrey, "though I think Crossan ought to stay at home and mind his business. He must be neglecting things. But--I wish you'd walk up to the store with me, Excellency. Crossan's away."

"I'd much rather go when Crossan's at home," I said; "but, of course, if you won't leave me in peace until I do, I may as well go at once."

I got my hat and walking stick. On the way up to the store Godfrey preserved an air of mysterious importance. I had no objection whatever to his doing this; because he could not talk and look mysterious at the same time, and I particularly dislike being talked to by Godfrey. I expect he tried to be dignified with a view to impressing me, but just before we

reached the store he broke down and babbled fatuously.

"Marion told me yesterday," he said, "that she'd had a letter from that fellow Power."

"She told me that too," I said.

"Well, I think you ought to put a stop to it. It's not right."

"My dear Godfrey," I said, "you appear to forget that he's one of the Powers of Kilfenora and private secretary to a millionaire."

This twofold appeal to the highest and strongest feelings which Godfrey possesses ought to have silenced him. He did, I think, feel the force of what I said. But he was not satisfied.

"If you knew all that was going on," he said, "you wouldn't like it."

We reached the store. The young woman who controls the sale of miscellaneous goods was alert and smiling behind her counter. Whatever Crossan might be doing she at all events was attending to her business. Godfrey took no notice of her. He led me through the shop to the yard behind it. He pushed open the door of one of the outhouses.

"That door ought to be locked," he said.

This was true. I was somewhat surprised to find it open.

"I forced the lock this morning," said Godfrey, "with a screw driver."

"In that case," I said, "you can hardly blame Crossan for its being open. Why did you do it?"

"I wanted to see what he had inside," said Godfrey, "and I wanted you to see."

There was a good deal inside. In fact the outhouse, a large building, was filled from floor to ceiling with packing-cases, some of them very large indeed. Godfrey pointed to a small one near the door.

"Just lift that up, will you, Excellency?" said Godfrey.

"No, I won't. Why should I? I'm not a railway porter, and it looks heavy."

"It is heavy. Just watch me for a moment if you don't want to lift it yourself."

Godfrey with evident difficulty lifted the packing-case, staggered a few steps with it and then set it down. The packing-case may have been heavy but it was quite small. It seemed to me that Godfrey was making a rather pitiful exhibition of his physical feebleness.

"You ought to do things with dumb bells," I said. "The muscles of your arms are evidently quite soft."

Godfrey took no notice of the taunt. He was in a state of tremendous moral earnestness.

"I want your permission to open these cases," he said.

"I won't give you any such permission," I said. "How can I? They're not my packing-cases."

Godfrey argued with me for quite a long time, but I remained firm. For some reason which I could not understand, Godfrey was unwilling to open the packing-cases without permission from somebody. I should have supposed that having already forced a door he would not have boggled at the lid of a packing-case; but he did. He evidently had some vague idea that the law takes a more serious view of smashing packing-cases than it does of housebreaking. He may have been right. But my record so far was clear. I had not forced the lock of the door.

"What do you suppose is in those cases?" said Godfrey.

"Artificial manure," I said.

Our store does a large business in artificial manure. It generally comes to us in sacks, but there is no reason why it should not come in packing-cases. It is tremendously heavy stuff.

"Those cases were landed from the *Finola*," said Godfrey. "She wouldn't come here with a cargo of artificial manure."

"If you've brought me all the way up here to accuse Conroy of smuggling," I said, "you've wasted your own time and mine."

"I don't accuse Conroy of smuggling," said Godfrey. "In fact, I'm going to write to him to-night to tell him what's going

on."

"Very well," I said. "You can if you like, but don't mix my name up with it."

We walked back together as far as the village. Godfrey was silent again. I could see that he still had something on his mind, probably something which he wanted me to do. He kept on clearing his throat and pulling himself together as if he were going to say something of importance. I was uncomfortable, for I felt sure that he intended to attack me again about Marion's correspondence with Bob Power. I have never, since she was quite a little girl, interfered with Marion's freedom of action. I had not the smallest intention of making myself ridiculous by claiming any kind of authority over her, especially in a matter so purely personal as the young man she chose to favour. Besides, I like Bob Power. At worst there was nothing against him except his smuggling, and smuggling is much less objectionable than the things that Godfrey does. I should rather, if it came to that, have a son-in-law who went to prison occasionally for importing spirits without consulting the government than one who perpetually nagged at me and worried me. But I did not want to provoke further arguments by explaining my feelings to Godfrey. I was therefore rather relieved when he finally succeeded in blurting out what was in his mind.

"I hope, Excellency," he said, "that you will take the first chance you get of speaking to Crossan."

In sudden gratitude for escaping a wrangle about Marion and Bob Power I promised hurriedly that I would speak to Crossan. I was sorry afterwards that I did promise. Still, I very much wished to know what was in the packing-cases. I did not really believe it was artificial manure. I did not believe either that it was smuggled brandy.

My chance came two days later. I met Crossan in the street. He was standing beside his motor car, a handsome-looking vehicle. He evidently intended to go for a drive. I felt at once that I could not ask him a direct question about the packing-cases. I determined to get at them obliquely if I could. I began by admiring the motor.

"She's good enough, my lord," said Crossan.

He is a man of few words, and is sparing of his praise. "Good enough" is, from Crossan, quite an enthusiastic compliment.

"If your lordship would care about a drive any day," he said, "it'll be a pleasure to me."

Crossan always interjects "my lord" and "your lordship" into the middle of the remarks he makes to me; but he says the words in a very peculiar tone. It always seems to me that he wishes to emphasize the difference in our social station because he feels that the advantage is all on his side. "The rank," so his tone suggests, "is but the guinea stamp. The man"--that is in this case Crossan himself--"is the gowd for a' that."

"You can get about the country pretty quickly in that car," I said.

Crossan looked at me with a perfectly expressionless face for some time. Then he said said--

"If you think, my lord, that I'm neglecting my work, you've only to say so and I'll go."

I hastened to assure him that I had no intention of finding fault with him in any way. My apology was as ample as possible. After another minute spent in silent meditation Crossan expressed himself satisfied.

"It suits me as little to be running round the country," he said, "as it would suit your lordship."

"I quite understand that," I said. "But then I don't do it. You do."

"It has to be," said Crossan.

I did not quite see why it had to be; but Crossan spoke with such conviction that I dared not contradict him and did not even like to question him. Fortunately he explained himself.

"I'm the Grand Master, as your lordship is aware," he said.

"Worshipful" is the title of courtesy applied to Grand Masters, and I'm sure no one ever deserved it better than Crossan.

"If we're not ready for them, my lord, they'll have our throats cut in our beds as soon as ever they get Home Rule."

"They," of course were the "Papishes," Crossan's arch enemies.

I wanted very much to hear more of his activities among the Orangemen. I wanted to know what steps he, as Grand Master, was taking to prevent cut-throats creeping in on us while we slept. I thought I might encourage him by telling

him something he would be pleased to hear.

"McConkey," I said, "who is foreman in the Green Looney Scutching Mill, is buying a splendid quick-firing gun."

The remark did not have the effect I hoped for. It had an exactly opposite effect. Crossan shut up like a sea anemone suddenly touched.

"Your lordship's affairs won't be neglected," he said stiffly. "You may count on that."

I felt that I could. I have the utmost confidence in Crossan's integrity. If a body of "Papishes" of the bloodiest kind were to come upon Crossan and capture him; if they were to condemn him to death and, being God-fearing men, were to allow him half an hour in which to make his soul; he would spend the time, not in saying his prayers, not even in cursing the Pope, but in balancing the accounts of the co-operative store, so that any auditor who took over the books afterwards might find everything in order.

"If you really feel it to be your duty," I said, "to go round the district working up--"

"You'll have heard of the Home Rule Bill, maybe," said Crossan.

I had heard of it, several times. After my visit to Castle Affey I even understood it, though it was certainly a measure of great complexity. I think I appreciated the orthodox Protestant view of it since the day I talked to McConkey. I wanted Crossan to realize how fully I entered into his feelings, so I quoted a phrase from one of Babberly's speeches.

"In this supreme crisis of our country's destiny," I said, "it is the duty of every man to do his uttermost to avert the threatened ruin of our common Protestantism."

That ought to have pacified Crossan even if it did not rouse him to enthusiasm. Huge crowds have cheered Babberly for saying these moving words. But Crossan received them from me in sullen silence.

"It would be well," he said at last, "if your lordship and others like you were more in earnest."

Crossan is not by any means a fool. I have occasionally been tempted to think he is, especially when he talks about having his throat cut at night; but he has always shown me in the end that he has in him a vein of strong common sense. He recognized that I was talking bombast when I spoke about the supreme crisis; but, curiously enough, he is quite convinced of Babberly's sincerity when he says things of that sort.

It was nearly an hour after Crossan left me when I recollected that I had not found out anything about the packing-cases. The subject somehow had not come up between us, though I fully intended that it should. Our talk about Home Rule gave me no clue to what was in the cases. I could scarcely suppose that they were full of gorgets for distribution among Orangemen, defensive armour proof against the particular kind of stabs which Crossan anticipated.

Godfrey called on me the next morning in a white heat of righteous indignation. He had received an answer to the letter which he wrote to Conroy. Before showing it to me he insisted on my reading what he called his statement of the case. It occupied four sheets of quarto paper, closely type-written. It accused Bob Power and McNeice of using the *Finola* for smuggling without the owner's knowledge. It made out, I am bound to say, quite a good case. He had collected every possible scrap of evidence, down to Rose's new brooch. I suppose Marion told him about that. He said at the end of the letter that he had no motive in writing it except a sincere wish for Conroy's welfare. This was quite untrue. He had several other motives. His love of meddling was one. Hatred of Crossan was another. Jealousy of Bob Power was a third.

"Now is there anything objectionable in that letter? Anything that one gentleman would not write to another?"

I admitted that on the whole it was a civil letter.

"Now look at his answer," said Godfrey.

Conroy's answer was on a post-card. It consisted of six words only.

"Do not be a damned fool."

"Well," I said, "that's sound advice even if it's not very politely expressed."

"Conroy's in it too," said Godfrey, vindictively, "and I'll make them all sorry for themselves before I've done with them."



CHAPTER X

I find by consulting my diary that it was on the 30th of June that I went to Dublin. I am not often in Dublin, though I do not share the contempt for that city which is felt by most Ulstermen. Cahoon, for instance, will not recognize it as the capital of the country in which he lives, and always speaks of Dublin people as impractical, given over to barren political discussion and utterly unable to make useful things such as ships and linen. He also says that Dublin is dirty, that the rates are exorbitantly high, and that the houses have not got bath-rooms in them. I put it to him that there are two first-rate libraries in Dublin.

"If I want a book," he said, "I buy it. We pay for what we use in Belfast. We are business men."

"But," I explained, "there are some books, old ones, which you cannot buy. You can only consult them in libraries."

"Why don't you go to London, then?" said Cahoon.

The conversation took place in the club. I lunched there on my way through Belfast, going on to Dublin by an afternoon train. I was, in fact, going to Dublin to consult some books in the College Library. Marion and I had been brought up short in our labours on my history for want of some quotations from the diary of a seventeenth-century divine, and even if I had been willing to buy the book I should have had to wait months while a second-hand bookseller advertised for it.

Trinity College, when I entered the quadrangle next day, seemed singularly deserted. The long vacation had begun a week before. Fellows, professors and students had fled from the scene of their labours. Halfway across the square, however, I met McNeice. He seemed quite glad to see me and invited me to luncheon in his rooms. I accepted the invitation and was fed on cold ham, stale bread and bottled stout.

Thackeray once hinted that fellows of Trinity College gave their guests beer to drink. Many hard words have been said of him ever since by members of Dublin University. I have no wish to have hard things said about me; so I explain myself carefully. McNeice's luncheon was an eccentricity. It is not on cold ham solely, it is not on stale bread ever, that guests in the Common Room are fed. If, like Prince Hal, they remember amid their feasting "that good creature, small beer," they do not drink it without being offered nobler beverages. When the University, in recognition of my labours on the Life of St. Patrick, made me a doctor of both kinds of law, I fared sumptuously in the dining hall and afterwards sipped port rich with the glory of suns which shone many many years ago on the banks of the upper Douro.

After luncheon, while I was still heavy with the spume of the stout, McNeice asked me if I had seen the new paper which was being published to express, I imagine also to exacerbate, the opinions of the Ulster Unionists. He produced a copy as he spoke. It was called *The Loyalist*.

"We wanted something with a bite in it," he said. "We're dead sick of the pap the daily papers give us in their leading articles."

Pap is, I think, a soft innocuous food, slightly sugary in flavour, suitable for infants. I should never have dreamed of describing the articles in *The Belfast Newsletter* as pap. An infant nourished on them would either suffer badly from the form of indigestion called flatulence or would grow up to be an exceedingly ferocious man. I felt, however, that if McNeice had anything to do with the editing of *The Loyalist* its articles would be of such a kind that those of the *Newsletter* would seem, by comparison, papescent.

"We're running it as a weekly," said McNeice, "and what we want is to get it into the home of every Protestant farmer, and every working-man in Belfast. We are circulating the first six numbers free. After that we shall charge a penny."

I looked at *The Loyalist*. It was very well printed, on good paper. It looked something like *The Spectator*, but had none of the pleasant advertisements of schools and books, and much fewer pages of correspondence than the English weekly has.

"Surely," I said, "you can't expect it to pay at that price."

"We don't," said McNeice. "We've plenty of money behind us. Conroy--you know Conroy, don't you?"

"Oh," I said, "then Lady Moyne got a subscription out of him after all. I knew she intended to."

"Lady Moyne isn't in this at all," said McNeice. "We're out for business with *The Loyalist*. Lady Moyne's--well, I don't quite see Lady Moyne running *The Loyalist*."

"She's a tremendously keen Unionist," I said. "She gave an address to the working-women of Belfast the week before

last, one of the most moving--"

"All frills," said McNeice, "silk frills. Your friend Crossan is acting as one of our agents, distributing the paper for us. That'll give you an idea of the lines we're going on."

Crossan, I admit, is the last man I should suspect of being interested in frills. The mention of his name gave me an idea.

"Was it copies of *The Loyalist*," I asked, "which were in the packing-cases which you and Power landed that night from the *Finola*?"

McNeice laughed.

"Come along round with me," he said, "and see the editor. He'll interest you. He's a first-rate journalist, used to edit a rebel paper and advocate the use of physical force for throwing off the English rule. But he's changed his tune now. Just wait for me one moment while I get together an article which I promised to bring him. It's all scattered about the floor of the next room in loose sheets."

I read *The Loyalist* while I waited. The editor was unquestionably a first-rate journalist. His English was of a naked, muscular kind, which reminded me of Swift and occasionally of John Mitchel. But I could not agree with McNeice that he had changed his tune. He still seemed to be editing a rebel paper and still advocated the use of physical force for resisting the will of the King, Lords and Commons of our constitution. It is the merest commonplace to say that Ireland is a country of unblushing self-contradictions; but I do not think that the truth of this ever came home to me quite so forcibly as when I read *The Loyalist* that it would be better, if necessary, to imitate the Boers and shoot down regiments of British soldiers than to be false to the Empire of which "it is our proudest boast that we are citizens." The editor--such was the conclusion I arrived at--must be a humorist of a high order.

His name was Diarmid O'Donovan and he always wrote it in Irish characters, which used to puzzle me at first when I got into correspondence with him. We found him in a small room at the top of a house in a side street of a singularly depressing kind.

McNeice explained to me that *The Loyalist* did not court notoriety, and preferred to have an office which was, as far as possible, out of sight. He said that O'Donovan was particularly anxious to be unobtrusive. He had, before he became connected with *The Loyalist*, been editor of two papers which had been suppressed by the Government for advocating what the Litany calls "sedition and privy conspiracy." He held, very naturally, that a paper would get on better in the world if it had no office at all. If that was impossible, the office should be an attic in an inaccessible slum.

O'Donovan, when we entered, was seated at a table writing vigorously. I do not know how he managed to write at all. His table was covered with stacks of newspapers, very dusty. He had cleared a small, a very small space in the middle of them, and his ink-bottle occupied a kind of cave hollowed out at the base of one of the stacks. It must have been extremely difficult to put a pen into it. The chairs--there were only two of them besides the editorial stool--were also covered with papers. But even if they had been free I should not have cared to sit down on them. They were exceedingly dirty and did not look safe.

McNeice introduced me and then produced his own article. O'Donovan, very politely, offered me his stool.

"McNeice tells me," he said, "that you are writing a history of Irish Rebellions. I suppose you have said that Nationalism ceased to exist about the year 1900?"

"I hadn't thought of saying that," I said. "In fact--in view of the Home Rule Bill, you know--I should have said that Irish Nationalism was just beginning to come to its own."

O'Donovan snorted.

"There's no such thing as Irish Nationalism left," he said. "The country is hypnotized. We've accepted a Bill which deprives us of the most elementary rights of freemen. We've licked the boots of English Liberals. We've said 'thank you' for any gnawed bones they like to fling to us. We've--"

It struck me that O'Donovan was becoming rhetorical. I interrupted him.

"Idealism in politics," I said, "is one of the most futile things there is. What the Nationalist Party--"

"Don't call them that," said O'Donovan. "I tell you they're not Nationalists."

"I'll call them anything you like," I said, "but until you invent some other name for them I can't well talk about them without calling them Nationalists."

"They--" said O'Donovan.

"Very well," I said. "*They*. So long as you know who I mean, the pronoun will satisfy me. They had to consider not what men like you wanted, but what the Liberal Party could be induced to give. I don't say they made the best bargain possible, but--"

"Anyhow," said McNeice, "we're not going to be governed by those fellows. That's the essential point."

I think it is. The Unionist is not really passionately attached to the Union. He has no insuperable antipathy to Home Rule. Indeed, I think most Unionists would welcome any change in our existing system of government if it were not that they have the most profound and deeply rooted objection to the men whom McNeice describes as "those fellows," and O'Donovan indicates briefly as "they."

"And so," I said, turning to O'Donovan, "in mere despair of nationality you have gone over to the side of the Unionists."

"I've gone over," said O'Donovan, "to the side of the only people in Ireland who mean to fight."

Supposing that Ulster really did mean to fight O'Donovan's position was quite reasonable. But Babberly says it will never come to fighting. He is quite confident of his ability to bluff the conscientious Liberal into dropping the Home Rule Bill for fear of civil war. O'Donovan, and possibly McNeice, will be left out in the cold if Babberly is right. The matter is rather a tangled one. With Babberly is Lady Moyne, working at her ingenious policy of dragging a red herring across the path along which democracy goes towards socialism. On the other hand there is McNeice with fiery intelligence, and O'Donovan, a coldly consistent rebel against English rule in any shape and form. They have their little paper with money enough behind it, with people like Crossan circulating it for them. It is quite possible that they may count for something. Then there is Malcolmson, a man of almost incredible stupidity, but with a knowledge, hammered into him no doubt with extra difficulty, of how to handle guns.

O'Donovan and McNeice were bending over some proof sheets and talking in low whispers; there was a knock at the office door, and a moment later Malcolmson entered. He looked bristlier than ever, and was plainly in a state of joyous excitement. He held a copy of the first number of *The Loyalist* in his hand. He caught sight of me at once.

"I'm damned," he said, "if I expected to see you here, Kilmore. You're the last man in Ireland--"

"I'm only here by accident," I said, "and I'm going away almost at once. Let me introduce you to Mr. McNeice and Mr. O'Donovan."

Malcolmson shook hands with the two men vigorously. I never shake hands with Malcolmson if I can possibly help it, because he always hurts me. I expect he hurt both McNeice and O'Donovan. They did not cry out, but they looked a good deal surprised.

"I happened to be in Dublin," said Malcolmson, "and I called round here to congratulate the editor of this paper. I only came across it the day before yesterday, and--"

"You couldn't have come across it any sooner," I said, "for it's only just published."

"And to put down my name as a subscriber for twenty copies. If you want money--"

"They don't," I said, "Conroy is financing them."

"Conroy has some sound ideas," said Malcolmson.

"You approve of the paper, then?" said McNeice.

"I like straight talk," said Malcolmson.

"We aim at that," said O'Donovan.

"I'm dead sick of politics and speech making," said Malcolmson. "What I want is to have a slap at the damned rebels."

"Mr. O'Donovan's point of view," I said, "is almost the same as yours. What he wants--"

"I'm glad to hear it," said Malcolmson, "and I need only say that when the time comes, gentlemen, and it won't be long now if things go on as they are going--you'll find me ready. What Ireland wants--"

Malcolmson paused. I waited expectantly. It is always interesting to hear what Ireland wants. Many people have theories on the subject, and hardly any one agrees with any one else.

"What Ireland wants," said Malcolmsen dramatically, "is another Oliver Cromwell."

He drew himself up and puffed out his chest as he spoke. He must, I think, have rather fancied himself in the part of a twentieth century Puritan horse soldier. I looked round at O'Donovan to see how he was taking the suggestion. Oliver Cromwell I supposed, could not possibly be one of his favourite heroes. But I had misjudged O'Donovan. His sympathy with rebels of all nations was evidently stronger than his dislike of the typical Englishman. After all, Cromwell, however objectionable his religious views may have been, did kill a king. O'Donovan smiled quite pleasantly at Malcolmsen. I dare say that even the idea of a new massacre of Drogheda was agreeable enough to him, provided the inhabitants of the town were the people to whom he denied the title of Nationalists and Malcolmsen wanted to have a slap at because they were rebels.

Then McNeice got us all back to practical business in a way that would have delighted Cahoon. McNeice, though he does live in Dublin, has good Belfast blood in his veins. He likes his heroics to be put on a business basis. The immediate and most pressing problem, he reminded us, was to secure as large a circulation as possible for *The Loyalist*.

"You get the paper into the people's hands," he said to Malcolmsen, "and we'll get the ideas into their heads."

Malcolmsen, who is certainly prepared to make sacrifices in a good cause, offered to hire a man with a motorcycle to distribute the paper from house to house over a wide district.

"I know the exact man we want," he said. "He knows every house in County Antrim, and the people like him. He's been distributing Bibles and selling illuminated texts among the farmers and labourers for years. He's what's called a colporteur. That," he turned to O'Donovan with his explanation, "is a kind of Scripture reader, you know."

If any one in the world except Malcolmsen had suggested the employment of a Scripture reader for the distribution of *The Loyalist*, I should have applauded a remarkable piece of cynicism. But Malcolmsen was in simple earnest.

"Will you be able to get him?" I said. "The society which employs him may perhaps--"

"Oh, that will be all right," said Malcolmsen. "There can't be any objection. But if there is--I happen to be a member of the committee of the society. I'm one"--he sunk his voice modestly--"of the largest subscribers."

I am inclined to forget sometimes that Malcolmsen takes a leading part in Church affairs. At the last meeting of the General Synod of the Church of Ireland he said that the distribution of the Bible among the people of Ireland was the surest means of quenching the desire for Home Rule. Free copies of *The Loyalist* for the people who already have Bibles and a force of artillery are, so to speak, his reserves.

CHAPTER XI

The 12th of July, was, of course, indicated by nature itself as a day in every way suitable for a great Unionist demonstration. Babberly and Lady Moyne were not the people to neglect an opportunity. They organized a demonstration. Then somebody--I think it must have been McNeice in the pages of *The Loyalist*--suggested that the thing should be called a review and not a demonstration. Malcolmsen took the idea up warmly and forced Babberly's hand. English journalists of the Conservative kind--journalists of every kind swarmed over Belfast for a week beforehand--were delighted and trumpeted the thing as a review. Liberal journalists lost their tempers--the clever ones losing theirs most hopelessly--and abused the Orangemen in finely pointed paradoxical epigrams, which I dare say excited the admiration of sentimental Nationalists in Chelsea, but had not the smallest effect of any kind on the people of Belfast. They, just then, had no leisure time to spend in reading epigrams, and never at any time appreciated paradox. An English statesman of great ability announced to the world at large that a demonstration was one thing, and a review was quite a different thing. He went no further than to point out the fact that there was a distinction between the two things; but everybody understood that a demonstration was, in his opinion, quite harmless, whereas a review might end in getting somebody into trouble.

The Nationalist leaders--"those fellows" as McNeice called them--issued a kind of manifesto. It was a document which breathed the spirit of moderate constitutionalism, and spoke the words of grave, serious patriotism. It made a strong appeal to the people of Belfast not to injure the cause of liberty, law and order by rash and ill-considered action. It said that no Nationalist wanted to see Babberly and Lord Moyne put into prison; but that most Nationalists had been made to sleep on plank beds for utterances much less seditious than this advertisement of a review. O'Donovan and McNeice tore this manifesto to pieces with jubilant scorn in the next number of *The Loyalist*.

A Roman Catholic bishop issued a kind of pastoral to his flock urging them to remain at home on the 12th of July, and above all things not to attempt a counter demonstration in Belfast. It was a nice pastoral, very Christian in tone, but quite unnecessary. No sane Roman Catholic, unless he wanted a martyr's crown, would have dreamed of demonstrating anywhere north of the Boyne on that particular day.

The newspapers were very interesting at this time, and I took in so many of them that I had not time to do anything except read them. I had not even time to read them all, but Marion used to go through the ones I could not read. With a view to writing an essay--to be published in calmer times--on "Different Points of View" we cut out and pasted into a book some of the finer phrases. We put them in parallel columns. "Truculent corner boys," for instance, faced "Grim, silent warriors." "Men in whom the spirit of the martial psalms still survives," stood over against "Ruffians whose sole idea of religion is to curse the Pope." "Sons of unconquerable colonists, men of our own race and blood," was balanced by "hooligans with a taste for rioting so long as rioting can be indulged in with no danger to their own skins." We were interrupted in this pleasant work by the arrival of a letter from Lady Moyne. She summoned me--invited would be quite the wrong word--to Castle Affey. I went, of course.

Babberly was there. He and Lady Moyne were shut up in the library along with Lady Moyne's exhausted secretary. They were writing letters which she typed. I saw Moyne himself before I saw them.

"I'm afraid," he said, "I'm very much afraid that some of our people are inclined to go too far. Malcolmsen, for instance. I can't understand Malcolmsen. After all the man's a gentleman."

"But," I said, "Malcolmsen wants to fight. He always said so."

"Quite so, quite so. We all said so. I've said so myself; but it was always on the distinct understanding--"

"That it would never come to that. I've heard Babberly say so."

"But--damn it all, Kilmore!--it doesn't do to push things to these extremes. The whole business has been mismanaged. The people have got out of hand; and there's Malcolmsen, a man who's dined at my table a score of times, actually egging them on. Now, what do you think we ought to do?"

"The Government is threatening you, I suppose?"

"It's growling," said Moyne. "Not that I care what the Government does to me. It can't do much. But I do not want her ladyship mixed up in anything unpleasant. It won't do, you know. People don't like it. I don't mind for myself, of course. But still it's very unpleasant. Men I know keep writing to me. You know the sort of thing I mean."

I did. The members of the English aristocracy still preserve a curious sentiment which they call "loyalty." It is quite a different thing from the "loyalty" of Crossan, for instance, or McNeice. I fully understood that there were men in clubs in London who would look coldly at poor Moyne (men of such importance that their wives' treatment of Lady Moyne

would matter even to her) if he were discovered to be heading an actual rising of Ulster Protestants. I promised to do what I could to get Moyne out of his difficulty.

I found that Babberly and Lady Moyne had worked out a very feasible plan without any help from me.

"That fellow Malcolmson has rushed things," said Babberly, "and there's an abominable rag called *The Loyalist*--"

"By the way," I said, "I hear that the Nationalists at their last meeting in Dublin joined in singing 'God Save the King.'"

I wanted to hear what Babberly thought of this. I was disappointed. The fact did not seem to interest him.

"I don't know who edits the thing," he went on, still referring to *The Loyalist*.

"Conroy is behind it," I said. "I happen to know that."

"But surely," said Lady Moyne, "Mr. Conroy cannot want to encourage violence. He has just as much to lose as any of us--more than most of us--by any kind of outbreak of the democracy."

"Lady Moyne has suggested to Malcolmson," said Babberly, "that he should agree to call this 12th of July business a March Past."

"Is that any improvement on Review?" I asked.

"Of course," said Lady Moyne, "the Government doesn't want to be driven to take steps against us. There would be horrible rioting afterwards if they struck Moyne's name off the Privy Council or did anything like that. It would be just as unpleasant for them as it would be for us, more so in fact."

"Your idea," I said, "is to give the Government a loophole of escape."

"Malcolmson has agreed all right," said Babberly, "and if only that wretched little paper--did you say Conroy was in it?"

"I'll write to Mr. Conroy at once," said Lady Moyne. "I'm sure his connection with a paper of that kind is simply a mistake."

She turned to the table and began to write her letter. The secretary in a distant corner of the room was still typing out a long pronouncement which Babberly intended to forward to *The Times*. A minute or two later Lady Moyne turned to me with one of her brightest smiles.

"We want you to be with us on the 12th," she said.

In England or Scotland a countess who gives an invitation for "the 12th" is understood to mean the 12th of August, and her guest must be ready to shoot grouse. In North-Eastern Ulster "the 12th" meant the 12th of July, and the party, in this case at all events, was likely to end in the shooting of policemen.

"At the Review?" I said, "I mean to say the March Past? But I never go to political meetings. I'm no good at all as a speaker."

"Oh, it doesn't matter about your speaking. We should love to hear you, of course. But if you'd really rather not--!"

I think Lady Moyne was relieved when I assured her that I really would rather not.

"But you'll be on the platform," she said. "We want you very much indeed."

"I don't see," I said, "that I'll be the least use to you."

"The point is," said Babberly, "that you're a Liberal."

"Oh, you mustn't say that," said Lady Moyne. "That's only foolish gossip. I'm perfectly certain that Lord Kilmore never was--"

"Never," I said. "But then I never was a Conservative either."

"That's just it," said Lady Moyne. "Don't you see?"

"The point is," said Babberly, "that if you are on the platform it will be quite clear--I mean to say as it's generally understood that you're inclined to Liberalism--"

I began to understand a little. Last time I was at Castle Affey Lady Moyne made a great point of my associating myself

with her party in opposing Home Rule. The fact that I was a Liberal (though not in any offensive sense of the word) gave weight to the opposition; and I might help to make the other Liberals (who were Liberals in the most offensive possible sense) take the threats of Babberly seriously. This time I was to sit on the platform side by side with Malcolmson and Cahoon, because, being a Liberal, or rather suspected of being inclined to Liberalism, my presence might induce the other Liberals, who were Liberals indeed, not to take Babberly's remarks at their face value. That is the drawback to the kind of detached position which I occupy. I am liable to be used for such various purposes that I get confused. However, I ought, no doubt, to be very thankful that I am useful in any way.

"If you think, my dear Lady Moyne," I said, "that my presence at the March Past will be of the slightest service to you--"

"It will," she said. "It will, indeed, of the very greatest service, and Moyne will be delighted."

I was thinking of Moyne when I made the promise. I do not mean to say that I should have undertaken to perch myself like a fool on a wooden platform in the middle of a mob simply out of friendship for Moyne. I would not have done it unless Lady Moyne had looked at me with a particular expression in her eyes, unless I had hoped that she would give my hand a little squeeze of intimate friendship when I was bidding her good night. Still I did think of Moyne too, and was quite genuinely pleased that I was able to help him out of a difficult position.

I found him later on roaming about among the cucumber frames in a desolate corner of the garden. A man who was digging potatoes directed me to that curious retreat.

"It's all right, Moyne," I said. "We've got the whole thing settled most satisfactorily. You needn't be afraid of any disagreeable public scandal."

"Thank God!" said Moyne, fervently. "How did you manage it?"

"I can't take any credit for the arrangement," I said. "Lady Moyne and Babberly had it all cut and dried before they consulted me at all."

"What are they going to do?"

"Well, in the first place they've got Malcolmson and the rest of that lot to stop calling the thing a Review. It's to be officially known for the future as a March Past."

"Who is to march past what?" said Moyne.

"I forgot to ask that," I said, "but I rather fancy the audience is to march past you."

"I don't see," said Moyne, "that there's much difference between calling it a March Past and calling it a Review. They're both military terms; and what I object to is being associated with--"

"Lady Moyne seemed to think," I said, "that it made all the difference in the world; and that the Government would grasp at the olive branch."

"I suppose it will be all right," said Moyne doubtfully.

"The next part of the plan," I said, "is that I am to be on the platform."

"You'll rather hate that, won't you, Kilmore?"

"I shall detest it."

"And I don't see what good it will do."

"Nor do I; but Lady Moyne and Babberly both say that as I'm a Liberal--"

"Surely to God you're not that!" said Moyne.

"No, I'm not. But I'm suspected of being inclined that way. Therefore my being on the platform will prove to the world that you're not nearly so much of a Unionist as you've been trying to make out."

"But I am," said Moyne.

"I know that, of course; but Lady Moyne wants to persuade people that you're not, just for the present, till this fuss about the Review wears off."

"I suppose it will be all right," said Moyne, again.

It was all right. An announcement was made in all the leading papers that no one had ever intended to hold a Review on the 12th of July, but that the Unionist leaders had expressed their unalterable determination to have a March Past. The Liberal papers said that this abandonment of the principal item on their programme showed more distinctly than ever that the Ulster Unionists were merely swaggering cowards who retreated before the firm front showed by the Government in face of their arrogant claims. The Unionist papers said that Belfast by insisting on the essential thing while displaying a magnanimous disregard for the accidental nomenclature, had demonstrated once and for ever the impossibility of passing the Home Rule Bill.

A few days later my name appeared amongst those of other gentlemen who intended to take seats on the platform in Belfast. The Unionist papers welcomed the entry into public life of a peer of my well-known intellectual powers and widely recognized moderation. The Liberal papers said that the emptiness of Ulster's opposition to Home Rule might be gauged by the fact that it had welcomed the support of a dilettante lordling.

CHAPTER XII

Our meeting on the 12th of July was held in the Botanic Gardens, and nobody marched past anything. A platform, not unlike the Grand Stand at a country race meeting, was built on the top of a long slope of grass. At the bottom of the slope was a level space, devoted at ordinary times to tennis-courts. Beyond that the ground sloped up again. The botanists who owned the gardens must, I imagine, have regretted that our meeting was a splendid success. I did not see their grounds afterwards, but there cannot possibly have been much grass left. The poor tennis-players must have been cut off from their game for the rest of the summer. The space in front of the platform was packed with men, and the air was heavy with the peculiarly pungent smell of orange peel. I cannot imagine how any one in the crowd managed to peel an orange. The men seemed to be so tightly packed as to make the smallest movement impossible. Possibly the oranges were deliberately peeled beforehand by the organizers of the meeting with a view to creating the proper atmosphere for the meeting. There certainly is a connection between the smell of oranges and political enthusiasm. I felt a wave of strong feeling come over me the moment I climbed to my seat; and as no one had at that time made a speech, it can only have been the oranges which affected me. I wish some philosopher would work out a theory of oranges. The blossom of the tree is used at weddings as a symbol of enduring love, perhaps as an aid to affection. The mature fruit pervades political meetings, which are all called together with a view to promoting strife and general ill feeling. What would happen if any one came to a meeting crowned with the blossoms? What would become of a bride if she were decked with the fruit? Is there any connection whatever between the fruit and the lily? It is certainly associated with political action of the most violent kind.

Poor Moyne, who took the chair, wore one of the lilies, a very small one, in the lapel of his coat. Lady Moyne carried a large bouquet of them. Babberly wore one. So did Malcolmson. Our Dean would have worn one if he could; but it is impossible to fix a flower becomingly into the button-hole of a clerical coat. We began by singing a hymn. The Dean declaimed the first two lines of it, and then the bands took up the tune. Considering that there must have been at least forty bands present, all playing, I think we got through the hymn remarkably well. We certainly made an impressive amount of noise. I think it was Babberly who suggested the hymn. He had an idea that it would impress the English Nonconformists. I do not think it did; but, so far as our meeting was concerned, that did not matter. We were not singing it—any of us, except Babberly—with a view to impressing other people. We were singing with the feeling in our breasts, that we were actually marching to battle under the divine protection. The reporters of the Unionist papers made the most of the prevailing emotion. They sent off telegrams of the most flamboyant kind about our Puritan forefathers.

Poor Moyne, who is a deeply religious man, did not sing the hymn. He has a theory that hymns and politics ought not to be mixed. I heard him arguing the position afterwards with the Dean who maintained that the question of Home Rule was not a political one. Political questions are those, so he argued, with regard to which there is a possibility of difference of opinion among honest men. But all honest men are opposed to Home Rule, which is therefore not a political question.

My seat was in the very front of the platform, and when we had finished the hymn I noticed that the smell of perspiration was beginning to overpower the oranges. It is my misfortune to have an unusually acute sense of smell. No one afflicted with such an infirmity ought to take any part in the politics of a modern democratic state.

Moyne introduced Babberly to the audience, and everybody cheered, although no one heard a word he said. Moyne has not a good voice at any time, and his objection to the hymn had made him nervous.

Babberly was not nervous, and he has a very good voice. I imagine that at least half the audience heard what he said, and the other half knew he was saying the right things because the first half cheered him at frequent intervals.

He began, of course, by saying that our forefathers bled and died for the cause which we were determined to support. This, so far as my forefathers and Moyne's are concerned, is horribly untrue. The ancestors of both of us commanded regiments of the volunteers who achieved the only Home Rule Parliament which ever sat in Ireland. My own great grandfather afterwards exchanged his right to legislate in Dublin for the peerage which I now enjoy. But Moyne and I were no doubt in a minority in that assembly. Babberly's forefathers may possibly have bled and died for the Union; but I do not think he can be sure about this. His father lived in Leeds, and nobody, not even Babberly himself, knows anything about his grandfather.

When the audience had stopped cheering Babberly's forefathers, he went on to tell us that Belfast had the largest shipbuilding yard, the largest tobacco factory, the largest linen mill, and the second largest School of Art Needlework in the United Kingdom. These facts were treated by everybody as convincing reasons for the rejection of the Home Rule Bill, and a man, who was squeezed very tight against the platform just below me, cursed the Pope several times with singular vindictiveness.

Babberly's next statement was that he defied the present Government to drive us out of the British Empire, which we had taken a great deal of trouble in times past to build up. This was, of course, a perfectly safe defiance to utter; for no one that I ever heard of had proposed to drive Babberly, or me, or Moyne out of the Empire.

Then we got to the core of Babberly's speech. Some fool, it appeared, wanted to impeach Babberly, and Babberly said that he wanted to be impeached. I am a little hazy about the exact consequences of a successful impeachment. There has not been one for a long time; but I have an idea that the victim of the process is called before the House of Lords and beheaded. How far recent legislation may have curtailed the powers of the House of Lords in the matter I do not know; but even under our new constitution impeachment must remain a very serious matter. It was, we all felt, most heroic of Babberly to face this kind of undefined doom in the way he did.

This was the last thing which Babberly said in his speech. He talked a great deal more, but he did not say anything else which it is possible to write down. I do not think I have ever heard any public speaker equal to Babberly in eloquence. He gave one incontestable proof of his power as an orator that day in Belfast. He must have spoken for very nearly an hour, and yet no one noticed that he was not saying anything for the greater part of the time. I did not notice it, and probably should never have found it out if I had not tried afterwards to write down what he said.

After Babberly came the Dean. I suffer a great deal from the Dean's sermons on Sundays; but I thoroughly enjoyed his speech. He is not Babberly's rival in eloquence; but he has a knack of saying the kind of things which people listen to. He began by telling us what he would do if he found himself in command of the forces of Ulster at the beginning of a great war. "Lord Moyne," he said, "should organize my transport and commissariat."

I cannot imagine any job at which Moyne would be more certain to fail totally. But the Dean justified himself.

"I have stopped in Lord Moyne's house," he said, "and I know how well he manages the food supply of a large establishment. My friend Mr. Babberly should draw up the plan of campaign. His cautious intellect should devise the schemes for circumventing the wiles and stratagems of the enemy. He should map out the ambuscades into which the opposing troops should fall. You have listened to Mr. Babberly to-day. You will agree with me about his fitness for the work to which I should put him."

I had listened to Babberly and I did not agree with the Dean. But I formed one of a very small minority. Moyne began to look uneasy. It seemed to me that he did not much like this military metaphor of the Dean's. I imagine that he would have been still more uncomfortable if he had been obliged to take an active part in a campaign planned by Babberly.

"For the command of a forlorn hope," said the Dean, "for the leading of a desperate charge, for the midnight dash across the frontier--"

Some one in the audience suggested the Boyne as the boundary of the frontier.

"I should select Colonel Malcolmson."

The audience highly approved of his choice. It seemed to me that the people did not quite grasp the fact that the Dean was speaking only metaphorically. Some thought of the same kind struck Moyne. He fidgetted uneasily, Babberly made an effort to stop the Dean, but that was impossible.

"For settling the terms of peace with the beaten enemy--"

"We'll beat them," said several people in the crowd.

"I should call upon my good friend Lord Kilmore."

This gave me a severe shock. For a moment I thought of standing up and refusing to act as military ambassador of the Ulster army. Then I recollected that if Moyne managed the transport and Babberly planned the campaign it was exceedingly unlikely that there would be any beaten enemy. I kept my seat and watched Babberly whispering earnestly to Lady Moyne.

Malcolmson followed the Dean. Moyne leaned over to me and expressed a hope that Malcolmson was not going to commit us to anything outrageous. From the look of Malcolmson's eye as he rose I judged that Moyne's hope was a vain one.

"The Dean," said Malcolmson, "has spoken to you about the campaign. I ask you, are you prepared to undertake one?"

"Good Heavens!" said Moyne.

Babberly squeezed his way past Lady Moyne.

"This won't do," he said to Moyne, "Malcolmson mustn't go too far."

"The Dean," said Malcolmson, "has told us where to find our commanders. Looking round upon this vast assembly of determined men I can tell the Dean where to look for the rank and file of the army."

"You'll have to stop him," said Babberly.

I dare say the thought of the impeachment which was hanging over his head made him nervous.

"I can't," said Lord Moyne.

"I ask those present here," said Malcolmson, "who, when the supreme moment comes are prepared to step forward into the ranks, to hold up their hands and swear."

Malcolmson did not make it quite clear what oaths we were to employ. But his audience appeared to understand him. Thousands of hands were held up and there was a kind of loud, fierce growl, which I took to be the swearing. Lord Moyne turned to me.

"What am I to do, Kilmore?"

"I don't know," I said.

Malcolmson and the ten or twelve thousand men in front of him were still growling like a very angry thunderstorm at a distance. The thing was exceedingly impressive. Then some one started the hymn again. I never heard a hymn sung in such a way before. If the explosions of large guns could be tuned to the notes of an octave the effect of firing them off, fully loaded with cannon balls, would be very much the same. Malcolmson, beating time very slowly with his hand from the front of the platform, controlled this human artillery. Lady Moyne came to me and shouted in my ear. It was necessary to shout on account of the terrific noise made by Malcolmson's hymn.

"As soon as he sits down you'll have to get up and say something."

"I can't," I yelled. "I'm no good at all as a public speaker."

The beginning of Lady Moyne's next shout I could not hear at all. Only the last words reached me.

"--on account of your being a Liberal, you know."

For the first time since I have known her I refused to do what Lady Moyne asked me. Very likely I should have given in at last and made an indescribable fool of myself; but before she succeeded in persuading me, Malcolmson's hymn stopped. Malcolmson himself, apparently satisfied with his performance, sat down.

"What on earth am I to do?" said Moyne.

"You can write to the papers, to-morrow," I said.

"But now?" said Moyne, "now."

"The only thing I can think of," I said, "is to start them singing 'God Save the King.' That will commit them more or less--at least it may."

Moyne rose to his feet and asked all the bands present to play "God Save the King." Babberly backed him and the bands struck up.

Considering that the audience had just pledged themselves with inarticulate oaths and most terrifying psalmody to march in Malcolmson's army, their enthusiasm for the King was striking. They sang the National Anthem quite as whole-heartedly as they had sung the hymn. They are a very curious people, these fellow-countrymen of mine.

Moyne cheered up a little when we got back to the club.

"That was a capital idea of yours, Kilmore," he said. "I don't see how they can very well accuse us of being rebels after the way we sang the National Anthem."

"I wonder if they'll impeach Babberly," I said.

"Oh, that's only a Labour Member," said Moyne. "He doesn't really mean it. Those fellows never do."

"Do you think our people really meant it to-day?" I said.

"Meant what? God Save the King? Of course they did."

"I was thinking of the hymn," I said.

"I hope to God," said Moyne, "they didn't mean that."

This is a curious view of hymn-singing for a religious man to take.

CHAPTER XIII

I cannot make out why everybody thinks I am a Liberal. Lady Moyne was the first who mentioned to me this slur on my character. Babberly evidently believed it. Then, shortly after the Belfast meeting, I had a letter, marked "Private and Confidential," from Sir Samuel Clithering. Although Clithering is not a member of the Government, he is in close touch with several very important Ministers. Under ordinary circumstances I should not mention Clithering's name in telling the story of his letter. I know him to be a conscientious, scrupulously honourable man, and I should hate to give him pain. Under ordinary circumstances, that is, if things had gone in Ulster in the way things usually do go, Clithering would have felt it necessary to assert publicly in the papers that he did not write the letter. This would have been very disagreeable for him because he does not like telling lies; and the unpleasantness would certainly be aggravated by the fact that nobody would believe him. So many important and exciting things, however, have happened in Ulster since I got the letter that I do not think Clithering will now want to deny that he wrote it. I have, therefore, no hesitation in mentioning his name.

This letter was written in the best politico-diplomatic style. I had to read it nine times before I could find out what it was about. When I did find out I made a translation of it into the English of ordinary life, so as to make quite sure of not acting beyond my instructions. I was first of all complimented on not being a party politician. This, coming from one of the Government wire-pullers, meant, of course, that I was in his opinion a strong Liberal. I have noticed for years that the only party politicians in these islands are the people who are active on the other side; and that party politics are the other side's programme. My correspondent evidently agreed with Lady Moyne and Babberly that as I was not a Conservative, I must be a supporter of the Government.

Having made this quite unwarranted assumption, the letter went on to suggest that I should ask Conroy if he would like a peerage. The point was not made quite clear, but I gathered that Conroy could have any kind of title that he liked, up to an earldom. I know, of course, that peerages are given in exchange for subscriptions to party funds, by the party, whichever it may be, which receives the subscriptions. I did not know before that peerages were ever given with a view to inducing the happy recipient not to subscribe to the funds of the other party. But in Conroy's case this must have been the motive which lay behind the offer. He had certainly given Lady Moyne a handsome cheque. He was financing McNeice's little paper in the most liberal way. He had, I suspected, supplied Crossan with the motor car in which he went about the country tuning up the Orange Lodges. It seemed quite likely it was his money with which Rose's young man bought the gold brooch which had attracted Marion's attention. Conroy was undoubtedly subsidizing Ulster Unionism very generously. I suppose it must have been worth while to stop this flow of money. Hence the suggestion that Conroy might be given a peerage. This, at least, was the explanation of the letter which I adopted at the time. I have since had reason to suppose that the Government knew more than I did about the way Conroy was spending his money, and was nervous about something more important than Babberly's occasional demonstrations.

My first impulse was to burn the letter and tell my correspondent that I was not a politician of any sort, and did not care for doing this kind of work. Then my curiosity got the better of my sense of honour. A man cannot, I think, be both an historian and a gentleman. It is an essential part of the character of a gentleman that he should dislike prying into other people's secrets. The business of the historian, on the other hand, is to rake about if necessary through dust-bins, until he finds out the reasons, generally disreputable, why things are done. A gentleman displays a dignified superiority to the vice of curiosity. For the historian curiosity is a virtue. I am, I find, more of an historian than a gentleman. I wanted very much to find out how Conroy would take the offer of a peerage. I also wanted to understand thoroughly why the offer was made.

Some weeks were to pass before I learned the Government's real reason for wanting to detach Conroy from the Unionist cause; but luck favoured me in the matter of sounding Conroy himself. I had a letter from him in which he said that he was coming to our neighbourhood for a few days. I immediately asked him to stay with me.

Then I tried, very foolishly, to make my nephew Godfrey feel uncomfortable.

"Conroy," I said, "is coming here to stay with me next Tuesday."

"How splendid!" said Godfrey. "I say, Excellency, you will ask me up to dinner every night he's here, won't you?"

"I thought," I said, "that you wouldn't like to meet Conroy."

"Of course I'd like to meet him. He might give me a job of some kind or get me one. A man like that with millions of money must have plenty of jobs to give away."

When Godfrey speaks of a job he means a salary. Nearly everybody does.

"If I can only get the chance of making myself agreeable to him," said Godfrey, "I'm sure I'll be able to get something out of him."

"I'm surprised," I said, "at your wanting to meet him at all. After the post-card he wrote you--"

"Oh, I don't mind that in the least," said Godfrey. "I never take offence."

This is, indeed, one of Godfrey's chief vices. He never does take offence. It was Talleyrand, I think, who said that no man need ever get angry about anything said by a woman or a bishop. Godfrey improves on this philosophy. He never gets angry with any one except those whom he regards as his inferiors.

"It would be a good opportunity," said Godfrey, "for your second menagerie party. We've only had one this year. I expect it would amuse Conroy."

"I'm nearly sure it wouldn't."

"We'll have to do something in the way of entertaining while he's here," said Godfrey. "I suppose you'll have the Moynes over to dinner?"

I knew that the Moynes were in London, so I told Godfrey that he could write and ask them if he liked. I tried to be firm in my opposition to the garden-party, but Godfrey wore me down. It was fixed for Wednesday, and invitations were sent out. I discovered afterwards that Godfrey told his particular friends that they were to have the honour of meeting a real millionaire. In the case of the Pringles he went so far as to hint that Conroy was very likely to give him a lucrative post. On the strength of this expectation, Pringle, who is an easy man to deceive, allowed Godfrey to cash a cheque for PS10.

Conroy arrived on Sunday afternoon, travelling, as a millionaire should, in a motor car. Godfrey dined with us that night, and made himself as agreeable as he could. Conroy had, apparently, forgotten all about the post-card. I did not get a minute alone with my guest that night and so could do nothing about the peerage. I thought of approaching him on the subject next morning after breakfast, though that is not a good hour for delicate negotiations. But even if I had been willing to attack him then, I hardly had the chance. Godfrey was up with us at half-past ten. He wanted to take Conroy on a personally conducted tour round the objects of interest in the neighbourhood. Conroy said he wanted to go to the house of a man called Crossan who lived somewhere near us, and would be very glad if Godfrey would act as guide. It is a remarkable proof of Godfrey's great respect for millionaires that he consented to show Conroy the way to Crossan's house. They went off together, and I saw no more of Conroy till dinner-time.

He deliberately avoided my garden-party, although Godfrey had explained to him the night before that my guests would be "quite the funniest lot of bounders to be found anywhere."

The Pringles must have been disappointed at not meeting Conroy. Miss Pringle, whose name I found out was Tottie, looked quite pretty in a pink dress, and smiled almost as nicely as she did when Bob Power took her to gather strawberries. Mrs. Pringle asked Godfrey to dine with them that night, and Tottie looked at him out of the corner of her eyes so as to show him that she would be pleased if he accepted the invitation. Pringle himself joined in pressing Godfrey. I suppose he must really have believed in the salary which Godfrey expected to get from Conroy.

Godfrey promised to dine with them. He explained his position to me afterwards.

"I needn't tell you, Excellency," he said, "that I don't want to go there. I shall get a rotten bad dinner and Mrs. Pringle is a rank outsider."

"Miss Pringle," I said, "seems a pleasant girl. She's certainly pretty."

"Poor little Tottie!" said Godfrey. "That sort of girl isn't bad fun sometimes; but I wouldn't put up with boiled mutton just for the sake of a kiss or two from her. The fact is--"

"Your banking account," I said.

"That's it," said Godfrey. "Pringle's directors have been writing rather nasty letters lately. It's perfectly all right, of course, and I told him so; but all the same it's better to accept his invitation."

Godfrey is the most unmitigated blackguard I've ever met.

"I hardly see Tottie Pringle as the next Lady Kilmore," said Godfrey; "but, of course, that's the game."

I do not believe it. Tottie Pringle--I do not for a moment believe that she ever allowed Godfrey to kiss her--does not look the kind of girl who--

"You'll make my excuses to Conroy, won't you, Excellency? Tell him--"

"What is the exact amount of the over-draft?" I said; "he'll probably want to know."

"Better not say anything about that," said Godfrey. "Tell him I had a business engagement."

Godfrey's necessity gave me my opportunity. I had Conroy all to myself after dinner, and I sounded him very cautiously about the title. The business turned out to be much more difficult than I expected. At first Conroy was singularly obtuse. He did not seem to understand what I was hinting at. There was really no excuse for him. Our surroundings were very well suited for delicate negotiations. I had given him a bottle of champagne at dinner. I had some excellent port on the table afterwards. My dining-room is a handsome apartment, a kind of large hall with a vaulted roof. The light of the candles on the table mingled in a pleasantly mysterious way with the twilight of the summer evening. The long windows lay wide open and a heavy scent of lilies crept into the room. The lamp on the sideboard behind me lit up the impressive portrait of my great grandfather in the uniform of a captain of volunteers, the Irish volunteers of 1780. Any one, I should have supposed, would have walked delicately among hints and suggestions in such an atmosphere, among such surroundings. But Conroy would not. I was forced at last to speak rather more plainly than I had intended to. Then Conroy turned on me.

"What does your Government think I should want the darned thing for?" he said.

"Oh, I don't know. I suppose the usual reasons."

"What are they?" said Conroy, "for I'm damned if I know."

"Well," I said, "when you put it that way I don't know that I can exactly explain. But most people like it. I like it myself, although I'm pretty well used to it. I imagine it would be much nicer when you came to it quite fresh. If you happen to be going over to London, you know, it's rather pleasant to have the fellow who runs the sleeping-car bustling the other people out of the way and calling you 'my lord.'"

Conroy sat in grim silence.

"There's more than that in it," I said. "That's only an example, quite a small example of the kind of thing I mean. But those little things count, you know. And, of course, the extra tip that the fellow expects in the morning wouldn't matter to you."

Conroy still declined to make any answer. I began to feel hot and flurried.

"There are other points, too," I went on. "For instance a quite pretty girl called Tottie Pringle wants to marry my nephew Godfrey--at least he says she does--simply because he'll be Lord Kilmore when I'm dead. You've met my nephew Godfrey, so you'll realize that she can't possibly have any other motive."

"What," said Conroy, "does your Government expect me to do in return for making me attractive to Tottie Pringle?"

"It's not my Government," I said. "I'm not mixed up with it or responsible for it in any way."

"I always understood," said Conroy, "that you are a Liberal."

"Everybody understands that," I said, "and it's no use my contradicting it. As for what the Government wants you to do, I haven't been actually told; but I fancy you'd be expected to stop giving subscriptions to Lady Moyne."

"Is that all?"

"That's all I can think of. But, of course, there may be other things."

"I reckon," said Conroy, "that your Government can't be quite fool enough to mind much about what Lady Moyne does with my money. The pennies she drops into the slot so as to make Babberly talk won't hurt them any."

This was very much my own opinion. If I were a member of the government--I rather think I actually was, a few weeks later--Babberly would merely stimulate me.

"You can tell your Government from me--" said Conroy.

"It's not my Government."

"Well tell *that* Government from me, that when I want a title I'll put down the full market price. At present I'm not taking any."

Next day Conroy went off with Crossan in his motor car. He did not come back. I got a telegram from him later in the

afternoon asking me to forward his luggage to Belfast. I forget the excuse he made for treating me in this very free and easy way; but there was an excuse, I know, probably quite a long one, for the telegram filled three sheets of the paper which the post-office uses for these messages.

Conroy's sudden departure was a bitter sorrow and disappointment to Godfrey. He came up to dinner that night with three new pearl studs in the front of his shirt.

"What I can't understand," he said, "is why a man like Conroy should spend his time with your upper servants; people like Crossan, whom I shouldn't dream of shaking hands with."

"I'm afraid," I said, "that he's not going to give you that job you hoped for."

"He may," said Godfrey. "I think he liked me right enough. If only he could be got to believe that Power is robbing him right and left."

"But is he?"

"He's doing what practically comes to the same thing. Once Conroy finds out--and he will some day--I should think I'd have a middling good chance of getting his secretaryship. He must have a gentleman for that job, otherwise he'd never be able to get along at all. I don't suppose he knows how to do things a bit. He evidently doesn't know how to behave. Look at the way he's gone on with Crossan since he's been here. Now if I were his secretary--"

Godfrey mumbled on. He evidently has hopes of ousting Bob Power. He may possibly succeed in doing so. Godfrey has all the cunning characteristic of the criminal lunatic.

Three days later he got his chance of dealing with Bob Power. The *Finola* anchored in our bay again and Bob Power was in command of her.

CHAPTER XIV

Bob Power spent the afternoon with us. Strictly speaking, I ought to say he spent the afternoon with Marion. I only saw him at tea-time. He let me understand then that he would like to stay and dine with us. I felt that I ought to be vexed at the prospect of losing another quiet evening. Conroy had cost me two evenings. My visit to Castle Affey, my political March Past, and my expedition to Dublin had robbed me of nine others. I could ill afford to spare a twelfth to Bob Power. Yet I felt unreasonably pleased when he promised to dine with us. There is a certain flavour of the sea about Bob, a sense of boisterous good fellowship, a joyous irresponsibility, which would have been attractive to me at any time, and were singularly pleasant after my political experiences. I was not at all so well pleased when a note arrived from Godfrey in which he asked whether he too could dine with us.

He arrived long before dinner, before I had gone upstairs to dress, and explained himself.

"I heard," he said, "that Power was up here, so I thought I'd better come too."

"How lucky it is," I said, "that Pringle didn't invite you to-night."

"I shouldn't have gone if he had. I should have considered it my duty to come here. After all, Excellency, some one ought to look after Marion a bit."

"For the matter of that," I said, "some one ought to look after Tottie Pringle."

"You never can tell," said Godfrey, "what silly fancy a girl will take into her head, and that fellow Power is just the sort who might--"

Godfrey nodded sagaciously. It has always been understood that Godfrey is to marry Marion at some future time. I have always understood this and, on personal grounds, dislike it very much; though I do not deny that the arrangement is convenient. My title is not a very ancient or particularly honourable one, but I do not like to think of its being dragged in the gutter by a pauper. If Godfrey married Marion he would have the use of her income. Godfrey has certainly understood this plan for the future. He may treat himself occasionally to the kisses of Tottie Pringle, but he is not the man to allow kissing to interfere with his prospect of earning a competence. Whether Marion understood her fate or not, I do not know. She always endured Godfrey with patience. I suppose that this condition of affairs gave Godfrey a certain right to nod sagaciously when he spoke of looking after Marion. But I resented both his tone and the things he said. I left him and went up to dress.

Marion's behaviour during the evening fully justified Godfrey's fears, though I do not think that anything would have excused him for expressing them to me. She was amazingly cheerful during dinner, and in so good a temper, that she continued smiling at Godfrey even when he scowled at her. Bob Power was breezily agreeable, and I should have thoroughly enjoyed the stories he told us if I had not been conscious all the time that Godfrey was frowning at my right ear. He sat on that side of me and Bob Power on the other, so my ear was, most of the time, the nearest thing to my face that Godfrey could frown at.

After dinner Bob and Marion behaved really badly; not to Godfrey, but to me. No one could behave badly to Godfrey because he always deserves worse than the worst that is done to him. But I am not a very objectionable person, and I have during the last twenty-two years shown a good deal of kindness to Marion. I do not think that she and Bob ought to have slipped out of the drawing-room window after singing one short song, and left me to be worried by Godfrey for the whole evening. Only one way of escape presented itself to me. I pretended to go to sleep. That stopped Godfrey talking after a time; but not until I had found it necessary to snore. I heard every word he said up to that point. I woke up with a very good imitation of a start when Bob and Marion came in again. That happened at ten o'clock, and Bob immediately said good night. Under ordinary circumstances Godfrey stays on till nearly eleven; but that night he went away five minutes after Bob left.

Next morning there was trouble. It began with Marion's behaviour at breakfast. As a rule she is a young woman of placid and equable temper, one who is likely in the future to have a soothing effect on her husband. That morning she was very nearly hysterical. When we went into my study after breakfast she was quite incapable of work, and could not lay her hands on any of the papers which I particularly wanted. I was irritated at the moment, but I recognized afterwards that she had some excuse, and in any case my morning's work would have been interrupted.

At half-past ten I got a note from Godfrey--written in pencil and almost illegible--in which he asked me to go down to see him at once. He said that he was in severe pain and for the time confined to bed.

"You're sure," he said, "to have heard a garbled account of what happened, before you get this letter. I want to tell you the *facts* before I take further action."

The word "facts" was underlined shakily. I had, of course, heard no account of anything which had happened. I handed the letter to Marion.

"Do you know what this means?" I asked.

Marion read it.

"Rose told me this morning," she said, "that there had been some kind of a row last night. She said Godfrey was killed."

"That isn't true at all events," I said. "He's still alive."

"Of course I didn't believe her," said Marion.

"But I think you ought to have told me at breakfast," I said. "I hate having these things sprung on me suddenly. At my time of life even good news ought to be broken to me gradually. Any sudden shock is bad for the heart."

"I thought there might be no truth in the story at all," said Marion, "and you know, father, that you don't like being worried."

I don't. But I am worried a great deal.

"I suppose," I said, "that I'd better go down and see him. He says he's in great pain, so he's not likely to be agreeable; but still I'd better go."

"Do," said Marion; "and, of course, if there's anything I can do, anything I can send down to him--"

"I don't expect he's as bad as all that," I said. "Men like Godfrey are never seriously hurt. But if he expresses a wish for chicken jelly I'll let you know at once."

I started at once. I met Bob Power just outside my own gate. He was evidently a little embarrassed, but he spoke to me with the greatest frankness.

"I'm extremely sorry, Lord Kilmore," he said, "but I am afraid I hurt your nephew last night."

"Badly?"

"Not very," said Bob. "Collar bone and a couple of ribs. I saw the doctor this morning."

"Broken?"

"Yes. It wasn't altogether my fault. I mean to say--"

"I'm sure it was altogether Godfrey's," I said. "The thing which surprises me is that nobody ever did it before. Godfrey is nearly thirty, so for twenty years at least every man he has met must have been tempted to break his ribs. We must, in spite of what everybody says, be a Christian nation. If we were not--"

"He would keep following me about," said Bob. "I told him several times to clear away and go home. But he wouldn't."

"He has a fixed idea that you're engaged in smuggling."

"Even if I was," said Bob, "it would be no business of his."

"That's just why he mixes himself up in it. If it had been his business he wouldn't have touched it. There's nothing Godfrey hates more than doing anything he ought to do."

"I'm awfully glad you take it that way," said Bob. "I was afraid--"

"My dear fellow," I said, "I'm delighted. But you haven't told me yet exactly how it happened."

"I was moving a packing-case," said Bob, "a rather large one--"

He hesitated. I think he felt that the packing-case might require some explanation, especially as it was being moved at about eleven o'clock at night. I hastened to reassure him.

"Quite a proper thing for you to be doing," I said, "and certainly no business of Godfrey's. Every one has a perfect right to move packing-cases about from place to place."

"He told me he was going for the police, so--"

"I don't think you need have taken any notice of that threat. The police know Godfrey quite well. They hate being

worried just as much as I do."

"So I knocked him down."

"You must have hit him in several places at once," I said, "to have broken so many bones."

"The fact is," said Bob, "that he got up again."

"That's just the sort of thing he would do. Any man of ordinary good feeling would have known that when he was knocked down he was meant to stay down."

"Then the two other men who were with me, young fellows out of the town, set on him."

"Was one of them particularly freckly?" I asked.

"I didn't notice. Why do you ask?"

"If he was it would account for my daughter's maid getting hold of an inaccurate version of the story this morning. But it doesn't matter. Go on with what you were saying."

"There isn't any more," said Bob. "They hammered him, and then we carried him home. That's all."

"I am going down to see him now," I said. "He's thinking of taking further action."

"Let him," said Bob. "Is Miss D'Aubigny at home?"

"Yes, she is. If you're going up to see her--"

"I would," said Bob, "if I thought she wouldn't be angry with me."

"She's nervous," I said, "and excited; but she didn't seem angry."

Just outside the town I met Crossan and, very much to my surprise, McNeice walking with him. Crossan handed me a letter. I put it into my pocket and greeted McNeice.

"I did not know you were here," I said. "When did you come?"

"Last night," said McNeice. "Crossan brought me on his motor."

"Were you in time for the scrimmage?"

"You'd maybe better read the letter I've given you, my lord," said Crossan.

"If I'd been there," said McNeice, "your nephew would probably be dead now. In my opinion he ought to be."

"The letter I've just given your lordship," said Crossan, "is an important one."

"I'm sure it is," I said. "But I haven't time to read it now."

"What's in it, my lord, is this. I'm resigning the management of your business here, and the sooner you're suited with a new man the better."

"If my nephew Godfrey has been worrying you, Crossan," I said, "I'll take steps--"

"It's not that, my lord. For all the harm his talk ever did me I'd stay on. But--"

He looked at McNeice as if asking permission to say more.

"Political business," said McNeice.

"Of course," I said, "if it's a matter of politics, everything must give way to politics. But I'm very sorry to lose you, Crossan. My business affairs--"

"You'll have no business affairs left, my lord, if the Home Rule Bill passes."

"But you're going to stop it," I said.

"We are," said Crossan.

He certainly believed that he was. At the present moment he believes that he did stop it.

I found Godfrey propped up in bed. His face had a curiously unbalanced appearance owing to the way in which one

side of his jaw was swollen. Bob Power's original blow must have been a hard one. I noticed when he spoke that one of his eye teeth was broken off short. He began to pour out his complaint the moment I entered the room.

"A murderous assault was made on me last night," he said. "After I left your house I walked down--"

"Don't talk if it hurts you, Godfrey," I said.

He was speaking in a muffled way which led me to think that the inside of his mouth must be nearly as much swollen as the outside.

"That fellow Power had a band of ruffians with him. If he had fought fair I shouldn't have minded, but--"

"What were you doing," I said, "to make him attack you? He must have had some reason."

"I wasn't doing anything. I was simply looking on."

"That may have been the most objectionable thing possible," I said. "I don't say that his violence was justified; but it may have been quite excusable if you insisted on looking on at something which he didn't want you to see."

Godfrey actually tried to smile. He could not do so, of course, on account of the condition of his mouth, but I judged by the expression of his eyes that he was trying to. Godfrey's smiles are always either malicious or idiotic. This one, if it had come off, would have been malicious.

"I saw all I wanted to," he said, "before they attacked me. In fact, I was just going for the police--"

"I suppose you sent for the police this morning?" I said.

"No, I didn't. I don't trust the police. I wouldn't trust the magistrates here, except you, of course, Excellency. What I'm going to do is write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer."

"Good gracious, Godfrey! Why the Chancellor of the Exchequer? What interest can you expect him to take in your fights? If you are going to make a political matter of it at all, you'd far better try the Secretary of State for War. It's much more in his line."

"But the Chancellor of the Exchequer is the man who's responsible for the revenue, isn't he?"

"You can't expect him to give you a pension simply because Power knocked out your teeth."

"He'll stop Power smuggling," said Godfrey.

"I suppose," I said, "that it's no use my telling you that he was not smuggling?"

"I saw him at it," said Godfrey, "and I'm going to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer."

"What on earth do you expect to gain by that?" I asked.

"He ought to be grateful to me for putting him on the track of the smuggling," said Godfrey. "I should think he'd want to do something for me afterwards. He might--"

"Give you a job," I said.

"Yes," said Godfrey. "I always heard that fellows in the Treasury got good salaries."

I was greatly relieved when I left Godfrey. I expected that he would want to take some sort of legal proceedings against Bob Power which would have involved us all in a great deal of unpleasantness. I should not have been surprised if he had tried to blackmail Bob or Conroy, or both, and I should have disliked that very much. But his letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer seemed to be merely foolish. In the first place Bob Power was not smuggling. In the next place the Chancellor of the Exchequer would never see Godfrey's letter. It would be opened, I supposed, by some kind of clerk or secretary. He would giggle over it and show it to a friend. He would also giggle. Then unless the spelling was unusually eccentric the letter would go into the waste-paper basket. Nothing whatever would happen.

I was, I own, entirely wrong. The Chancellor of the Exchequer did see the letter. I take that for granted, because the Prime Minister saw it, and I cannot see how it could have got to him except through the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The spelling may have been as bad as Godfrey's spelling usually is, but the letter evidently gave a detailed account of what had happened, the kind of account which impresses people as being true. The letter was, in fact, the first direct evidence the Government got about what Conroy and McNeice and Bob were doing. I dare say there were suspicions abroad before. The offer of a peerage to Conroy showed that there was good reason to placate him. But it was Godfrey's absurd letter which first suggested to the minds of the Cabinet that Conroy was using his yacht, the *Finola*,

for importing arms into Ulster. Even then I do not think that anybody in authority suspected how thoroughly Conroy and Bob were doing the work. They may have thought of a cargo of rifles, and a few thousand cartridges. The existence of the Ulster artillery was a surprise to them at the very moment when the guns first opened fire.

So far from having no consequences at all, Godfrey's ridiculous letter actually precipitated the conflict which took place. I do not think that it made any difference to the result of the fighting. That would have been the same whether the fighting came a little sooner or a little later. But the letter and the action of the Government which followed it certainly disorganized Conroy's plans and hustled McNeice.

I found McNeice in my study when I got home. I told him, by way of a joke, about the letter which Godfrey intended to write. To my surprise he did not treat it as a joke. I suppose he realized at once what the consequences of such a letter might be.

"They ought to have put him past writing letters," he growled, "when they had him."

Then, without even saying good-bye to me, he got up and left the room. In less than an hour he and Crossan were rushing off somewhere in their motor car. They may have gone to hold a consultation with Conroy. He was in Belfast at the time.

I found Bob Power and Marion in the garden, but not, as I expected, eating gooseberries. They were sitting together on a seat opposite a small artificial pond in which I try to keep gold fish. When I came upon them they were sitting up straight, and both of them were gazing intently into the pond. This surprised me, because all the last consignment of gold fish had died, and there was nothing in the pond to look at.

I told Bob about Godfrey and the letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. His reception of the news was even more disappointing than McNeice's was. He neither laughed, as I hoped, nor even scowled. In fact, if I had not spoken quite distinctly, I should have thought that he did not hear what I said.

"Lord Kilmore," he said, "I think I ought to tell you at once--"

Then he stopped and looked at Marion. She became very red in the face.

"Father," she said, "Bob and I--"

Then she stopped too. I waited for a long time. Neither of them did more than begin a sentence; but Bob took Marion's hand and held it tight. I thought it better to try to help them out.

"I don't know," I said, "whether I've guessed rightly--"

"Of course you have, father," said Marion.

"If not," I said, "it'll be very embarrassing for all of us when I tell you what my guess is."

"Marion and I--" said Bob.

"Have spent the morning," I said, "in finding out that you want to marry each other?"

"Of course we have," said Marion.

"Of course," said Bob.

The discovery that they both wanted the same thing made them ridiculously happy. Marion kissed me with effusive ardour, putting her left arm tight round my neck, but still holding on to Bob with her right hand. Bob, after our first raptures had subsided a little, insisted on going down to Godfrey's lodgings, and apologizing for breaking his ribs. I told him that an apology delivered in that spirit would merely intensify Godfrey's wish to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. But nothing I said moved Bob in the least. He was so happy that he wanted to abase himself before some one.

CHAPTER XV

Babberly is in some ways a singularly unlucky man. A place for him, and that a high one, ought to have been quite secure in the next Unionist Cabinet. Now he will never hold office under any government, and yet no one can say that his collapse was in any way his own fault.

On the very day on which the Chancellor of the Exchequer received Godfrey's letter, Babberly announced his intention of holding another Unionist demonstration in Belfast. He did not mean any harm by this. He intended nothing worse than another eloquent speech and expected nothing more serious than the usual cheers. He regards demonstrations very much as my nephew Godfrey does garden-parties. They are troublesome functions, requiring a good deal of labour and care for their successful accomplishment, but they are necessary. People expect something of the kind from time to time; and—if I do not give garden-parties, I should not, so Godfrey says, keep up my position in the county. If Babberly did not, so to speak, give demonstrations he would lose his position in the political world. Babberly's position is, of course, vastly more important than mine.

Moyne, goaded on I suppose by Lady Moyne, wrote a letter to the papers—perhaps I should say published a manifesto—urging the extreme importance of Babberly's demonstration. This was necessary because McNeice and O'Donovan, in *The Loyalist*, had lately adopted a sneering tone about demonstrations. And *The Loyalist* was becoming an effective force in the guidance of Ulster opinion. Thanks to the exertions of Crossan, Malcolmson and some others the paper was very widely circulated and wherever it went it was read. Lady Moyne, I knew, disliked *The Loyalist* and was uneasy about the tone of its articles. She felt it necessary to stimulate the popular taste for demonstrations, and wrote Moyne's manifesto for him. It was a very good manifesto, full of weighty words about the present crisis and the necessity of standing shoulder to shoulder against the iniquitous plot of the Government for the dismemberment of the Empire.

Very much to my surprise, and I am sure to Lady Moyne's, *The Loyalist* printed a strong article in support of the proposed demonstration. Nothing could have been more flattering than its reference to Babberly and Lord Moyne; nothing better calculated to insure the success of the performance than the way in which it urged all Unionists to attend it. "Assemble in your Thousands" was the phrase used four times over in the course of the article. There was only one sentence in it which could cause any one the slightest uneasiness.

"Previous demonstrations," so the article concluded, "have served their purpose as expressions of our unalterable convictions. This one must do something more. *It must convince the world that we mean what we say.*"

That, of course, was nothing more than Babberly had proclaimed a dozen times in far more eloquent language. Nor was the fact that McNeice printed the last sentence in italics particularly startling. Babberly had emphasized the same statement with all the violence possible. But, so tense was the public mind at this time, everybody was vaguely anxious and excited. We felt that McNeice attached more meaning to the words than Babberly did.

A member of the Cabinet happened to be speaking two days later at a large public meeting in Croydon. He was supposed to be explaining the advantages of the new Insurance Act to the mistresses and servants of the smaller middle-class households. There were, I believe, very few people with sufficient faith in his power of apology to go to hear him; but, of course, there were plenty of newspaper reporters. The Cabinet Minister addressed them, and, ignoring for the time the grievances of the British house-and-parlourmaid, he announced that the Government was going to stand no nonsense from Ulster.

"The leaders," he said, "of the unfortunate dupes who are to assemble next week in Belfast, must understand once for all that in a democratically governed country the will of the majority must prevail, and His Majesty's Government is fully determined to see that it does prevail, at any cost."

This, again, was nothing more than the usual thing. Only the last three words conveyed anything in the nature of a threat, and many papers did not report the last three words. Babberly, I think, was quite justified in supposing that the Cabinet Minister was saying no more than, according to the rules of the game, he was bound to say; that he was, in fact, giving a garden-party of his own to keep up his position in the county. At all events Babberly replied to the Government's pronouncement with a defiance of the boldest possible kind. *The Loyalist*, in a special number, published in the middle of the week, patted Babberly on the back, and said that the men of Ulster would, if necessary, assert their right of public meeting with rifles in their hands.

This was not going much further than Babberly himself had often gone in earlier stages of the controversy. It is true that he had always spoken of "arms" which is a vague word and might mean nothing worse than the familiar paving stones. *The Loyalist* specified the kind of arms, mentioned rifles, which are very lethal weapons. Still, viewed from a

reasonable standpoint, there was nothing very alarming in the word rifles.

Two days later Moyne motored over to my house. He seemed greatly disturbed, so I took him into my study and gave him tea. While we were drinking it he told me what was the matter with him.

"Look here, Kilmore," he said, "do you know anything about a rumour that's flying about?"

"There are so many," I said.

"About the importation of arms into this country."

I had my suspicions, rather more than suspicions, for I had been thinking over the somewhat remarkable performances of Bob Power and the *Finola*. I did not, however, want to say anything definite until I knew how much information Moyne had. After all Bob Power had now arranged to be my son-in-law. I do not know what the law does to people who import arms into a peaceful country; but the penalty is sure to be severe, and I did not want Marion's wedding-day to be blighted by the arrest of the bridegroom.

"They say," said Moyne, "that some of the cargoes have been landed here under your windows."

"I can only assure you," I said, "that I have never in my life imported so much as a pocket pistol."

"I had a long letter from Babberly this morning," said Moyne. "He had an interview with the Prime Minister yesterday. It appears that the Government has some information."

"Why doesn't the Government act upon it then?"

"They are acting. They want me and Babberly to come out and denounce this kind of thing, to discountenance definitely--"

"That's all well enough," I said, "but I don't see why you and Babberly should be expected to get the Government out of a hole. In fact it's your business to keep them in any holes they fall into."

"Under ordinary circumstances," said Moyne, "we shouldn't, of course, stir hand or foot. We'd let them stew in their own juice. And I may tell you that's the line Babberly thinks we ought to take. But I don't know. If there's any truth in these rumours, and there may be, you know, it seems to me that we are face to face with a very serious business. Party politics are all right, of course; and I'm just as keen as any man to turn out this wretched Government. They've done mischief enough, but--well, if there's any truth in what they say, it isn't exactly a question of ordinary politics, and I think that every loyal man ought to stand by--"

"If there's any truth in the rumours--" I said.

"The country's in a queer state," said Moyne. "I don't understand what's going on."

"If the people have got rifles," I said, "they're not likely to give them up because you and Babberly tell them to."

"Babberly says there's nothing in it," said Moyne, doubtfully, "and her ladyship agrees with him. She thinks it's simply a dodge of the Government to spike our guns."

It is curious that Moyne cannot help talking about guns, even when he's afraid that somebody or other may really have one. He might, under the circumstances, have been expected to use some other metaphor. "Cook our goose," for instance, would have expressed his meaning quite well, and there would have been no suggestion of gunpowder about the words.

"I don't see," I said, "how you can very well do anything when both Lady Moyne and Babberly are against you."

"I can't--I can't, of course. And yet, don't you know, Kilmore, I don't know--"

I quite appreciated Moyne's condition of mind. I myself did not know. I felt nearly certain that Bob Power had been importing arms in the *Finola*. I suspected that Crossan and others had been distributing them. And yet it seemed impossible to suppose that ordinary people, the men I lunched with in the club, like Malcolmson, the men who touched their hats to me on the road, like Rose's freckly-faced lover, the quiet-looking people whom I saw at railway stations, that those people actually meant to shoot off bullets out of guns with the intention of killing other people. Of course, long ago, this sort of killing was done, but then, long ago, men believed things which we do not believe now. Perhaps I ought to say which I do not believe now. Malcolmson may still believe in what he calls "civil and religious liberty." Crossan certainly applies his favourite epithet to the "Papishes." He may conceivably think that they would put him on a rack if they got the chance. If he believed that he might fight. And yet the absurdity of the thing prevents serious consideration.

The fact is that our minds are so thoroughly attuned to the commonplace that we have lost the faculty of imaginative vision of unusual things. Commonplace men--I, for instance, or Babberly--can imagine a defeat of the Liberal Government or a Unionist victory at the General Election, because Liberal Governments have been defeated and Unionist victories have been won within our own memories. We cannot imagine that Malcolms and Crossan and our large Dean would march out and kill people, because we have never known any one who did such things. Men with prophetic minds can contemplate such possibilities, because they have the power of launching themselves into the unseen. We cannot. This is the reason why cataclysms, things like the Flood recorded in the Book of Genesis, and the French Revolution, always come upon societies unprepared for them. The prophets foretell them, but the common man has not the amount of imagination which would make it possible for him to believe the prophets. "They eat and drink, marry, and are given in marriage," until the day when the thing happens.

Looking back now and considering, in the light of what actually happened, my own frame of mind while I was talking to Moyne, I can only suppose that it was my lack of imagination which prevented my realizing the meaning of what was going on around me.

The next event which I find it necessary to chronicle is Conroy's visit to Germany. I heard about it from Marion. She got a letter almost every day from Bob Power, and it was understood that he was to pay us a short visit at the end of that week. He explained, much to Marion's disappointment and mine, that this visit must be postponed.

"The chief," it was thus he wrote of Conroy, "has gone over to Germany. He's always going over to Germany. I fancy he must have property there. But it doesn't generally matter to me whether he goes or not. This time--worse luck--he has taken it into his head to have the yacht to meet him at Kiel. I have to go at once."

At the moment I attached no importance whatever to Conroy's visit to Germany. Now I have come to think that he went there on a very serious business indeed. His immense financial interests not only kept him in touch with all the money markets of the world. They also gave him a knowledge of what was being done everywhere by the great manufacturers and the inventors. Moreover Conroy's immense wealth, when he chose to use it, enabled him to get things done for him very quietly. He could secure the delivery of goods which he ordered in unconventional ways, in unusual places. He could, for instance, by means of lavish expenditure and personal interviews, arrange to have guns put unobtrusively into innocent looking tramp steamers and transhipped from them in lonely places to the hold of the *Finola*. Whether the German Government had any idea of what was going on I do not know. Foreign governments are supposed to be well supplied with information about the manufacture and destination of munitions of war. The English Government, I am sure, had not up to the last moment any definite information. Its suspicions were of the very vaguest kind before the Chancellor of the Exchequer received Godfrey's letter.

The Belfast demonstration--Babberly's defiance of the Government's warning--was fixed for the first Monday in September. On the 24th of August, ten days before the demonstration, *The Loyalist* became a daily instead of a weekly paper. Its circulation increased immediately. It was on sale everywhere in the north of Ireland, and it was delivered with striking regularity in out of the way places in which it was almost impossible to get any other daily paper. It continued to press upon its readers the necessity of attending Babberly's demonstration in Belfast. It said, several times over, that the demonstration was to be one of armed men. Parliament was sitting late, debating wearily the amendments proposed by Unionists to the Home Rule Bill. A Nationalist member arrived at Westminster one day with a copy of *The Loyalist* in his pocket. He called the attention of the Chief Secretary for Ireland to the language used in one of the leading articles, and asked what steps were being taken to prevent a breach of the peace in Belfast on the first Monday in September. Before the Chief Secretary could answer Babberly burst in with another question.

"Is it not a fact," he asked, "that the paper in question is edited by a notorious Nationalist, a physical force man, a declared rebel, one of the chosen associates of the honourable gentleman opposite?"

The Chief Secretary replied that he had no knowledge of the political opinions of the editor in question further than as they obtained expression in his paper. He appeared to be a strong Unionist.

Considering that O'Donovan had been in prison three times, and that papers edited by him had been twice suppressed by the Government, the Chief Secretary must have meant that he had no official knowledge of O'Donovan's opinions. The distinction between knowledge and official knowledge is one of the most valuable things in political life.

Babberly displayed the greatest indignation at this answer to his question.

"Is the fair fame of the men of Ulster," he asked, "to be traduced, is their unswerving loyalty to the Crown and Constitution to be impeached, on the strength of irresponsible scribblings emanating from a Dublin slum?"

The office of *The Loyalist* is in a slum. So far Babberly was well informed. He cannot have known that the "scribblings" were by the pen of an eminent fellow of Trinity College, or that the money which paid for printing and circulation was

Conroy's.

The Nationalist member pressed for a reply to his original question. He said that he desired nothing except that the Government should perform the elementary duty of preserving law and order.

That particular Nationalist member had, in the days past, been put into prison with the utmost regularity whenever a government undertook to perform the elementary duty he now desired to see undertaken. And no government ever, in old times, undertook such work except when goaded to desperation by Babberly. The seething of a kid in its mother's milk is forbidden by the law of Moses, which shows that it must be a tempting thing to do. That Nationalist member felt the temptation strongly. He evidently had hopes of sacrificing Babberly on the altar of the twin gods so long worshipped by the Ulster members, incarcerating him in the sacred names of law and order. But the Chief Secretary did not see his way to make Babberly the hero of a state trial. He replied that the Government was fully alive to the duty of preserving order in Belfast, and refused to commit himself to any definite plan for dealing with Babberly.

The newspapers made the most of the incident, and O'Donovan's record was scrutinized by both parties. A lively discussion ensued as to whether a "Hill-sider"--some one discovered that picturesque description of O'Donovan--could become a militant Unionist. The text from the prophet Jeremiah about the spots on the leopard was quoted several times with great effect.

McNeice's name was not mentioned, nor was Conroy's. We may suppose that his connection with the University saved McNeice. Trinity College has, of late years, displayed such a capacity for vigorous self-defence, that the boldest politician hesitates to attack it or any one under its immediate protection. Conroy escaped because no one, not even an Irish member, cares to ride atilt against a millionaire. We respect little else in heaven or earth, but we do, all of us, respect money.

CHAPTER XVI

On the Wednesday before the day fixed for the Belfast demonstration, a meeting of the Ulster Unionist leaders was held in London. Moyne was at it. Lady Moyne, although the absurd conventions of our political life prevented her being present in person, was certainly an influence in the deliberations. She gave a dinner-party the night before in Moyne's town house. Babberly, of course, was at the dinner, and with him most of the small group of Ulster Members of Parliament. Three or four leading members of the Opposition, Englishmen who had spoken on Ulster platforms and were in full sympathy with the Ulster dislike of Home Rule, were also present. Cahoon was not. He travelled from Belfast during the night of the dinner-party and only reached London in time for the meeting of the Party next day. I do not know whether Cahoon was invited to the dinner or not. Malcolmson was invited. He told me so himself, but he did not accept the invitation. He said he had business in Belfast and he went to London with Cahoon. The Dean was at the dinner-party. His name appeared in the newspaper lists of guests next morning. McNeice was not there. Lady Moyne did not like McNeice, and, although he was a member of the "Ulster Defence Committee," he was never admitted to what might be called the social gatherings of the party.

The newspapers, in their columns of fashionable intelligence, printed a full list of the guests at this dinner, and even noted the dresses worn by some of the chief ladies. It was described as a brilliant function, and Lady Moyne figured as "one of the most successful of our political hostesses." I have no doubt that she was successful in impressing her views on Babberly and the others. Whether she thought it worth while to spend time that night in talking to the Dean I do not know. Immediately under the account of the dinner-party there was a short paragraph which stated that Conroy, "the well-known millionaire yachtsman," had returned from a cruise in the Baltic Sea, and that the *Finola* was lying off Bangor in Belfast Lough.

In quite a different part of the papers there were comments and articles on the meeting of the Ulster leaders to be held that afternoon. The articles in Liberal papers oscillated between entreaties and threats. One of them, in a paper supposed to be more or less inspired by the Government, pleased me greatly. It began with a warm tribute to the loyalty which had always characterized the men of Ulster. Then it said that troops were being moved to Belfast in order to overcome a turbulent populace. It went on from that to argue that troops were entirely unnecessary, because Ulstermen, though pig-headed almost beyond belief in their opposition to Home Rule, would not hesitate for a moment when the choice was given them of obeying or defying the law. They would, of course, obey the law. But, so the article concluded, if they did not obey the law the resources of civilization were by no means exhausted.

As no law had, up to that time, been made forbidding the holding of the Belfast demonstration, this article was perhaps premature in its attempt to impale Babberly and his friends on the horns of a dilemma.

The Conservative papers assumed an air of calm confidence. One of them, the editor of which was in close touch with Babberly, said plainly that dear as the right of free speech was to the Unionist leaders they would cheerfully postpone the Belfast demonstration rather than run the smallest risk of causing a riot in the streets. Political principles, it is said, were sacred things, but the life of the humblest citizen was far more sacred than any principle, and the world could confidently rely on Babberly's being guided in his momentous decision by considerations of the loftiest patriotism.

I have no doubt that Babberly fully intended to do as that paper said he would do. I feel certain that the informal consultation of the politicians at Lady Moyne's dinner-party had ended in a decision to postpone the demonstration. But things had passed beyond the control of Babberly and Lady Moyne. No newspaper was able to give any report of the proceedings of the meeting held that afternoon. But Malcolmson, Cahoon and McNeice were all present, and the Dean, having escaped the overpowering atmosphere of Moyne House, was able to express his opinions freely and forcibly. On the other hand Lady Moyne was not there, and Moyne, when it comes to persuading men, is a very poor substitute for her. The English Unionists could not be there, so the weight of their moderation was not felt. The meeting broke up without reaching any decision at all; and the Belfast demonstration remained on the list of fixtures for the next week.

Sir Samuel Clithering, originally a manufacturer of hosiery in the midlands, was at this time acting regularly as an official ambassador of the Cabinet. The fact that he was a leading Nonconformist was, I fancy, supposed to commend him in some obscure way to the Ulster party. He spent the evening after the meeting in flying about in his motor between the House of Commons where Babberly was proposing amendments to the Bill, Moyne House where Lady Moyne and her secretary sat over her typewriter, a military club in St. James' Street where Malcolmson sat smoking cigars, and a small hotel in the Strand where McNeice and Cahoon were stopping. The Dean had left London for Belfast immediately after the meeting. I have no doubt that Sir Samuel Clithering did his best; but diplomacy applied to men like McNeice and Malcolmson is about as useful as children's sand dykes are in checking the advance of flowing tides.

It is a source of regret to me that my account of what happened in London is meagre and disjointed. I was not there

myself and events became so much more exciting afterwards that nobody has any very clear recollection of the course of these preliminary negotiations.

My own personal narrative begins again two days after the London meeting, that is to say on the Friday before the Belfast demonstration.

Godfrey came up to see me at eleven o'clock with his arm in a sling.

"Excellency," he said, "the Dean has just hoisted a large flag on the tower of the church. I'm sure you don't approve of that."

It is, I hope, unnecessary to say that Godfrey is at feud with the Dean. The Dean is a straightforward and honourable man. He and Godfrey live in the same town. A quarrel between them was therefore inevitable.

As a matter of fact I do not approve of the hoisting of flags on the church tower. In Ireland we only hoist flags with a view to irritating our enemies, and--I am not an expert in Christian theology but it seems to me that church towers are not the most suitable places for flaunting defiances. The Dean and I argued the matter out years ago and arrived at a working compromise. I agreed to make no protest against flags on the 12th of July. The Dean promised not to hoist them on any other day. This is fairly satisfactory to the Dean because he can exult over his foes on the day of the year on which it is most of all desirable to do so. It is fairly satisfactory to me because on three hundred and sixty-four days out of every year the church remains, in outward appearance at least, a house of prayer, and I am not vexed by having to regard it as a den of politicians. That is as much as can be expected of any compromise, and I was always quite loyal to my share of the bargain. The Dean, it now appeared, was not; and Godfrey saw his chance of stirring up strife.

"I don't think," I said, "the Dean can have anything to do with the flag. He is in London."

"He came back yesterday," said Godfrey, "and the flag he has hoisted is a large Union Jack."

Now the Union Jack is of all flags the most provocative. Any other flag under the sun, even the Royal Standard, might be hoisted without giving any very grave offence to any one. But the Union Jack arouses the worst feelings of everybody. Some little time ago a fool flew a Union Jack out of the window of a Dublin house underneath which the Irish leader happened at the moment to be proclaiming his loyalty to the Empire and his ungovernable love for the English people. The fool who hoisted the flag was afterwards very properly denounced for having gone about to insult the Irish nation. The Dean might, I think, have set floating a banner with three Orange lilies emblazoned upon it like the fleur-de-lys of ancient France. No one's feelings would have been much hurt and no one's enthusiasm unusually stirred. But it is characteristic of the Dean that when he does a thing at all he does it thoroughly.

"Just come and look at it," said Godfrey. "It's enormous."

We went into the library, from the windows of which a clear view can be obtained of the town and the church which stands above it. There certainly was a flag flying from the church tower. I took a pair of field-glasses and satisfied myself that it was the Union Jack.

"Would you like me to speak to the Dean about it?" said Godfrey.

"Certainly not," I said. "Any interference on your part would merely--and these are rather exciting times. The Dean is entitled, I think, to a little license. I don't suppose he means to keep it there permanently."

Then, borne to us by a gentle breeze across the bay, came the sound of the church bells. We have a fine peal of bells in our church, presented to the parish by my father. They are seldom properly rung, but when they are--on Christmas Day, at Easter and on the 12th of July--the effect is very good.

"Surely," I said, "the Dean can't be having a Harvest Thanksgiving Service yet? It's not nearly time."

Then I noticed that instead of one of the regular chimes the bells were playing a hymn tune. It was, as I might have guessed, the tune to which "O God, our help in ages past" is sung in Ireland. The hymn, since Babberly's first demonstration in Belfast, had become a kind of battle song. It is, I think, characteristic of the Irish Protestants that they should have a tune of their own for this hymn. Elsewhere, in England, in Scotland, in the United States and the Colonies this metrical version of the 90th Psalm is sung to a fine simple tune called St. Ann. But we are not and never have been as other men are. Without a quiver of our nerves we run atilt at the most universally accepted traditions. The very fact that every one else who uses the hymn sings it to the tune called St. Ann would incline us to find some other tune if such a thing were obtainable. We found one which musicians, recognizing that we had some right to claim it as ours, called "Irish" or "Dublin." This tune emerged suddenly from nowhere in response to no particular demand in the middle of the eighteenth century. It is anonymous, but it was at once wedded to the words of that particular hymn, and we have used it ever since. It is difficult to give an opinion on the comparative merits of two hymn tunes, and I hesitate

to say that ours is a finer one than that used by the rest of the English-speaking world. I am, however, certain that there is in our tune an unmistakable suggestion of majestic confidence in an eternal righteousness, and that it very well expresses the feeling with which we sing the hymn at political demonstrations and elsewhere. It came to me that day across the waters of the bay, hammered slowly out by the swinging bells, with a tremendous sense of energy. The English St. Ann seemed lilty and almost flippanant in comparison.

I raised my glasses again and took another look at the Union Jack, blown out from its flag-post and displaying plainly its tangled crosses. Then I noticed that men were entering the churchyard singly, in pairs and in little groups of three and four.

"The Dean," I said, "must have some sort of service in church to-day. If it isn't the Harvest Thanksgiving it must be an anniversary of something. What happened at this time of year, Godfrey? I can't remember anything."

I still stared through my glasses. I was struck by the unusual fact that only men were going into the church. Then, quite suddenly, I saw that every man was carrying a gun. I laid down my glasses and turned to Godfrey.

"I wish," I said, "that you'd go down to the town--not to the church, mind, Godfrey, but into the town, and ask somebody--ask the police sergeant at the barrack what is going on in the church."

Godfrey is always at his very best when he has to find out something. He would have made almost an ideal spy. If any one is ever wanted by the nation for the more disagreeable part of secret service work I can confidently recommend Godfrey.

Half an hour later he returned to me hot and breathless.

"The police sergeant told me, Excellency, that the Dean's going to march all the Orangemen and a lot of other men along with them to Belfast for the Unionist demonstration. They are having service in the church first and they've all got rifles."

I have all my life steadily objected to politics being mixed with religion. I hold most strongly that the Church ought not to be dominated by politicians. The Church is degraded and religion is brought into contempt when they are used by party leaders. But--the bells had ceased ringing. The hymn was now, no doubt, being sung by the men within. It occurred to me suddenly that on this occasion it was not the politicians who were taking possession of religion, but religion which was asserting its right to dominate politics. This is plainly quite a different matter. I can even imagine that politics might be improved if religion asserted itself a little more frequently than it does. I still maintain that it is only right and fair to keep politics out of the Church. I am not at all sure that it is right to keep the Church out of politics.

"I told the sergeant," said Godfrey, "that he had better go and stop them at once."

"Oh, did you?" I said. "Do you know, Godfrey, that's just the kind of suggestion I'd expect you to make under the circumstances."

"Thanks awfully, Excellency," said Godfrey. "I'm awfully glad you're pleased."

There are besides the sergeant three constables in our police barrack. They are armed as a rule with short round sticks. On very important occasions they carry an inferior kind of firearm called a carbine. There were, I guessed about three hundred men in the church, and they were armed with modern rifles. Godfrey's faith in the inherent majesty of the law was extremely touching.

"Did he go?" I asked.

"I don't think he intends to," said Godfrey, "but he did not give me a decided answer."

Our police sergeant is a man of sense.

"Did you say," I asked, "that they're going to march to Belfast?"

"That's what the sergeant told me," said Godfrey.

"Actually walk the whole way?"

Belfast is a good many miles away from us. It would, I suppose, take a quick walker the better part of two days to accomplish the journey.

"He said 'march,'" said Godfrey. "I suppose he meant to walk."

This is, as we are constantly reminded, the twentieth century. I should have supposed that any one who wanted to get from this place to Belfast would have gone in a train. Our nearest railway station is some way off, but one might walk to it in an hour and a half. Once there, the journey to Belfast can be accomplished in another two hours. It seems rather absurd to spend two days over it, but then the whole thing is rather absurd. The rifles are absurd. The gathering of three hundred men into a church to indulge in a kind of grace before meat as preparation for a speech from Babberly is rather absurd. To set a peal of bells playing--but I am not quite sure about the hymn tune. It did not sound to me absurd as it came across the bay. I am, I trust, a reasonable man, not peculiarly liable to be swept off my feet by waves of emotion; but there was something in the sound of that hymn tune which prevented me from counting it, along with our other performances, as an absurdity.

CHAPTER XVII

The Dean and his men did actually march to Belfast. I saw them there two days later. I also saw them start, ranged in very fair order with the Dean at their head. The most surprising thing about their march was that they had no band. There are at least two bands in the town. I subscribe to both of them regularly and have occasionally given a donation to a third which enjoys an intermittent existence, springing into sudden activity for a week or two and then disappearing for months. I asked the police sergeant, who is a South of Ireland man and very acute of mind, why none of the bands accompanied the army. The explanation he gave me was interesting and suggestive.

"There isn't as much as a boy in the district," he said, "who'd content himself with a drum when he might have the handling of a rifle."

And yet an excessive fondness for drums has been reckoned--by English politicians--one of the failings of the Ulster man.

I went to Belfast next morning quite unexpectedly. No peal of bells heartened me for my start, partly because all the bell-ringers and nearly all the able-bodied members of the church in the parish had marched forth with the Dean. Partly also, I suppose, because I did not travel in a heroic way. I am much too old to undertake a two-days' walking tour, so I went by train. Godfrey saw me off. I owed this attention, I am sure, to the fact that Marion was with me. She told Godfrey that she was going to marry Bob Power, but Godfrey did not on that account cease to regard her as his property. He had hopes, I fancy, that Bob Power would be killed in some fight with a Custom House officer. Marion, on the other hand, was vaguely afraid that either Bob or I would get injured while rioting in Belfast. That was her reason for going with me.

I went because I received on Friday evening a very urgent letter from Lady Moyne. She and Lord Moyne had just arrived in Belfast, and her letter was sent to me by a special messenger on a motor bicycle. She wished me to attend an extraordinary meeting of the "Ulster Defence Committee" which, in defiance of our strong sabbatarian feeling, was to be held on Sunday afternoon.

"We elected you a member of the committee at a meeting held yesterday in London," she wrote, "so you have a perfect right to be present and to vote."

That meeting must have been held after McNeice, Malcolmson and Cahoon returned to Ireland. They regard me as a Laodicean in the matter of Home Rule, and would never have consented to my sitting on a committee which controlled, or at all events was supposed to control, the actions of the Ulster leaders.

"It's most important, dear Lord Kilmore," the letter went on, "that you should be present on Sunday. Your well-known moderation will have a most steady influence, and if it should come to a matter of voting, your vote may be absolutely necessary."

After getting a letter of that kind I could not well refuse to go to Belfast. Even without the letter I should, I think, have gone. I was naturally anxious to see what was going to happen.

I spent my time in the train reading several different accounts of an important Nationalist meeting held the day before in a village in County Clare, the name of which I have unfortunately forgotten. Three of the chief Nationalist orators were there, men quite equal to Babberly in their mastery of the art of public speaking. I read all their speeches; but that was not really necessary. None of them said anything which the other two did not say, and none of them left out anything which the other two had said.

They all began by declaring that under Home Rule all Irishmen should receive equal consideration and be treated with equal respect. They all looked forward to the day when they would be walking about the premises at present occupied by the Bank of Ireland in Dublin with their arms round Babberly's neck. The dearest wish of their hearts--so they all said, and the people of County Clare cheered heartily--was to unite with Lord Moyne, Babberly, Malcolmson and even the Dean in the work of regenerating holy Ireland. Any little differences of religious creed which might exist would be entirely forgotten as soon as the Home Rule Bill was safely passed. They then went on to say that the Belfast people, and the people of County Antrim and County Down generally, were enthusiastically in favour of Home Rule. The fact that they elected Unionist members of Parliament and held Unionist demonstrations was accounted for by the existence of a handful of rack-renting landlords, a few sweating capitalists and some clergymen whose churches were empty because the people were tired of hearing them curse the Pope.

Poor Moyne has sold every acre of his property and the Dean's only difficulty with the majority of his large congregation is that he does not curse the Pope often enough to please them. Cahoon, I am told, only sweats in the old-fashioned intransitive sense of the word. He is frequently bathed in perspiration himself. I never heard of his

insisting on his workmen getting any hotter than was natural and necessary. But these criticisms are beside the mark. No one supposes that a political orator means to tell the truth when he is making a speech. Politics could not be carried on if he did. What the public expects and generally insists on is that the inevitable lies should have their loins girt about with a specious appearance of truthfulness. Every speaker must offer distinct and convincing proofs that his statements are strictly accurate reflections of fact. The best and simplest way of doing this is by means of bold challenge. The speaker offers to deposit a large sum of money with the local mayor to be paid over to a deserving charity, if any opponent of the speaker can, to the satisfaction of twelve honourable men, generally named, disprove some quite irrelevant truism, or can prove to the satisfaction of the same twelve men the falsity of some universally accepted platitude. This method is very popular with orators, and invariably carries conviction to their audiences.

The Nationalist members in County Clare broke away into a variant of the familiar plan. They challenged the Government.

"Let the Government," they said, all three of them, "proclaim the meeting to be held in Belfast on Monday next, and allow the public to watch with contempt the deflation of the wind-distended bladder of Ulster opposition to Home Rule. We venture to say that the little group of selfish wire-pullers at whose bidding the meeting has been summoned, will sneak away before the batons of half a dozen policemen, and their followers will be found to be non-existent."

The Government, apparently, believed the Nationalist orators, or half believed them. Sir Samuel Clithering was sent over to Belfast, to report, confidentially, on the temper of the people. He must have sent off his despatch before the Dean's army marched in, before any of the armies then converging on the city arrived, before the Belfast people had got out their rifles. The Government in the most solemn and impressive manner, proclaimed the meeting. That was the news with which we were greeted when our train drew up at the platform in Belfast.

The proclamation of meeting is one of the regular resources of governments when Irish affairs get into a particularly annoying tangle. There have been during my time hundreds of meetings proclaimed in different parts of the country. The Lord Lieutenant and the Chief Secretary never get any thanks for their action. The people who want to hold the meeting always accuse the Government of violating the right of free speech and substituting a military tyranny for the Magna Charta. The other people who do not want the meeting to be held always say that the Government ought to have proclaimed it much sooner than it did, and ought to have imprisoned, perhaps beheaded, the men who intended to speak at the meeting.

Bob Power met us on the platform, which was horribly crowded, and immediately conducted Marion to a motor car which he had in waiting outside the station. Then he came back to me and we went together in search of Marion's luggage. It was while we were pushing our way through the crowd that he told me the great news. I said that the failure of the demonstration would be a disappointment to the Dean and his riflemen who would have to walk all the way home again without hearing Babberly's speech.

"I'm not so sure about that," said Bob. "We may have the meeting in spite of their teeth."

"You can't possibly," I said, "hold a meeting when--dear me! Who are those?"

There was a crowd round the luggage van where we were trying to discover Marion's trunk. An unmannerly porter shoved me back, and I bumped into a man who had something hard and knobby in his hand. I looked round. He was a soldier in the regular khaki uniform with a rifle in his hand. The bayonet was fixed. I felt deeply thankful that it was pointing upwards and not in a horizontal direction when the porter charged me. It might quite easily have gone through my back. This man appeared to be a kind of outpost sentry. Behind him, all similarly armed, were twenty or thirty more men drawn up with their backs to the wall of the station. A youth, who looked bored and disgusted, was in command of them and stood at the end of the line. His sword struck me as being far too big for him.

"Who on earth are those?" I said.

"Those," said Bob, "are the troops who are overawing us. Some of them. There are lots more. You'll see them at every street corner as we go along. By jove! I believe that's Nosey Henderson in command of this detachment. Excuse me one moment, Lord Kilmore. Henderson was with me at Harrow. I'll just shake hands with him."

He turned to the young officer as he spoke.

"Hullo Nosey," he said, "I didn't know you were in these parts."

"Ordered up from the Curragh," said Henderson. "Damned nuisance this sort of police duty. We oughtn't to be asked to do it."

"Your particular job," said Bob, "is to overawe the railway porters, I suppose."

"Been here since nine o'clock this morning," said Henderson, "and haven't had a blessed thing to eat except two water biscuits. What's the row all about? That's what I can't make out."

"Oh! It's quite simple," said Bob. "Our side wants to hold a meeting--"

"You are on a side then, are you?"

"Of course I am," said Bob. "I'm in command of a company of volunteers. We don't run to khaki uniforms and brass buttons, but we've got guns all right."

"I say," said Henderson, "tell me this now. Any chance of a scrap? Real fighting, you know? I've been asking all sorts of fellows, and nobody seems to be able to say for certain."

"We shan't begin it," said Bob; "but, of course, if you get prodding at us with those spikes you have at the end of your guns--"

"There are a lot of fellows in this town that would be all the better of being prodded. Every porter that walks along the platform spits when he passes us in a damned offensive way. You would think they were looking for trouble."

The crowd round the luggage van cleared away a little and we found Marion's trunk. Bob handed it over to a porter and we joined Marion in the motor car.

The scene outside the station was striking. A considerable body of dragoons, some mounted, some on foot beside their horses, were grouped together near the great gate which led into the railway company's yard. Their accoutrements and the bridles of their horses jangled at every movement in a way very suggestive of military ardour. The trappings of horse soldiers are evidently made as noisy as possible. Perhaps with the idea of keeping up the spirits of the men. Some Highlanders, complete in their kilts, stood opposite the dragoons at the other end of the yard. A sergeant was shouting explosive monosyllables at them in order to make them turn to the left or to the right as he thought desirable. Behind them were some other soldiers, Englishmen I presume, who wore ordinary trousers. They were sitting on a flight of stone steps eating chunks of dry bread. Their rifles were neatly stacked behind them. Round the motor car were about thirty men whom I hesitate to call civilians, because they had rifles in their hands; but who were certainly not real soldiers, for they had no uniforms. They looked to me like young farmers.

"My fellows," said Bob, pointing to these men. "Pretty tidy looking lot, aren't they? I brought them along as a sort of guard of honour for Marion. They're not really the least necessary; but I thought you and she might be pleased to see them."

Here and there, scattered among the military and Bob's irregular troops, were black uniformed policemen, rosy-faced young men, fresh from a healthy life among the cattle ranches of Roscommon, drafted to their own immense bewilderment into this strange city of Belfast, where no one regarded them with any reverence, or treated them with the smallest respect. The motor car started, creeping at a walking pace through the mingled crowd of armed men who thronged the entrance to the station. Our guard of honour, some of them smoking, some stopping for a moment to exchange greetings with acquaintance, kept up with us pretty well. Then, as we got clear of the station and went faster, we left our guard behind. One man indeed, with a singular devotion to duty, poked his rifle into the car and then ran alongside of us with his hand on the mudguard. He carried Marion's trunk into the hotel when we got there.

Our drive was an exciting one. At every street corner there were parties of soldiers. Along every street stalwart policemen strolled in pairs. There were certainly hundreds of armed irregulars. For the most part these men seemed to be under no control; but occasionally we met a party marching in something like military formation, led by an officer, grave with responsibility. One company, I remember, got in our way and for a long time could not get out of it. Their officer had been drilling them carefully and they were all most anxious to obey his orders. The difficulty was that he could not recollect at the moment what orders he ought to give to get them out of our way. He halted them to begin with. Then in firm tones, he commanded a half-right turn and a quick march. We had to back our car to avoid collision with the middle part of the column. Their officer halted them again. We offered to go back and take another route to our hotel; but the officer would not hear of this. He told his men to stand at ease while he consulted a handbook on military evolutions. In the end he gave the problem up.

"Get out of the way, will you," he said, "and form up again when the car is past."

This was unconventional, but quite effective. The men--and it is to their credit that not one of them smiled--broke their formation, scattered to right and left and reformed after we had passed. This took place in a narrow side street in which there was very little traffic. I recognized the wisdom of the officer in choosing such a place for his manoeuvres.

In the main streets the business of the town seemed to be going on very much as usual. It was Saturday afternoon.

Shops and offices were closing. Young men and girls passed out of them and thronged the trams which were leaving the centre of the city. They took very little notice of the soldiers or the police. In the poorer streets women with baskets on their arms were doing their weekly shopping at the stalls of small butchers and greengrocers. Groups of factory girls marched along with linked arms, enjoying their outing, unaffected apparently by the unusual condition of their streets. The newspaper boys did a roaring trade, shrieking promises of sensational news to be found in the pages of the *Telegraph* and *Echo*.

Marion became intensely excited.

"Doesn't it look just as if the town had been captured by an enemy," she said, "after a long siege?"

"It hasn't been captured yet," said Bob.

I have often tried to understand how it was that Bob Power came to take the active part he did in the fighting which followed, and how he came to be in command of a body of volunteers. He had not, so far as I know, any actual hatred of the idea of Home Rule. He was too light-hearted to be in full sympathy with fanatical Puritans like Crossan and McNeice. He certainly had no hatred of the British Empire or the English army. He was, up to the last moment, on friendly terms with those of the army officers whom he happened to know. He chatted with them and with detached inspectors of police in the same friendly way as he did with Henderson at the railway station.

I can only suppose that he regarded the whole business--to begin with at all events--as a large adventure of a novel and delightful kind. He went into it very much as many volunteers went into the Boer War, without any very strong convictions about the righteousness of the cause in which he fought, certainly without any realization of the horror of actual bloodshed.

There are men of this temperament, fortunately a good many of them. If they did not exist in large numbers the world's fighting would be very badly done. The mere mercenary--uninspired by the passion for adventure--will at the best do as little fighting as possible, and do it with the smallest amount of ardour. Fanatics cannot be had to order. Some kind of idea--in most cases a religious idea--is necessary to turn the ordinary church-going business man or farmer into an efficient fighting unit. The kind of patriotism which is prepared to make sacrifices, to endure bodily pain and risk death, is very rare. It is on the men who enjoy risk, who love struggle, who face death with a laugh, the men of Bob Power's reckless temperament, that the world must rely when it wants fighting done. Hitherto men of this kind have been plentiful. Whether our advancing civilization is going to destroy the breed is a question which, I am pleased to say, need not be answered by my generation. There are enough Bob Powers alive to last my time.



CHAPTER XVIII

I fully intended to go to church on Sunday morning. I was, in fact, waiting for Marion at the door of the hotel, when Sir Samuel Clithering came to see me.

"I shall be so much obliged," he said, "if you will spare me a few minutes."

I did not want to spare any minutes to Sir Samuel Clithering. In the first place I had promised to take Marion to the cathedral. "A Parade Service"--I quote the official title of the function--was to be held for the benefit of the volunteers and Marion naturally wanted to see Bob Power at the head of his men. I wanted to hear the men singing that hymn again, and I wanted to hear what sort of sermon the Dean--our Dean, not the Dean of the cathedral--would preach on such an occasion. He was advertised to preach, as "Chaplain General of the Loyalists." These were three good reasons for not giving Sir Samuel Clithering the few minutes he demanded. I had, also, a fourth. I had held, as I have related, previous communications with Clithering. I suspected him of having more peerages in his pocket for distribution, and I did not want to undertake any further negotiations like that with Conroy. He might even--and I particularly disliked the idea--be empowered to offer our Dean an English bishopric.

I kept this last reason to myself, but I stated the other three fully to Sir Samuel. He seemed dissatisfied.

"Everybody's going to church," he complained. "I can't get Lord Moyne. I can't get Babberly. I can't get Malcolmson, and it's really most important that I should see some one. Going to church is all very well--"

"As a leading Nonconformist," I said.

"Free Churchman," said Sir Samuel.

"I beg your pardon, Free Churchman. You ought not to object to people going to church. I've always understood that the Free Churchmen are honourably distinguished from other Christians by their respect for the practice of Sunday worship."

"Of course, I don't object to people going to church. I should be there myself if it were not that--"

He hesitated. I thought he might be searching for an appropriate text of Scripture so I helped him.

"Your ass," I said, "has fallen into a pit, and you want--"

This was evidently not exactly the text he wanted. He seemed astonished when I quoted it.

"Ass!" he said. "What ass?"

"The Government," I said. "It is in rather a hole, isn't it?"

"Capital," said Clithering, laughing without the smallest appearance of mirth, "capital! I didn't catch the point for a moment, but I do now. My ass has fallen into a pit. You put the matter in a nutshell, Lord Kilmore. I don't mind confessing that a pit of rather an inconvenient size does lie in front of us. I feel sure that you, as a humane man, won't refuse your help in the charitable work of helping to get us out."

Marion came downstairs in her best hat. It was not for nothing that Bob Power and I and the running volunteer had struggled with her trunk. Her frock, also, was charming.

"Your daughter," said Clithering. "Now my dear young lady, you must spare your father to me for an hour. Affairs of state. Affairs of state. But you'll allow me to send you to church in my car. My private secretary is in it, and I shall tell him to see you safely to church, to secure a seat for you--"

"The Dean has reserved seats for us," I said.

"Capital, capital. We can regard that as settled then. My private secretary--an excellent young fellow whom I picked up at Toynbee Hall--a student of our social problems--a man whom I'm sure you'll like."

He conducted Marion to the door and handed her over to the private secretary from Toynbee Hall. I resigned myself and led Clithering to a deserted smoking-room.

"I never saw so much church-going anywhere," he said. "It's most remarkable. I don't think the Government quite appreciates--"

As a matter of fact the percentage of church-going men on that particular Sunday was considerably over the average.

On the other hand there were much fewer women than usual. Every church of every Protestant denomination was holding a "Parade Service" for volunteers, and most of the women who tried to get in had to be turned away from the doors. I thought it well to rub the facts in a little.

"Rack-renting landlords," I said. "Sweating capitalists, and clergymen whose churches are empty because their congregations are tired of hearing them curse the Pope!"

"Eh?" said Clithering, "what's that? what's that?"

"Only a quotation," I said. "I forget if it was a Cabinet Minister--"

"Not at all," said Clithering. "I recollect the words now. It was one of the Irish Members. No Cabinet Minister would dream of saying such things. We have a high sense of the importance of the Ulster problem. Nothing, I assure you, is further from our minds than the desire to minimize or treat with undue flippancy the conscientious objections, even the somewhat unreasonable fears of men whom we recognize as--"

Clithering paused. I had not anything particular to say, so I waited for him to begin again.

"I understand," he said, "that a meeting of the Unionist Defence Committee is to be held this afternoon."

"Yes," I said. "I'm going to it. I'm not really a member of the committee, at least I wasn't until yesterday; but--"

"I quite understand, quite understand. In fact--speaking now in the strictest confidence--I may say that the suggestion to add your name to the committee was made--well it was made to Lady Moyne by a very important person. It was generally recognized that a man of your well-known moderation--"

I was beginning to dislike being called a man of moderation nearly as much as I disliked being called a Liberal.

"What do you want me to do?" I asked.

"The situation--the very difficult and distressing situation is this," said Clithering, "stated roughly it is this. The Government has proclaimed to-morrow's meeting."

"That," I said, "is the pit into which--I don't want to be offensive--I'll say, your ox has fallen."

"And the town is full of troops and police. Any attempt to hold the meeting can only result in bloodshed, deplorable bloodshed, the lives of men and women, innocent women sacrificed."

"The strength of Babberly's position," I said, "is that he doesn't think bloodshed deplorable."

"But he does. He told me so in London. He repeated the same thing this morning."

"I don't mean Babberly personally," I said, "I mean his party; Malcolmsen, you know, and our Dean. If you'd only gone to hear the Dean preach this morning you'd know what he thinks about blood. I've often heard him say that the last drop of it--mind that now, Sir Samuel--the last drop ought to be shed. That's going as far as any one very well could, isn't it?"

"But he must," said Clithering, "he must think bloodshed deplorable."

"No, he doesn't," I said. "You mustn't think everybody is like your Government. It's humanitarian. We're not. We're business men."

Clithering caught at the last phrase. It appealed to him. He did not know the meaning attached to it by Cahoon.

"That's just it," he said. "We want to appeal to you as business men. We want to suggest a reasonable compromise."

"I'm afraid," I said, "that you've come to the wrong place. I'm not the least averse to compromises myself, in fact I love them. But the Belfast business man--You don't quite understand him, I'm afraid, Sir Samuel. Have you heard him singing his hymn?"

"No. What hymn? But leaving the question of hymns aside for the moment--"

"You can't do that," I said, "the hymn is the central fact in the situation."

Clithering thought this over and evidently failed to understand it.

"What I am empowered to suggest," he said, "is a compromise so very favourable to the Ulster claims that I can hardly imagine your rejecting it. The Government will allow the meeting to be held this day week if your committee will agree to the postponement."

"If," I said, "you will also withdraw your Home Rule Bill--"

"But we can't," said Clithering. "We can't do that. We'll insert any reasonable safeguards. We'll concede anything that Ulster likes to ask, but we're pledged, absolutely pledged, to the Bill."

"Well," I said, "as far as pledges are concerned, we're pledged against it."

"What we deprecate," said Sir Samuel, "is violence of any kind. Constitutional agitation, even if carried on with great bitterness is one thing. Violence--but I'm sure, Lord Kilmore, that we can rely on you to use your influence at the meeting this afternoon to secure the acceptance of the terms we offer. I'm sure we can count on you. You can't *want* bloodshed."

I did not want bloodshed, of course. I do not suppose that anybody did. What Clithering could not understand was that some people--without wanting bloodshed--might prefer it to Home Rule. He left me, still I fancy relying on my well-known moderation. No man ever relied on a more utterly useless crutch. Moderation has never been of the slightest use anywhere in Ireland and was certainly a vain thing in Belfast that day.

I walked round to the club and found nobody in it except Conroy. He alone, among the leading supporters of the Loyalist movement, had failed to go to church. I thought I might try how he would regard the policy of moderation.

"I suppose," I said, "that you'll have to give up this meeting to-morrow."

"I don't think so," said Conroy.

"I've just been talking to Sir Samuel Clithering," I said, "and he thinks there'll be bloodshed if you don't."

"I reckon he's right there. We're kind of out for that, aren't we?"

"It won't be so pleasant," I said, "when it's your blood that's shed. I don't mean yours personally, I mean your friends."

"The other side will do some of the bleeding," said Conroy.

"Still," I said, "in the end they'll win."

"I wouldn't bet too heavy on that," said Conroy.

"You don't mean to say that you think that a handful of north of Ireland farmers and mechanics can stand up against the British Empire?"

"It's fixed in my mind," said Conroy, "that the British lion will get his tail twisted a bit before he's through with this business. I don't say that he won't make good in the end. Nobody but God Almighty can tell this minute whether he will or not; but he'll be considerable less frisky when he's finished than he is to-day."

"But," I said, "even supposing you clear the streets of the soldiers and police to-morrow--I do not see how you can; but if you do the Government will simply anchor a battleship off Carrickfergus and shell the whole town into a heap of ruins."

"I'm calculating on their trying that," said Conroy.

That was all I could get out of Conroy. I left him, feeling uneasily that his vote would certainly go against Clithering's compromise. His confidence in the fighting powers of the raw men whom Bob and others had taken to church with them struck me as absurd. His cool assumption of power to deal with the British fleet was arrogance run mad.

On my way back to my hotel I ran into a congregation which had just got out of some church or other. In the first rank--they were marching in very fair order--was Crossan. He saluted me and stopped.

"I'm thinking," he said, "that you won't have seen them."

He pointed to a small group of men who were bringing up the rear of the congregation's march. They were dragging a heavy object along with two large ropes. I recognized the leader of them at once. He was Cahoon's foreman friend, McConkey. I was pleased to find that he recognized me.

"I have her safe," he said. "Would you like to take a look at her?"

I did. She was a machine gun of a kind quite unknown to me; but her appearance was very murderous. McConkey led me up to her. He stroked her black side lovingly and patted her in various places.

"I was trying her yesterday," he said, "down on the slob land under the Shore Road. Man o' man, but she shoots

bonny!"

I had no doubt of it. She was likely to be accountable for a good deal of bloodshed if there was any street fighting next day. The record of her bag would, I should think, haunt Sir Samuel Clithering for the rest of his life.

"I've a matter of five thousand cartridges," said McConkey in a hoarse whisper, "and there's another five thousand ordered."



CHAPTER XIX

The committee met at three o'clock in the afternoon. Sir Samuel Clithering was not, of course, a member of it; but he lurked about outside and waylaid us as we went in. He was in a condition of pitiful bewilderment. Alice whose adventures in Wonderland have been very dear to me since I first read them aloud to Marion, was once placed in a difficult and awkward position by the kings, queens and knaves of the pack of cards with which she was playing coming to life. This was sufficiently embarrassing. But Clithering was much worse off than Alice. In her story all the cards came to life, and though the unexpectedness of their behaviour made things difficult for her there was a certain consistency about the whole business. A card player might in time adjust himself to a game played with cards which possessed wills of their own. But poor Clithering had to play with a pack in which one suit only, and it not even the trump suit, suddenly insisted that the game was a reality. The other three suits, the Liberals, the Conservatives, and the Irish Nationalists still behaved in the normal way, falling pleasantly on top of each other, and winning or losing tricks as the rules of the game demanded. The Ulster party alone--Clubs, we may call them--would not play fairly. They jumped out of the player's hand and obstinately declared that the green cloth was a real battlefield. The higher court cards of the suit--Lady Moyne for instance, and Babberly--Clithering felt himself able to control. It was the knaves--I am sure he looked on McNeice as a knave--the tens, the sevens and the humble twos which behaved outrageously.

And Clithering was not the only player who was perplexed. I had been to luncheon with the Moynes. Babberly was there of course. So was Malcolmson. Clithering sat next but one to Lady Moyne. Malcolmson was between them. It was a curious alliance. The emissary of the Government, which had passed measures which all good aristocrats disliked intensely, joined hands for the moment with the lady whose skill as a political hostess had frequently been troublesome to Clithering's friends. I do not suppose that such an alliance could possibly last long. Those whom misfortune, according to the old proverb, forces into bed together, always struggle out again at opposite sides when the clouds cease to be threatening. But while it lasted the alliance was firm enough. They were both bent on pressing the advantages of moderation on Malcolmson. They produced very little effect. Malcolmson is impervious to reason. He kept falling back, in replying to their arguments, on his original objection to Home Rule.

"I shall never consent," he said, "to be governed by a pack of blackguards in Dublin."

It was really a very good answer, for every time he made it he drove a wedge into the coalition against him. Lady Moyne was bound to admit that all Irishmen outside Ulster are blackguards, and that the atmosphere of Dublin is poisonous. Clithering, on the other hand, was officially committed to an unqualified admiration for everything south of the Boyne. I do not think that Malcolmson appreciated his dialectic advantage. His mind was running on big guns rather than arguments.

Lady Moyne squeezed my hand as we parted after luncheon, and I think I am not exaggerating in saying that there were tears in her eyes. She succeeded at all events in giving me the impression that her future happiness depended very largely on me. I determined, as I had determined several times before, to be true to the most charming lady of my acquaintance.

Moyne took the chair at our meeting. Next him sat Babberly. Cahoon, McNeice and Malcolmson sat together at the bottom of the table. I was given a chair on Moyne's other side. Conroy would not sit at the table at all. He had two chairs in a corner of the room. He sat on one of them and put his legs on the other. He also smoked a cigar, which I think everybody regarded as bad form. But nobody liked to protest, because nobody, except me and McNeice, knew which side Conroy was going to take in the controversy before us. Babberly, I feel sure, would have objected to the cigar if he had thought that Conroy favoured extreme defiance of the Government. Malcolmson, like many military men, is a great stickler for etiquette. He would have snubbed the cigar if he thought Conroy was inclined to moderation. As things were, we all warmly invited Conroy to desert his private encampment and join us round the table.

"I guess I'm here as an onlooker," said Conroy. "You gentlemen can settle things nicely without me, till it comes to writing cheques. Then I chip in."

Moyne murmured a compliment about Conroy's extreme generosity in the past, and Babberly said that further calls on our purses were, for the present, unnecessary. Then we all forgot about Conroy. The Dean sat half way down the table on my side. There was also present a Member of Parliament, a man who had sat by Babberly's side in the House of Commons all through the dreary months of June, July and August, supporting consistently every move he made towards wrecking the Home Rule Bill. There ought to have been several others of the moderate party at the meeting. Their letters of apology were read to us. They all had urgent business either in England or Scotland, which prevented their being in Belfast. I do not think their absence made much difference in the result of our deliberations. We had got beyond the stage at which votes matter much.

Moyne was pitifully nervous. He stated our position very fairly. It was, he said, a hateful thing to have to give in to the Government. He did not like doing it. On the other hand he did not like to take the responsibility of urging the people of Belfast to commit a breach of the peace. Lives, he said, would certainly be lost if we attempted to hold our meeting in the face of the force of armed men which the Government had collected in our streets. He would feel himself guilty of something little short of murder if he did not advise the acceptance of the compromise offered by Clithering. It was, after all, a fair, more than a fair compromise. Nothing would be lost by postponing the meeting for a week.

It was rather a feeble speech. Nobody offered any interruption, but nobody expressed any approval of what he said. When he sat down Babberly rose at once.

Now Babberly is no fool. He knows that florid orations are out of place at committee meetings. He did not treat us to any oratory. He gave us tersely and forcibly several excellent reasons for postponing our demonstration.

"The Government," he said, "is weakening. Its offer of a compromise shows that it is beginning at last to feel the full force of the Ulster objection to Home Rule."

Here McNeice interrupted him.

"If that's so," he said, "we must make our objection more unmistakably obvious than before."

"Quite so," said Babberly; "but how? Is it--"

"By fighting them," said McNeice.

"If by fighting them," said Babberly, "you mean asking the unarmed citizens of Belfast to stand up against rifles--"

"Unarmed?" The word came from Conroy in his corner. Every one was startled. We had not expected Conroy to take any part in the discussion.

"Undrilled, undisciplined," said Babberly. "What can be the result of such a conflict as you suggest? Our people, the men who have trusted us, will be mowed down. We shall place ourselves hopelessly in the wrong. We shall alienate the sympathies of our friends in England."

A large crowd had gathered in the street outside the windows of the room in which we were sitting. I suppose that the men found waiting a tiresome business. By way of passing the time they began to sing "O God, our help in ages past."

"It is of the utmost importance to us," said Babberly, "to retain the sympathies of the English constituencies. Any illegal violence on our part--"

"You should have thought of that before you told the English people that we meant to fight," said McNeice.

"If you follow my advice to-day," said Babberly, "there will be no necessity for fighting."

The hymn outside gathered volume. It seemed to me that thousands of voices were joining in the singing of it. It became exceedingly difficult to hear what Babberly was saying. I leaned forward and caught his next few sentences.

"By keeping within the limits of constitutional action at this crisis we shall demonstrate that we are, what we have always boasted ourselves, the party of law and order. We shall win a bloodless victory. We shall convince the Government that we possess self-control as well as determination."

Then the noise of the singing outside became so great that it was impossible to hear Babberly at all. McNeice tilted his chair back and began to hum the tune. Malcolmson beat time to the singing with his forefingers. Their action seemed to me to be intentionally insulting to Babberly. The crowd outside reached the end of a verse and there was a pause.

"Damn that hymn!" said Babberly.

This roused the Dean. It would have roused any dean with a particle of spirit in him. After all, a high ecclesiastic cannot sit still and listen to profane condemnation of one of the Psalms of David, even if it has undergone versification at the hands of Dr. Watts. The conduct of McNeice and Malcolmson was offensive and provocative. The noise made by the crowd was maddening. There is every excuse for Babberly's sudden loss of temper. But the Dean's anger was more than excusable. It was justified. He sprang to his feet, and I knew at once that he was very angry indeed. I could see a broad white rim all round the irises of his eyes, and a pulse in his temples was throbbing visibly. I recognized the symptoms. I had seen them once before at a vestry meeting when some ill-conditioned parishioner said that the Dean's curate was converting to his own uses the profits of the parish magazine. The periodical, as appeared later on, was actually run at a loss, and the curate had been seven-and-ninepence out of pocket the previous year.

The Dean said something to Babberly, but the crowd had begun the fourth verse of the hymn, and we could not hear

what he said. I got up and shut both windows. The atmosphere of our committee-room was hot, and likely to become hotter; but it is better to do business in a Turkish bath than not to do it at all. There was plainly no use our talking to each other unless we were able to hear. My action gave Babberly time to regain his temper.

"I apologize," he said. "I apologize to all of you, and especially to you, Mr. Dean, for an intemperate and uncalled-for exclamation."

The Dean sat down. The pulse in his forehead was still throbbing, but the irises of his eyes ceased to look like bulls' eyes in the middle of targets.

"I have been a consistent supporter of the Union," said Babberly, "for twenty years. In season and out of season I have upheld the cause we have at heart on English platforms and in the House of Commons. I know better than you do, gentlemen, what the temper of the English people is. I know that we shall sacrifice their friendship and alienate their sympathy if we resort to the argument of lawlessness and violence."

"It's the only argument they ever listen to," said McNeice. "Look at the Nationalists. What arguments did they use?"

"Gentlemen," said Babberly, "are you going to ask Ulstermen to fire on the King's troops?"

"I reckon," said Conroy, "that we mean to use our guns now we've got them."

Babberly made a curious gesture with his hands. He flung them out from him with the palms upwards and then sat down. McNeice rose next.

"For the last two years," he said, "we've been boasting that we meant to resist Home Rule with force if necessary. That's so, isn't it?"

Malcolmson growled an assent.

"English politicians and Irish rebels said we were bluffing. Our own people--the men outside there in the street--thought we were in earnest. The English went on with their Bill. Our people drilled and got rifles. Which of the two was right about us? Were we bluffing or were we in earnest? We've got to answer that question to-morrow, and we'll never get another chance. If we don't fight now, we'll never fight, for there won't be a man left in Ulster that will believe in us again. I don't know that there's any more to be said. I propose that Lord Moyne puts the question to the meeting and takes a vote."

Then Cahoon rose to his feet.

"Before you do that, my lord," he said, "I'd like to say a word. I'm a business man. I've as much at stake as any one in this room. My fortune, gentlemen, is in bricks and mortar, in machinery and plant not ten miles from this city. I've thought this matter out, and I came to a conclusion years ago. Home Rule won't do for Belfast, and Belfast isn't going to have it. If I saw any way of stopping it but the one I'd take it. There are thousands, yes, gentlemen, thousands of men, women, and children depending on my business for their living. Home Rule means ruining it and starving them. I don't like fighting, but, by God, I'll fight before I submit to Home Rule."

Lord Moyne looked slowly round the room. His face was quite pale. It seemed to me that his eyes had grown larger. They had a look of terror in them. His hands trembled among the papers in front of him. He saw at once what the result of a vote would be. He looked at me. I shook my head. It was quite plain that nothing I could say would influence the meeting in the least.

"Gentlemen," said Moyne, "are we to attempt to hold our meeting to-morrow? Those who are in favour of doing so say 'Aye.'"

Cahoon, McNeice, Malcolmson, the Dean and Conroy voted "aye."

"The 'ayes' have it," said Moyne.

"Before we part," said Babberly, "I wish to say that I leave Belfast to-night--"

Malcolmson muttered something. Babberly held up his hand.

"No," he said. "You are wrong. I'm not afraid. I'm not taking care of my own skin. But I have lived a loyal man and I mean to die a loyal man. I decline to take part in the rebellion."

I have heard Babberly speak on various occasions and admired his eloquence. This time I recognized his sincerity. He was speaking the truth.

"I shall go back to England," he said, "and, of this you may rest assured, that I shall do what can be done in Parliament and elsewhere to save you and the men whom I must call your victims from the consequences of to-day's madness and to-morrow's crime."

He left the room. The five men who had voted "Aye" were gathered in a knot talking eagerly. I took Moyne's arm and we went out together.

"Her ladyship must be got away," he said. "And your daughter, Kilmore. She's here, isn't she? This town will be no place for women to-morrow. Luckily I have the car. You'll take them, won't you? Castle Affey will be the best place for the present."

"What are you going to do yourself?" I asked.

We passed through the door and down the flight of steps to the street. The crowd outside caught sight of us at once. Some one shouted aloud.

"More traitors!"

The news of the result of the meeting and the part we took in it had somehow reached the people already. An angry roar went up from the crowd. Those who were nearest to us cursed us. A police-officer with eight men forced a way through the crowd. At a word from their officer the men drew their batons and stood in front of us.

"I think, my lord," said the officer to Moyne, "that you'd better go back. We had the greatest difficulty in getting Mr. Babberly through, and the crowd is angrier now."

"I'm going on," said Moyne.

"I cannot be responsible," said the officer. "I haven't enough men to control this crowd. If you go on--"

Moyne pushed his way through the cordon of police. I followed him. At first the people drew back a little and let us pass into the middle of the crowd. Then one man after another began to hustle us. Moyne linked his arm in mine and helped me along. A man struck him in the face with the flat of his hand. It was a sharp slap rather than an actual blow. Moyne flushed deeply, but he neither spoke nor struck back. Then suddenly the people seemed to forget all about us. A wild cheer burst from them. Hats were flung into the air. Sticks were waved. Some one began firing shots from a revolver in rapid succession. It was a fusillade of joy, a kind of salute to McNeice who appeared at the window of the committee-room. Moyne and I pushed our way on. When we were clear of the crowd Moyne spoke to me again.

"You'd better take them at once," he said. "It's impossible to know what'll happen here to-night."

"But you?" I said.

"Oh, I shall stay."

"Don't be a fool, Moyne," I said. "You're the one of all others who ought not to stay. Don't you see that whatever way things go you're in for it? The mob thinks you're a traitor. I wouldn't trust those fellows we've just left not to kill you. And when the soldiers have shot them down and the subsequent investigation begins, the Government is bound to fix on you as a ringleader. There'll be panic to-morrow and savage vindictiveness the next day. McNeice and Malcolmson will frighten the Government and the Government will have you hanged or beheaded afterwards for causing the trouble. The English people will clamour for a victim, and you're exactly the sort of victim they'll like. Your one chance is to get out of this. Go to Castle Affey to-night, and telegraph to *The Times* to-morrow to say that you dissociate yourself--"

Moyne stopped me.

"Look here, Kilmore," he said. "I've heard all you have to say, and I agree with it, more or less. I don't suppose I'll be either murdered by the mob or shot by the military, but--"

"You will," I said, "if you stay here."

"Even if I am," he said, "I'll have to stay."

"In the name of goodness, why?"

"You know the way we've been talking for the last two years--our side, I mean."

I knew the way Babberly had been talking. I knew the way Lady Moyne had goaded him and others to talk, but poor Moyne hardly ever talked at all. All he ever wanted was to be left alone.

"Well, I can't exactly go back on them now when they're doing what we said they ought to do. I've got to see the thing through. After all it's my fault that those poor fellows are in this horrible mess."

He glanced back as he spoke. He was thinking of the angry crowd we had left behind us.

"So you'll take care of the ladies," he said. "Run them down to Castle Affey and make yourself as comfortable as you can. They won't be expecting you, but they'll manage some sort of dinner."

"I'm not going," I said. "I'm staying on in Belfast."

"But why should you? You've no responsibility. You've never taken any part in our--It's very good of you to think of staying. It really is. And I appreciate the spirit in which--But--"

"For goodness' sake, Moyne," I said, "don't give me credit for any kind of heroism. That *noblesse oblige* attitude of yours doesn't suit me a bit. It isn't in my line."

"But hang it all, Kilmore, you can't be staying here for the fun of it."

"I've often told you," I said, "that I'm writing a history of the Irish Rebellions. I naturally want to see one, and there isn't likely to be another in my time. That's my only reason for staying in Belfast."

We found Lady Moyne waiting for us when we reached the hotel. She was wearing a long cloak, and had a motor-veil tied over her head. She was evidently prepared to start at once.

"I've ordered the car," she said. "It ought to be round now. Marion's coming with me, Lord Kilmore. I think she'd be better out of Belfast for the next few days."

The news of the decision of our committee seemed to have spread with quite unexampled rapidity. We came straight from the meeting, and we found that Lady Moyne had already recognized the necessity for flight.

"I'm glad you're going," said Moyne, "and I'm glad you're taking Marion with you. But how did you know? Who told you what--?"

"That young man who's Mr. Conroy's secretary," said Lady Moyne. "I forget his name."

"Bob Power," I said.

"He came in to see Marion, and he told us."

Bob must have known beforehand what the committee's decision was to be. I realized that Conroy must have had the whole plan cut and dried; that the meeting at which Moyne presided was simply a farce. However, there was nothing to be gained by discussing that.

"I think," I said, "that Moyne ought to go with you. I don't think Belfast is particularly safe for him just now; and--"

"Moyne must stay, of course," said Lady Moyne.

"There'll be trouble afterwards," I said. "He ought not to be mixed up in it. If he clears out at once--"

Lady Moyne looked at me with an expression of wonder on her face. Her eyes opened very wide.

"Surely," she said, "you don't expect him to run away."

"Of course not," said Moyne; "of course not. And there's really no risk. I'll--"

"That's not the kind of people we are," said Lady Moyne.

"I'll join you at Castle Affey in a couple of days," said Moyne.

"Castle Affey," said Lady Moyne. "I'm not going to Castle Affey. I'm going to London."

"What for?" I said. "And how are you going to get there? There are no steamers on Sunday night."

"I'm taking possession of Mr. Conroy's yacht," said Lady Moyne. "She's lying off Bangor, and that young man, Mr. Power, said we could have her. We'll get across to Stranraer this evening, and I'll have a special train and be in London to-morrow morning."

"London!" said Moyne. "But why London? Surely Castle Affey--"

"I must see the Prime Minister early to-morrow. He must be persuaded--he must be forced if necessary--to telegraph

orders to Belfast. Don't you realize? I don't blame you, I don't blame either of you for the failure of your meeting this afternoon. I'm sure you did your best. But--but what will happen here to-morrow? We can't leave the people to be shot down like dogs. After all, they're *our* people."

"But what can you do?" said Moyne. "The Prime Minister won't see you."

"If necessary I shall force him," said Lady Moyne. "He shall see me."

Lady Moyne is, as I have always said, a remarkable woman. Many members of her sex have been trying for years to force their way into the presence of the Prime Minister. They have hitherto failed.

"I am afraid," I said, "that Marion won't be much use to you if you're going to come into collision with the police in any way."

Lady Moyne smiled.

"I hope I shan't be reduced to those methods," she said; "but if I am I shall leave Marion at home."

I had not the slightest doubt that Lady Moyne would succeed in seeing the Prime Minister. He has probably sense enough to know that though he may resist other women successfully, he cannot possibly make head against her.

"If there is no rioting here to-night," said Lady Moyne, "I shall be in time. That young man, Mr. Power, seemed to think that everything would be quiet until to-morrow. I hope he's right."

"He's sure to be," I said. "Conroy is running the revolution and settles exactly what is to happen."

"He was very confident," said Lady Moyne. "Ah! here's Marion. Now we can start. Good-bye, Lord Kilmore. Do your best here. I'll make the best arrangement I can with the Prime Minister."



CHAPTER XX

Moyne and I dined together in the hotel. We should have got a better dinner at the club, and I wanted to go there. But Moyne was afraid of the other men's talk. It was likely that there would be some very eager talk at the club; and Moyne, whose name still figured on placards as chairman of next day's meeting would have been a butt for every kind of anxious inquiry.

We did not altogether escape talk by staying in the hotel.

Just as we were sitting down to dinner I was told that Bob Power wished to see me. Moyne wanted me to send him away; but I could not well refuse an interview to the man who was to be my son-in-law. I gave that as my excuse to Moyne. In reality I was filled with curiosity, and wanted to hear what Bob would say to us. I told the waiter to show him in. He carried no visible weapon of any kind, but he was wearing a light blue scarf round his left arm. I suppose I stared at it.

"Our nearest approach to a uniform," he said. "Something of the sort was necessary."

"But why light blue?" I asked.

"Oh, I don't know. It's a good colour, easily seen. The men are to wear orange, of course. I'm an officer."

"Captain or Colonel or Knight at Arms?" I asked.

"We haven't bothered about titles," said Bob, who did not seem to recognize the question. "We haven't had time to settle details of any sort. In fact I haven't much time now. I just dropped in to tell you that you needn't be nervous about to-night. We have our men well under control, and the police ought to be able to deal with the rabble. If they can't--if there's any sign of rioting--we step in and stop it at once."

He pulled a revolver from his coat pocket as he spoke. It gave us the necessary information about the way in which rioting was to be stopped.

"I shall be on patrol all night," he said. "My orders--"

"By the way," I said, "excuse my asking a stupid sort of question. But who gives you your orders? Who is Commander-in-Chief?"

"Conroy, of course. Didn't you know? He organized the whole thing. Wonderful head Conroy has. I don't wonder he became a millionaire. He has his men under perfect control. They may not look starchy when you see them in the streets, but they'll do what they're told. I thought you and Lord Moyne would be glad to know, so I dropped in to tell you. I must be off now."

He got as far as the door and then turned.

"Marion and Lady Moyne got away all right," he said. "I saw them off."

Then he left us.

"That's good news as far as it goes," I said.

"I'm not sure," said Moyne. "I'm not at all sure. If there had been a riot to-night, the ordinary sort of riot--but I don't know. It's very hard to know what to hope for."

If there had been an ordinary riot that night, and if it had been sternly and promptly suppressed, there would perhaps have been no battle next day. If, on the other hand, Conroy and Bob and the others could keep their men under control, if they could secure the peace of the city for the night, then the fighting next day was likely to be serious. As Moyne said, it was very hard to know what to hope for.

The waiter brought in our fish, and with it a message from Sir Samuel Clithering. He wanted to see Moyne. I had had enough of Clithering for one day, so I made no objection when Moyne flatly refused to see him.

I suppose a man cannot be a successful manufacturer of hosiery in the English midlands without possessing the quality of persistence. Clithering had it. He sent another message to say that his business was very important. Moyne said that he and his business might go to hell together. I hope the waiter translated this message into parliamentary language. Clithering is a Nonconformist, and therefore a man of tender conscience. I should not like him to be shocked.

The hotel cook was doing his best for us. He sent us up an *entree*. With it came a note from Clithering.

"I'm sending a telegram to the Prime Minister describing the condition of affairs here. May I say that you have refused to preside at the meeting to-morrow?"

Moyne showed me the note. Then he scribbled an answer on the back of it.

"You may tell the Prime Minister that if a meeting is held I shall preside. The announcements made in the papers and posters stand good."

"Do you think that's wise?" I asked.

"I think it's right," said Moyne.

It is a great pity that right things very seldom are wise. I have hardly ever met anything which could possibly be called prudent which was not also either mean or actually wrong.

Our next interruption was due to a newspaper reporter. He represented several papers, among others one in New York. He had the names of all of them printed on his card, but they did not impress Moyne. Our waiter, who was beginning to swell with a sense of his own importance, drove off that newspaper reporter. Three others, all of them representing papers of high standing, sent in their cards in quick succession. Moyne laid a sovereign on the table and told the waiter that he could have it as a tip on condition that no one got into the room while we were at dinner.

The waiter got the sovereign in the end; but he did not deserve it. While we were drinking our coffee a young man overwhelmed our waiter and forced his way into the room. There were two doors in our room, which is one of what is called a suite. As the young man entered by one, Moyne, leaving his coffee and his sovereign behind him, left by the other. He shut it with a slam and locked it.

"Lord Moyne, I presume?" said the young man.

"Lord Moyne," I said, "has just left."

"May I ask," he said, "if I have the honour of addressing Mr. McNeice?"

I explained that I was not McNeice. Then, in order to get him to go away, if possible, I added that I was not Malcolmson, or Cahoon, or Conroy, or the Dean.

"If you'll pardon my curiosity," he said, "I should like to ask--"

I saw that I should be obliged to tell him who I was in the end. I told him at once, adding that I was a person of no importance whatever, and that I had no views of any kind on what he would no doubt want to call "the situation."

"May I ask you one question?" he said. "Is Lord Moyne going to take the chair to-morrow?"

"Yes," I said, "he is. But if you're going to print what I say in any paper I won't speak another word."

"As a matter of fact," he said, "the wires are blocked. There's a man in the post office writing as hard as he can and handing one sheet after another across the counter as quick as he can write them. Nobody else can send anything."

"Clithering, I expect."

"Very likely. Seems to fancy himself a bit, whoever he is. Nobody else can get a message through."

He seemed an agreeable young man. Moyne had probably gone to bed and I did not want to spend a lonely evening.

"Have a glass of claret," I said.

He sat down and poured himself off half a tumbler-full. Then it struck him that he owed me some return for my hospitality.

"My name," he said, "is Bland. I was with Roberts' column in the Orange Free State."

"Ah!" I said. "A war correspondent."

"I did the Greek War, too," he said. "A poor affair, very. Looks to me as if you were going to do better here. But it's a curious situation."

"Very," I said, "and most unpleasant."

"From my point of view," said Bland, "it's most interesting. The usual thing is for one army to clear out of a town before the other comes in or else to surrender after a regular siege. But here--"

"I'm afraid," I said, "that our proceedings are frightfully irregular."

"None the worse for that," said Bland kindly. "But they *are* a bit peculiar. I've read up quite a lot of military history and I don't recollect a single case in which two hostile armies patrolled the streets of the same city without firing a shot at one another. By the way, have you been out?"

"Not since this afternoon," I said.

"It would be quite worth your while to take a stroll round," said Bland. "There's not the slightest risk and you may never have a chance of seeing anything like it again."

I quite agreed with Bland. The odds are, I suppose, thousands to one against my ever again seeing two hostile armies walking up and down opposite sides of the street. I got my hat and we went out together.

We were almost immediately stopped by a body of lancers. Their leader asked us who we were and where we were going.

"Press correspondents," said Bland, "on our way to the telegraph office."

This impressed the officer. He allowed us to go on without ordering his men to impale us. I was glad of this. I am not particularly afraid of being killed, but I would rather meet my end by a sword cut or a bullet than by a lance. I should feel like a wild pig if a lancer speared me. No one could die with dignity and self-respect if he felt like a wild pig while he was passing away.

"In ordinary wars," said Bland, "the best thing to say is that you are a doctor attached to the Ambulance Corps. But that's no use here. These fellows don't want doctors!"

Then we met a party of volunteers. They stopped us too, and challenged us very sternly. Bland gave his answer. This time it did not prove wholly satisfactory.

"Protestant or Papist?" said the officer in command.

"Neither," said Bland, "I'm a high caste Brahmin."

Fortunately I recognized the officer's voice. It was Crossan who commanded this particular regiment. It never was safe, even in the quietest times, to be flippant with Crossan. On a night like that and under the existing circumstances, Bland might very well have been knocked on the head for his joke if I had not come to his rescue.

"Crossan," I said, "don't make a fuss. Mr. Bland and I are simply taking a walk round the streets."

"If he's a Papist," said Crossan, "he'll have to go home to his bed. Them's my orders. We don't want rioting in the streets to-night."

I turned to Bland.

"What is your religion?" I asked.

"Haven't any," he said. "I haven't believed any doctrine taught by any Church since I was six years old. Will that satisfy you?"

"I was afeard," said Crossan, "that you might be a Papist. You can go on."

This shows, I think, that the charges of bigotry and intolerance brought against our Northern Protestants are quite unfounded. Crossan had no wish to persecute even a professed atheist.

We did not go very far though we were out for nearly two hours. The streets were filled with armed men and everybody we met challenged us. The police were the hardest to get rid of. They were no doubt soured by the treatment they received in Belfast. Accustomed to be regarded with awe by rural malefactors and denounced in flaming periods, of a kind highly gratifying to their self-importance, by political leaders, they could not understand a people who did not mention them in speeches but threatened their lives with paving stones. This had been their previous experience of Belfast and they were naturally suspicious of any stray wayfarers whom they met. They were not impressed when Bland said he was a newspaper reporter. They did not seem to care whether he believed or disbelieved the Apostles' Creed. One party of them actually arrested us and only a ready lie of Bland's saved us from spending an uncomfortable night. He said, to my absolute amazement, that we were officials of an exalted kind, sent down by the Local Government Board to hold a sworn inquiry into the condition of Belfast. This struck me at the time as an outrageously silly story, but it was really a rather good one to tell. The Irish police are accustomed to sworn inquiries as one of the last resorts of harassed Governments. It seemed to the sergeant quite natural that somebody should be in Belfast to hold one.

We came across McConkey with his machine gun at a street corner. He had got a new crew to pull it along. I suppose the first men were utterly exhausted. But McConkey himself was quite fresh. Enthusiasm for the weapon on which he had spent the savings of a lifetime kept him from fatigue.

The experience was immensely interesting; but I began to get tired after a time. The necessity for explaining what we were--or rather what we were not--at the end of every fifty yards, began to make me nervous. Bland's spirits kept up, but Bland is a war correspondent and accustomed to being harried by military authorities. I am not. It was a comfort to me when we ran into Bob Power's regiment outside the Ulster Hall.

"Bob," I said, "I want to get back to my hotel. I wish you'd see me safe, chaperone me, convoy me, or whatever you call the thing I want you to do."

Bland tugged at my sleeve.

"Get him to take me to the post-office," he said. "I'll have another go at getting a telegram through."

"Bob," I said, "this is my friend Mr. Bland. He's a war correspondent and he wants to get to the post-office."

My return to the hotel was simple enough. The police kept out of the way of Bob's men. The other soldiers let him and his regiment pass without challenge. Bland, faithful to his professional duties, poured out questions as we went along.

"How's it managed?" he said. "Why aren't you at each other's throats?"

"So far as we're concerned," said Bob, "there's nothing to fight about. We don't object to the soldiers or the police. We're loyal men."

"Oh, are you?" said Bland.

"Quite."

"Unless our meeting's interrupted to-morrow," I said.

"Of course," said Bob.

"That explains your position all right," said Bland. "But I don't quite understand the others. I should have thought--"

"The soldiers," said Bob, "have strict orders not to provoke a conflict. I met Henderson just now and he told me so. You remember Henderson, Lord Kilmore? The man I was talking to at the railway station. He'd only had two water biscuits to eat all day yesterday. When I met him just now he told me he'd had nothing since breakfast to-day but one bit of butterscotch. He said he wished we'd fight at once if we were going to fight and get it over."

"But the police--" said Bland, still trying to get information. "I should have thought the police--"

"They tried to arrest us," I said. "In fact they did arrest us but they let us go again."

"I dare say they'd like to arrest us," said Bob, "but you see we've all got guns."

"Ah," said Bland, "and the ordinary inhabitants of the city--?"

"They're in bed," said Bob, "and we've all agreed that they'd better stay there. Nobody wants a riot."

"Thanks," said Bland. "If I can get my wire through I'll let the world know the exact position of affairs."

"If you are wiring," said Bob, "you might like to mention that there was jolly nearly being a fight at the gasworks. The military people got it into their heads that we intended to turn off the gas and plunge the town into darkness so as to be able to murder people without being caught. They took possession of the works and put a party of Royal Engineers in charge. Fairly silly idea! But some fool on our side--a fellow who's been dragging a quick-firing gun about the streets all day--"

"McConkey," I said. "I know him."

"I didn't hear his name," said Bob, "but he got it into his head that the Royal Engineers were going to turn off the gas so that the soldiers could make short work of us. He wanted to wipe out those engineers with his gun. I don't suppose he'd have hit them, but he'd certainly have tried if some one hadn't run and fetched Conroy. He settled the matter at once."

"How?" said Bland. "This story will be a scoop for me. I don't expect any one else knows it."

"He handed the gasworks over to the police," said Bob.

"But did that satisfy any one?" I asked. "I should have thought that both the original parties would have fallen upon the police."

"Not at all," said Bob. "The police are so much the weakest party in the town that it's plainly to their interest to keep the gas burning. Even the man with the machine gun saw that."

I found Moyne waiting for me when I got back to the hotel. He was very depressed and took no more than a mere sip of the whisky and soda which I ordered for him. I made an effort to cheer him a little before I went to bed.

"I don't think," I said, "that there'll be a battle to-morrow."

"I am sure there will. What's to stop it?"

"The fact is," I said, "that everybody will be too exhausted to fight. McConkey, for instance, is still hauling that field gun of his about the streets. He simply won't have strength enough left to-morrow to shoot it off. All the soldiers and all the volunteers are marching up and down. They mean to keep it up all night. I should say that you and I and three or four other sensible people who have gone to bed will have the town entirely to ourselves to-morrow."

Moyne smiled feebly.

"I wish it was all well over," he said. "I hope the Prime Minister won't be disagreeable to--. It would have been better, much better, if she'd gone to Castle Affey."

"You needn't be a bit afraid of that," I said.

This time I spoke with real assurance. No man living could be disagreeable to Lady Moyne, if she smiled at him. When she left Belfast she was so much in earnest and so anxious, that she would certainly smile her very best at the Prime Minister.

"I don't know," said Moyne. "He may hold her responsible to some extent. And she is, you know. That's the worst of it, she is. We all are."

"Not at all," I said.

"Oh, but we are," said Moyne. "I feel that. I wish to goodness we'd never--"

"What I mean is that the Prime Minister won't hold her responsible. After all, Moyne, he's a politician himself. He'll understand."

"But we said--we kept on saying--Babberly and all of us--"

Moyne was becoming morbid.

"Don't be a fool," I said. "Of course we said things. Everybody does. But we never intended to do them. Any one accustomed to politics will understand that. I expect the Prime Minister will be particularly civil to Lady Moyne. He'll see the hole she's in."



CHAPTER XXI

I went down to the club next morning at about half-past ten o'clock, hoping to see Conroy. He, so I thought, might be able to tell me what was likely to happen during the day. Moyne could tell me nothing. I left him in the hotel, desperately determined to take the chair at any meeting that might be held; but very doubtful about how he was to do it.

The streets were much less obviously martial than they had been the night before. There were no soldiers to be seen. There were only a very few volunteers, and they did not seem to be doing anything particular. The police--there were not even many of them--looked quite peaceable, as if they had no more terrific duties to perform than the regulation of traffic and the arrest of errant drunkards. I began to think that I had accidentally told Moyne the truth the night before. All our warriors seemed to be in bed, exhausted by their marching and counter-marching. I did not even see McConkey with his machine gun. This disappointed me. I thought McConkey was a man of more grit. One night's work ought not to have tired him out.

Clithering was in the club. He, at all events, was still active. Very likely he was caught the night before by some patrolling party and forced to go to bed. Unless he happened to be carrying some sort of certificate of his religious faith in his pocket, Crossan would almost certainly have put him to bed. The moment he saw me he came fussing up to me.

"I'm very glad to be able to tell you," he said, "that the troops are to be kept in barracks to-day unless they are urgently required. I'm sure you'll agree with me that's a good plan."

"It depends," I said, "on the point of view you take. It won't be at all a good plan for the police if there's any fighting."

"I telegraphed to the Prime Minister last night," said Clithering; "I sent a long, detailed message--"

"I heard about that," I said, "from one of the war correspondents, a man called Bland. You rather blocked the wires, and he couldn't get his messages through."

"It was of the utmost possible importance," said Clithering, "that the Prime Minister should thoroughly understand the situation. Our original idea was that the appearance of large bodies of troops in the streets would overawe--"

"They weren't overawing any one," I said.

"So I saw. So I saw yesterday afternoon. I telegraphed at once. I gave it as my opinion that the troops, so far from overawing, were exasperating the populace. I suggested--I'm sure you'll agree with me that the suggestion was wise--in fact I urged very strongly that the troops should be kept out of sight to-day--under arms and ready for emergencies--but out of sight. I am in great hopes that the people will settle down quietly. Now, what do you think, Lord Kilmore?"

"They'll be quite quiet," I said, "if you let them hold their meeting."

"Oh, but that's impossible," said Clithering. "I quite agree with the Prime Minister there. Any sign of weakness on the part of the Government at the present crisis would be fatal, absolutely fatal. The Belfast people must understand that they cannot be allowed to defy the law."

"Then you'd better trot out your soldiers again, all you've got."

Clithering did not seem at all pleased with this suggestion.

"We shall rely upon the police," he said, "to put a stop to the meeting. I do not anticipate that there will be any organized--"

"On the whole," I said, "I'm very glad I'm not a policeman."

"Surely," said Clithering, "the responsible leaders of the Unionist party will understand the criminal folly of--You don't anticipate--"

"I'm nothing of a prophet," I said; "but if you ask my opinion I'd say that the police will be wiped out in about ten minutes. They're a very fine body of men; but there aren't nearly enough of them. If you really want to stop the meeting you'll have to get out the soldiers, and even with them--"

"But we want to avoid bloodshed," said Clithering. "We cannot have the citizens of Belfast shot down by the military. Think of the consequences, the political consequences. A Tory Government might--but we! Besides, the horrible moral guilt."

"It's no affair of mine," I said; "but I should have thought--I dare say I am wrong. There may be no moral guilt about killing policemen."

"But they won't be killed," said Clithering. "Our one aim is to avoid bloodshed."

"You're trying the police rather high," I said. "They'll do what you tell them, of course. But I don't think it's quite fair to ask them to face ten times their own number of men all armed with magazine rifles when they have nothing but those ridiculous little carbines."

"Oh, but the police are not to have firearms," said Clithering. "Strict orders have been given--batons ought to be quite sufficient. We must avoid all risk of bloodshed."

"Good gracious!" I said. "Do you expect a handful of police with small, round sticks in their hands--Oh! go away, Clithering. You mean well, I dare say, but you're absurd."

It is very seldom that I lose my temper in this sudden way. I was sorry a moment afterwards that I had given way to my feelings. Poor Clithering looked deeply hurt. He turned from me with an expression of pained astonishment and sat down by himself in a corner. I pitied him so much that I made an effort to console him.

"I dare say it will be all right," I said. "The police will probably have sense enough to go away before they're shot. Then the meeting will be held quite peaceably. I don't know what the political consequences of that may be, but you'll get off the moral guilt, and there'll be no bloodshed."

This ought to have cheered and consoled Clithering; but it did not. It made him more nervous than ever.

"I must go at once," he said, "and see the General in command. Everything must be--"

He left the room hurriedly without finishing his sentence. This annoyed me. I wanted to know what everything must be.

The reading-room of the club is on the first floor, and the window commands an excellent view of Donegal Place, one of the principal thoroughfares of Belfast. The club stands right across the eastern end of the street, and the traffic is diverted to right and left along Royal Avenue and High Street. At the far, the western end, of Donegal Place, stands the new City Hall, with the statue of Queen Victoria in front of it. There again the traffic is split at right angles. Some of the best shops in the town lie on either side of this street. A continuous stream of trams passes up and down it, to and from the junction, which is directly under the club windows, and is the centre of the whole Belfast tramway system. It is always pleasant to stand at the reading-room window and watch the very busy and strenuous traffic of this street. As a view point on that particular morning the window was as good as possible. Donegal Place is the chief and most obvious way from the northern and eastern parts of the city to the place where the meeting was to be held.

Between eleven o'clock and twelve the volunteers began to appear in considerable numbers. I saw at once that I had been wrong in supposing that they meant to spend the day in bed. One company after another came up Royal Avenue or swung round the corner from High Street, and marched before my eyes along Donegal Place towards the scene of the meeting. Small bodies of police appeared here and there, heading in the same direction. Now and then a few mounted police trotted by, making nearly as much jangle as if they had been regular soldiers. The hour fixed for the meeting was one o'clock, but at noon the number of men in the street was so great that ordinary traffic was stopped. A long line of trams, unable to force their way along, blocked the centre of the thoroughfare. The drivers and conductors left them and went away. Crowds of women and children collected on the roofs of these trams and cheered the men as they marched along.

At half-past twelve Moyne drove along in a carriage. The Dean was beside him, and Cahoon had a seat with his back to the horses. The progress of the carriage was necessarily very slow. I could not see Moyne's face, but he sat in a hunched-up attitude suggestive of great misery. The Dean sat bolt upright, and kept taking off his hat to the crowd when cheers broke out. Cahoon, whose face I could see, seemed cheerful and confident.

At the back of the carriage, perched on a kind of bar and holding on tightly to the springs, was Bland. Barefooted urchins often ride in this way, and appear to enjoy themselves until the coachman lashes backwards at them with his whip. I never saw a grown man do it before, and I should have supposed that it would be most uncomfortable. Bland, however, seemed quite cheerful, and I admired the instinct which led him to attach himself to Moyne's carriage. He made sure of being present at the outbreak of hostilities, since the meeting could neither be held nor stopped till Moyne arrived; and he had hit upon far the easiest way of getting through the crowd which thronged Donegal Place.

At a quarter to one Bob Power and his company arrived. Instead of marching to the scene of the meeting Bob halted and drew his men across the end of the street right underneath the club windows. Crossan, with another company of volunteers, joined him.

Bob and Crossan consulted together, and Bob gave an order which I could not hear. Two of his men laid down their rifles and ran along the street, one taking each side of the line of trams. They shouted to the people on the roofs of the trams as they passed them. The orders, if they were orders, were obeyed. There was a hurried stampede of women and children. They climbed down from the trams and ran along the street towards my end of it. Bob's men opened their ranks and let them go through.

One after another the shops in the streets were closed. Roller blinds and shutters covered the windows. A telegraph boy on a red bicycle rode through Bob's lines into the empty street. He stopped and dismounted, evidently puzzled by the deserted appearance of the street. Two of the volunteers seized him and took the envelope from his wallet. They sent him back to the post-office. The poor boy was so frightened that he left his bicycle behind him.

Bob gave an order and one of his men took the bicycle and rode off in the direction of the meeting. A few minutes later one of the club waiters brought the telegram to me. It was from Lady Moyne.

"Saw the Prime Minister this morning. He is taking all possible measures to avoid bloodshed. Has telegraphed instructions to the military authorities. Tell Moyne. Am sending duplicate message to him. Want to make sure of reaching him."

I glanced at my watch. It was five minutes past one; evidently too late to tell Moyne anything. Whatever was happening at the scene of the meeting had begun to happen at one o'clock. I waited.

Ten minutes later a motor car, driven at a furious pace, dashed round the corner at the far end of the street, and sped towards us. A single passenger sat beside the driver. I recognized him at once. It was Clithering. Halfway down the street he suddenly caught sight of Bob's volunteers. He clutched the driver by the arm. The car stopped abruptly, backed, turned round and sped back again. I lost sight of it as it swept round the corner.

Then followed another period of waiting in tense silence. The men beneath me--there must have been about five hundred of them--did not speak. They scarcely moved. Bob and Crossan stood in front of them, rigid, silent.

Bob's scout, the man who had mounted the telegraph boy's red bicycle, appeared in front of the Town Hall and came tearing along the street. He sprang to the ground in front of Bob and Crossan and spoke to them eagerly. They turned almost at once and gave an order. Their men lay down. I heard the rattle of their rifles on the pavement. I could see their hands fiddling with the sights, slipping along the barrels and stocks, opening and snapping shut the magazines. The men were nervous, but, except for the movements of their hands, they showed no signs of great excitement. One man, near the end of the line, deliberately unbuttoned his collar and threw it away. Another took off his coat, folded it up carefully, and laid it on the ground behind him. It struck me that it was his vest coat, a Sunday garment which he was unwilling to soil. Bob walked slowly along the line, speaking in low tones to the men. Crossan stood rigidly still a few paces in front of the line, watching the far end of the street.

Another cyclist appeared and rode towards us. One of the men fired his rifle. Crossan turned round, walked back to the man, and struck him on the head. Then he wrenched the rifle from his hands, threw it into the street, and kicked the man savagely. The man made no resistance. He got up and slowly left the ranks, walking away shamefacedly with hanging head. I do not think that Crossan had spoken to him, nor did he speak to any one else. His action explained itself. He turned his back on the men and once again stared down the empty street. Discipline was evidently to be strictly preserved in the ranks of the volunteers. There was to be no shooting until the order was given.

When Crossan's proceedings ceased to be interesting I looked round to see what had become of the cyclist. I caught sight of him in the custody of two volunteers. He was shoved through the door of the club. I could only see the top of his head, and so failed to recognize him until he entered the room and came over to me.

"Bland," I said. "How did you get here?"

"I spotted this window," said Bland, "as I rode along, and I asked them to put me in here. Is it a club?"

"Yes," I said. "What happened at the meeting?"

"Get me a whisky and soda," said Bland, "if you're a member."

I rang the bell.

"What happened?" I said. "Did they hold the meeting?"

"They were holding it," said Bland, "when I left. But it wasn't much of a meeting."

I ordered a whisky and soda from a terrified waiter.

"What about the police?" I asked.

"They ran over the police," said Bland. "I don't think they killed many. There wasn't any shooting. The whole thing was done with a rush. Damned well done. You couldn't call it a charge. The police were drawn up in the middle of an open space where four or five roads met. The men kind of flowed over them. When the place was clear again, there weren't any police. That's all. Ah! here's the whisky!"

He was evidently thirsty for he drank the whole tumbler-full at a draught.

"What about Moyne?" I said. "What did he do?"

"Oh! He stood up on the back seat of a carriage and began to make a speech. But that didn't matter."

"What did he say?"

"I don't know. I didn't stay to listen. I expect he urged them not to kill any one. But it does not matter what he said. The men with rifles, the volunteers, began to march off at once, in good order, some in one direction, some in another. In five minutes there wasn't anybody left to listen to Lord Moyne except a few corner boys. I can tell you this, Lord Kilmore, there's a man with a head on his shoulders behind this insurrection. He has those men of his holding all the most important parts of the town. I got hold of a bicycle--"

"How?" I said. "You're very wonderful, Bland. How did you get a bicycle in the middle of a battlefield?"

"Stole it," said Bland. "It belonged to a policeman, but he is probably dead, so he won't mind. I rode after two or three different parties of volunteers just to see where they were going. When I got back to the place of the meeting there was a body of cavalry trotting up. I had a sort of feeling that the battle would come this way. It ought to. This is the most important place in the town. All lines of communication meet here. Your side has brains enough to see that. The question is, will the soldiers attack them here? I chanced it. If there's any good fighting to-day it ought to be here."

I am not sure whether the General in command of the troops had the brains to recognize that the post which Bob Power held was the key to the whole situation. He did a good deal of desultory street fighting in other places, and though he made a strong show of attacking Bob Power in the end I think he was drawn into it by accident.

Bland lit a cigarette, and he and I stood at the window watching.

A crowd of men appeared at the far end of the street, running in wild disorder. They ran quite silently with bent heads and outstretched hands. Behind them, immediately behind them, came a squadron of dragoons galloping. As the fugitives turned into the street the soldiers overtook them and struck right and left with their swords. They were using the flats, not the edges of the blades. The fugitives staggered under the blows. Some of them stumbled and fell; but I do not think that any one was seriously hurt.

"Lord Moyne's audience," said Bland. "The corner boys. There's not an armed man among them."

I noticed that when he pointed it out to me. The flying men, wild with terror, rushed into the empty trams. For the moment they were safe enough. The dragoons could not get at them without dismounting. They pulled up their horses.

Bob Power gave an order. Rifles cracked all along his line. The men must have emptied their magazines before they stopped firing. The officer of the dragoons gave an order. His squadron wheeled and galloped back the way they came. Five horses lay plunging on the ground. Four men dragged themselves clear of their saddles and ran after their comrades. The other lay where he fell.

Six men detached themselves from Bob's lines and ran forward. In a few minutes they were dragging the terrified fugitives from the trams and driving them along the street. They came towards us, wailing aloud in high shrill voices, like women. Behind them came Bob's volunteers, carrying the wounded dragoon, and supporting a couple of the fugitives who had been knocked down by the soldiers. The howling men were pushed through the ranks to the rear. The volunteers closed up again in silence. Not even when the dragoons turned and galloped away did they break their silence. I have heard of soldiers going into battle with shouts and greeting moments of success with cheers. These men fired on their enemies without a shout and saw them fly without a cheer. Five minutes later a company of infantry marched into the street, extended into open order, and fired. Bob's men fired. More infantry came. They deployed along the front of the City Hall. The rifle fire from both ends of the street was rapid and continuous. It was the first time in my life that I had ever been in danger of being killed by a bullet. I confess that for a few minutes I was so nervous that I was unable to give any attention to the fighting going on in front of me. So many rifles were going off at the far end of the street that it seemed certain that not only Bland and I but every one of Bob's men must necessarily die at once. To my very great surprise I was not hit. My nervousness began to disappear. I peered out of the window and noticed that none of Bob's men were either killed or wounded.

"I suppose," I said to Bland, "that this is a regular battle. You've had some experience so you ought to know."

"Oh yes," said Bland, "it's a battle right enough--of sorts."

A bullet snicked through the window glass above my head and buried itself in the wall at the far end of the room. I looked at the volunteers again. They did not seem to be suffering. I took a glance at the soldiers at the far end of the street. The firing did not seem even to annoy them.

"There seems to me," I said, "to be very little damage done. Don't they usually kill each other in battles?"

"The shooting's damned bad," said Bland, "damned bad on both sides. I never saw worse. I wonder if they mean to shoot straight."

Bob's men, I think, were doing their best; but they were certainly making very bad practice. It did not seem to me that during the first twenty minutes they hit a single living thing except the four dragoon horses. The walls of the houses on both sides of the street were filled with bullet marks. A curious kind of shallow furrow appeared about halfway down the street. At first it seemed a mere line drawn on the ground. Then it deepened into a little trench with a ridge of dust beyond it.

"There must be a ton or two of good bullets buried there," said Bland. "They haven't sighted for the distance."

"I don't blame the volunteers," I said, "but the soldiers really ought to shoot better. A lot of money is spent on that army every year, and if they can't hit a single enemy at that distance--"

"I rather think," said Bland, "that the soldiers are firing up into the air on purpose. That bullet which came through our window is the only one which hit anything. It's shocking waste of ammunition."

The door of the reading-room opened behind me. I turned and saw Sir Samuel Clithering. He staggered into the room and looked deadly white. For a moment I thought he must be blind. He plunged straight into a table which stood in the middle of the room in front of him.

"My God! My God!" he cried.

Then he was violently sick. He must have got into the club somehow from the back. I went over to him, intending to get him out of the room before he was sick again. He clutched my arm and held me tight.

"Stop it," he said. "Stop it. Promise them anything, anything at all; only get them to stop."

I did not quite know what Clithering wanted me to do. It seemed absurd to go down to Bob Power and offer, on behalf of the Government, to introduce amendments into the Home Rule Bill. Yet something of the sort must have been in Clithering's mind when he urged me to promise anything. He probably had some vague idea of consulting the wishes of the electorate. That is the sort of thing Clithering would think of doing in an emergency.

"It's horrible, too horrible," he said. "Oh God! Bloodshed! Bloodshed!"

"Cheer up," I said, "I don't think a single man on either side has been hit yet."

"I say," said Bland from the window, "did the soldiers get orders to fire over the people's heads?"

"Yes," said Clithering. "Strict orders. The Cabinet was unanimous. The Prime Minister telegraphed this morning."

"Rather rough on the peaceable inhabitants of the town," said Bland, "the men who have kept out of the battle. I suppose you forgot that bullets come down again somewhere."

"I was in one of the back streets," wailed Clithering, "far away--"

"Exactly," said Bland, "it's just in back streets that those things happen."

"It was a woman," said Clithering, "a girl with a baby in her arms. I did not know what had happened. I ran over to her. She and the baby--both of them. I shall never forget it. Oh!"

Then he was sick again. Clithering is a highly civilized man. I suppose one must be highly civilized if one is to keep pace with the changing fashions in stockings. It was out of what is called "Fancy Hosiery" that Clithering made most of his money. I felt very sorry for him, but his performances were making me feel sick too. I joined Bland again at the window.

"They've got a machine gun," said Bland. "Things will get brisker now."

I looked out anxiously and saw with a sense of relief that it was Bob's side which had got the new gun. McConkey and his assistants had turned up from somewhere and were dragging their weapon into position under the window of a large jeweller's shop on the left flank of Bob's firing line. This was bad enough. In street fighting at close quarters a gun of this kind is very murderous and ought to do a terrible amount of destruction. But things would have been much worse if the soldiers had had it. They, I suppose, would have known how to use it. I doubted McConkey's skill in spite of his practice on the slob lands below the Shore Road.

"The soldiers will have to shoot in earnest now," said Bland. "If that fellow can handle his gun he'll simply mow them down."

It looked at first, I am bound to say, as if McConkey had really mastered his new trade. He got his weapon into position and adjusted a belt of cartridges, working as coolly as if he were arranging the machinery of the Green Looney Scutching Mill. He seemed to find a horrible satisfaction in what he was doing. Twice I saw him pat the muzzle of the thing as if to give it encouragement. I dare say he talked to it.

"He's damned cool," said Bland. "I've seen fellows who'd been fighting for months not half so--"

Then McConkey started his infernal machine. The effect was most surprising. Two tramcars, which were standing close to the far end of the street, simply disappeared. There was a kind of eruption of splintered wood, shattered glass and small fragments of metal. When that subsided there was no sign of there ever having been tramcars in that particular spot. McConkey evidently noticed that he had not aimed his pet quite straight. He stopped it at once.

An officer--I think it was Bob's friend Henderson--sprang to his feet at the far end of the street and ran along the line of soldiers shouting an order.

"They'll begin in earnest now," said Bland. "Why doesn't he rattle them again with the gun?"

McConkey had the best will in the world, but something had gone wrong with his gun; it was a complicated machine, and he had evidently jammed some part of it. I saw him working frenziedly with a large iron spanner in his hand; but nothing he could do produced the least effect. It would not go off.

In the meantime Henderson's soldiers stood up and stopped firing. The volunteers stopped firing too. The soldiers formed in a line. There was silence in the street for a moment, dead silence. I could hear McConkey's spanner ringing against the iron of his gun. Then Bob Power shouted.

"They're going to charge us. Up, boys, and come on! We'll meet them halfway."

"They're all gone mad together," said Bland. "You can't charge down magazine rifles. It's impossible."

"It seems to me," I said, "that if this battle is ever to be finished at all they'll have to get at each other with their fists. So far weapons have been a total failure."

Clithering crawled across the room while we were speaking and clutched me by the legs. I do not think it was fear of the bullets which made him crawl. He had been so very sick that he was too weak to walk.

"What's happening?" he said. "For God's sake tell me. Are there many killed?"

"No one yet on this side," I said. "There may be a few soldiers hit, but I don't suppose you mind about them. There's just going to be a charge. Get up and you'll be able to see it."

Clithering caught the edge of the window-sash and dragged himself to his feet. He was just in time to see Bob's men rush along the street. They did not charge in any sort of order. They simply spread out and ran as fast as they could, as fast as I ever saw men run. Some of them took their rifles with them. Others, evidently agreeing with me that they would do more destruction with their fists, left their rifles behind. They covered fifty or sixty yards, and were still going fast when they discovered that the soldiers were not waiting for them. Henderson walked alongside the leading men of the column with his ridiculously long sword in his hand. Two mounted officers brought up the rear. Two men, with their rifles sloped over their shoulders, marched briskly across the end of the street. In the middle of the column were eight stretchers carried along. Bob's men, in spite of their bad shooting, had wounded that number of their enemies. I found out afterwards that they had killed three others outright. The discipline of the British army must be remarkably good. In spite of this heavy loss the soldiers obeyed orders, and steadily refrained from trying to kill Bob's men. Their final disappearance was a crowning proof of their obedience. I watched this body of infantry march out of sight into the next street. They were not running away. They were not even retreating. They gave me the impression of having stopped the battle in a way that was quite customary because it was time for them to do something else--get some dinner perhaps.

This performance produced, as might be expected, a most disconcerting effect upon Bob's warriors. They stopped running and stared at their departing foes. Then they turned round and gaped at each other. Then they applied to Bob Power for information. They wanted to know, apparently, whether they had gained a great and glorious victory, or were to regard the departure of the enemy as some subtle kind of strategy. Bob seemed as much puzzled as every one else. Even Bland, in spite of his experience of battles in two great wars, was taken aback.

"Well, I'm damned," he said.

"Thank God, thank God!" said Clithering.

Then he crumpled up and fainted. He meant, I think, to express the relief he felt at the cessation of hostilities. He had not heard, or if he heard, had not heeded, Bland's remark. Clithering is not the type of man to thank God for any one's damnation, and he had no special dislike of Bland.

"I'm damned," said Bland again.

"I suppose," I said, "that it's rather unusual in battles to do that sort of thing--march off, I mean--without giving some sort of notice to the other side. It strikes me as rather bad form. There ought to be a rule against it."

Bob's men returned, sheepishly and dejectedly, to their original posts. Crossan was arguing with McConkey about the condition of the machine gun. The young man who had taken off his coat before the battle picked it up from the ground, brushed it carefully, and put it on. Bob Power walked along the street with a note-book in his hands. He appeared to be writing down the names of the shop-keepers whose windows were broken. He is a young man of active and energetic disposition. I suppose he felt that he must do something.

Bland stared through the window for some time. He hoped, I dare say, that the soldiers would come back, with reinforcements, perhaps with artillery. At last he gave up this idea.

"Let's have a drink," he said. "We want one."

He turned abruptly and stumbled over Clithering, who had fallen just beside him. I got hold of a waiter, the only one left in the club, and made him bring us a whisky and soda. Bland squirted the syphon into Clithering's face, and I poured small quantities of whisky into his mouth. Clithering is a rigid teetotaler, and has for years been supporting every Bill for the suppression of public houses which has been brought before Parliament. The whisky which he swallowed revived him in the most amazing way.

"Have they gone?" he asked.

"If you mean the soldiers," said Bland, "they have. I can't imagine why, but they have."

"I telegraphed to the Prime Minister," said Clithering. "It was hours and hours ago. Or was it yesterday? It was just before I saw the woman shot. I told him that--that the soldiers--they were only meant to overawe the people--not to kill them--I said the soldiers must be withdrawn to barracks--I said they must not be allowed--"

I do not know whether it was exhaustion after nervous strain or the whisky which affected Clithering. Whisky--and he had swallowed nearly a glassful--does produce striking effects upon teetotalers; so it may have been the whisky. Clithering turned slowly over on his side and went sound asleep. Bland and I carried him upstairs to a bedroom on the top storey of the club. There were, Bland said, three bullets buried in the mattress, so it was fortunate that we had not carried Clithering up earlier in the day.

"Let's get the waiter," said Bland, "if he hasn't gone away, and tell him to undress this fool!"

"It's hardly necessary to undress him, is it?"

"Better to," said Bland, "and take away his clothes. Then he'll have to stay there, and won't be able to send any more telegrams."

"It's rather a good thing he sent that last one," I said. "If he hadn't, somebody would certainly have been killed in the charge."

"I suppose that telegram accounts for it," said Bland. "I mean for the behaviour of the soldiers. Orders sent straight from Downing Street. I say, what a frightful temper the Commanding Officer must be in this minute! I wonder if I could get an interview with him."

He looked questioningly at me. I fancy he hoped that I would give him a letter of introduction to the General in command of the district.

"His language," said Bland, "would be a tremendous scoop for me. Could you--?"

"No," I said, "I couldn't. I don't know him, and even if I did--"

"Oh, well," said Bland, "it can't be helped. And, any way, I dare say I shouldn't have been able to get my telegram through. The wires are sure to be blocked."



CHAPTER XXII

I looked at my watch and found that it was three o'clock. The battle had lasted more than two hours.

"I had no idea," I said to Bland, "that fighting was such interesting work. The time has flown."

"I'm uncommonly hungry," said Bland. "Let's try and find something to eat."

When he mentioned the subject of eating I found that I too was very hungry. I felt, however, that it was scarcely right, certainly it was not suitable to sit down to luncheon in a club while a revolution was in full swing under the windows. People ought to be serious immediately after battles.

"Oughtn't we to be doing something?" I asked.

"Doing what?"

"Well, I don't know. Seeing after the wounded, perhaps."

Attending to wounded men is properly speaking work for women; but both Lady Moyne and Marion were in London.

"There are sure to be a few somewhere," I said. "They've been fighting all over the town, and I don't suppose the soldiers were as careful everywhere else as they were here."

"Are you a surgeon as well as a lord?" asked Bland.

"Oh no. I don't know anything about surgery. My idea--"

"Then I expect the wounded, if there are any, would rather you left them alone. Besides, a town like this must have hundreds of doctors in it. They'll all be out after the wounded by this time as keen as vultures. It isn't every day that an ordinary practitioner gets the chance of gouging out bullets. They wouldn't let you interfere with their sport even if you paid them. There won't, as a matter of fact, be nearly enough wounded to go round the profession. They'd hate to have an amateur chipping in. Let's forage about a bit and get some food."

It was not very easy to find food in the club, and the only surviving waiter was still undressing Clithering. But Bland is a good forager. He found two dressed crabs somewhere, and then came upon a game pie. I let him have the dressed crabs all to himself. He is a much younger man than I am and is a war correspondent. He ought to be able to digest anything.

I fully intended to eat three helpings of game pie, for I was very hungry; but before I had finished the first of them I was interrupted. Crossan stalked into the room. He was the last man I wanted to see. His appearance and manner are, at the best of times, tragic. Clithering had been with me, off and on, most of the day, so I had got rather tired of tragedy.

"I think it right to inform your lordship," said Crossan, "that Mr. Godfrey D'Aubigny has just been arrested in the streets."

"Good!" I said. "I hope that whoever has him won't let him go."

"He's to be tried by court martial," said Crossan, "on suspicion of being a spy."

Godfrey actually haunts me. No sooner have I achieved a moment's peace and quietness--with the greatest difficulty in the middle of a rebellion--than Godfrey breaks in on me. How he came to be in Belfast I could only dimly guess. It seemed likely that, having heard that a battle was going on, he came to the scene of it in the hope of pillage.

"I suppose," I said, "they won't actually hang him?"

"It was him, as your lordship is aware," said Crossan, "that gave the first information to the Government."

Crossan, in spite of the fact that he was a victorious general, preserved his peculiar kind of respect for my title. He did not, indeed, take off his hat when he entered the room, but that was only because soldiers, while on duty, never take off their hats.

"Don't be absurd, Crossan," I said. "You know perfectly well that he hasn't intelligence enough to give anything but wrong information to any Government. What he told the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he wrote to him was that you were smuggling."

"If your lordship doesn't care to interfere--," said Crossan.

"Can I help in any way?" said Bland.

He had been eating steadily and had finished the two crabs. I had not eaten more than three or four mouthfuls of game pie. I felt I might accept his offer.

"If you've any experience of courts martial," I said, "I haven't--and if you really don't mind trotting off--"

"Not a bit," said Bland. "In fact a court martial would be rather a scoop for me. I'm sure the public would want to know how it's run."

"I shall feel greatly obliged to you," I said. "The fact is that a nephew of mine is going to be hanged as a spy. You said you were going to hang him, didn't you, Crossan?"

"I think it likely, my lord," said Crossan.

"Of course," I said, "he richly deserves it; and so far as my own personal feelings go I should be very glad if he were hanged. But, of course, he's my nephew and people might think I'd been unkind to him if I made no effort to save him. One must consider public opinion more or less. So if you could arrange to rescue him--"

While I was speaking Clithering shambled into the room. He was wearing a suit of pyjamas not nearly big enough for him. The waiter who put him to bed was quite a small man. The pyjamas must have been his. He asked us to find his clothes for him, and said that he wanted to go to the post-office.

"I must send a telegram to the Prime Minister," he said. "I must send it at once."

Crossan eyed him very suspiciously.

"It strikes me," said Bland, "that if you're caught sending telegrams to the Prime Minister you'll be hanged too."

"They're just going to hang a nephew of mine," I explained, "for writing a letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. You can see for yourself that a telegram to the Prime Minister is much worse. I really think you'd better stay where you are."

But Clithering was, unfortunately, in a mood of hysterical heroism. He said that he did not value his life, that lives were only given to men in order that they might lay them down, and that the noblest way of laying down a life was in the service of humanity.

I could see that Crossan was getting more and more suspicious every minute.

"It is in order to save the lives of others," he said, "that I want to send my telegram to the Prime Minister."

Crossan actually scowled at Clithering. I expected that he would arrest him at once. There might have been, for all I knew, a Committee of Public Safety sitting in the Town Hall. I could imagine Crossan hauling the unfortunate Clithering before it on a charge of communicating with the Prime Minister. I could imagine Clithering, heroic to the last, waving his incriminating telegram in the faces of his judges. Bland saved the situation.

"Come along, Colonel," he said. "Show me where that court martial of yours is sitting. Lord Kilmore will restrain this lunatic till we get back."

Crossan may have been pleased at being addressed as Colonel. Or he may have trusted that I would prevent any telegram being sent to the Prime Minister. At all events, he stopped scowling at Clithering and went off with Bland. I offered Clithering some of the game pie, but he refused to touch it. He sat down at a corner of the table and asked me to lend him a pencil and some paper. I did so, and he composed several long telegrams. The writing evidently soothed him. When he had finished he asked me quite calmly whether I thought he would really be hanged if he went to the post-office. I was not at all sure that he would not. Clithering sighed when he heard my opinion. Then he sat silent for a long time, evidently trying to make up his mind to the hanging.

"If I could get the telegram through first," he said at last, "I shouldn't so much mind--"

"But you wouldn't," I said; "and what is the good of throwing away your life without accomplishing anything?"

"It's terrible," said Clithering, "terrible."

It was terrible, of course; but I was beginning to get tired of Clithering. Besides, he looked very ridiculous in pyjamas which only reached halfway down his legs and arms.

"Don't you think," I said, "that it would be better for you to go back to bed? You'll be safe there, and it won't really matter much whether your telegram goes to the Prime Minister or not. A little sleep will do you all the good in the

world."

"We have murdered sleep," said Clithering.

I never realized the full immensity of Clithering's fatuousness until he uttered that mangled quotation from Macbeth in the tone of an old-fashioned tragedian. I believe the man actually revelled in harrowing emotion. It would not have surprised me to hear him assure me that the "multitudinous seas" would not wash out the blood-stains from his hands. He might very well have asked for "some sweet oblivious antidote." If he had known the passages I am sure he would have quoted them.

"Do go to bed," I said.

Then Bland came in leading Godfrey with him.

"I rescued him," said Bland, "without very much difficulty."

"I call it frightful cheek," said Godfrey, "fellows like that who ought to be touching their hats to me and saying 'Sir' when they speak to me--Fancy them daring--"

This view of the matter was very characteristic of Godfrey. I really believe that he would dislike being hanged much less if the executioner were one of the small class of men whom he recognizes as his social equals.

"They gave him quite a fair trial," said Bland, "and had just condemned him when--"

"That fellow Crossan in particular," said Godfrey.

"The Colonel ran round to tell you," said Bland. "I rather fancy they wanted to get off carrying out the sentence if they could."

"A lot of fellows," said Godfrey sulkily, "who ought to be wheeling barrows! But it's very largely your fault, Excellency. You always encouraged that class. If you'd kept them in their proper places--"

"What on earth brought you to Belfast?" I said. "Why didn't you stay at home? Nobody wants you here. Why did you come?"

Godfrey looked uneasily at Bland. He evidently did not want to make his reason for coming to Belfast public property. Godfrey is usually quite shameless. I could only imagine that he had done something of a peculiarly repulsive kind.

"Well," I said, "why did you come?"

He looked at Bland again, and then nodded sideways at me.

"I suppose," I said, "that you thought there might be some assessment made by the Government of the amount of damage done in the town, and that if you started valuing things at once on your own hook, you might possibly get a job out of it."

"But is there?" said Godfrey eagerly; "for if there is--"

"So far as I know there isn't," I said.

"Anyhow it wasn't that which brought me to Belfast. The fact is, Excellency, I couldn't very well stay at home. You remember,"--here his voice sunk to a whisper--"what I told you about the Pringles."

"Your bank account?"

"No. Not that. The girl, I mean. Tottie Pringle."

"Oh yes, I remember."

"Well, old Pringle began to get offensive. He seemed to think that I ought to--you know."

"Marry her? I expect you ought."

"Excellency?" said Godfrey in genuine horror and amazement.

"By the way," said Bland, "I forgot to mention that I promised the court martial to get your nephew out of Belfast before to-morrow morning. I hope you don't mind. They wouldn't let him go on any other condition."

"Quite right," I said. "Godfrey shall start to-night."

"I don't see why I should," said Godfrey. "I don't think it's at all nice of you, Excellency, to--"

"And while we're at it," I said, "we may as well ship off Clithering. Godfrey let me introduce you to--"

I looked round and discovered that Clithering was not in the room.

"I hope to goodness," I said, "that he's not gone out to get himself hanged. He rather wanted to a few minutes ago."

"It's all right," said Bland. "I saw him going upstairs. I expect he's looking for his clothes."

"Godfrey," I said. "I'm going to offer you a great chance. Sir Samuel Clithering is in every way a very big man. In the first place he's very rich. In the next place he's on intimate terms with the Prime Minister. In fact he's been sending him telegrams every hour or so for the last two days. You go upstairs and help him to find his clothes. Then take him over to London. The Fleetwood steamer is still running. If you can get him out of Belfast and lay him down safe and sound on his own doorstep the Government will be so grateful that they'll very likely make you a stipendiary magistrate."

"But supposing he doesn't want to go?"

"You'll have to make him," I said.

"How?" said Godfrey. "How can I?"

"Don't be a fool, Godfrey," I said. "Nag at him. You've got more than two hours before you, and nagging is a thing you're really good at."

Bland took Godfrey by the arm and led him up to Clithering's bedroom. He locked them in together, and did not open the door again until half an hour before the steamer started. Then he took up Clithering's clothes to him. Godfrey had evidently spent the time as I advised. Clithering deserved it, of course; but he certainly looked as if he had been through a bad time when Bland let him out.

There was a meeting of the Ulster Defence Committee at seven o'clock. It was summoned, so the notice which I received informed me, in order to make arrangements for preserving the peace of the town. This, I thought, was very proper work for the committee. The Cabinet was probably making other arrangements with the same object. Between them the committee and the Government had destroyed what little peace Belfast ever had. The least they could do was to restore it.

Moyne took the chair as usual. He opened our proceedings by saying firmly and decisively, that he intended to surrender himself at once to the authorities.

"We're the only authorities there are at present," said McNeice, "so if you want to surrender--"

"We must resolve ourselves into a Provisional Government," said the Dean, who always likes to do things constitutionally.

"The police," said Moyne feebly.

"There aren't any," said McNeice.

"Wiped out," said Malcolmson.

"The General in command of the troops--" said Moyne.

"The troops are shut up in their barracks," said McNeice.

"Licked," said Malcolmson.

"Say," said Conroy, "are you dead sure you whipped them?"

"They bolted," said Malcolmson.

"I don't reckon to be a military expert," said Conroy, "but it kind of occurs to me that those troops weren't doing all they knew. I don't say but you're quite right to boost your men all you can; but we'll make a big mistake if we start figuring on having defeated the British army."

"I happen to know," I said, "that Mr. Conroy is quite right. Clithering--"

"That spaniel!" said McNeice.

"He told me," I said, "that the troops had orders to fire over our men's heads. The idea, I think, was not so much to

injure as to overawe us."

"It was a damned foolish idea," said McNeice sulkily.

"You cannot," said the Dean, "overawe the men of Ulster."

This is one of the Dean's most cherished opinions. I have heard him express it a great many times. I do not know whether the Dean had actually been fighting during the afternoon. I am sure he wanted to; but he may have considered it his duty to do no more than look on. Our Dean is particularly strong on Old Testament history. I am sure he recollected that Moses sat on the top of an adjacent hill while Joshua was fighting the Amalekites.

"If you want to surrender yourself," said Conroy to Moyne, "I reckon you'll have the chance of handing yourself over to a British Admiral before long."

"Have you any reason to suppose that the Fleet--?" said Moyne.

"We're ready for them," said Malcolmson. "If the Government thinks it can force Home Rule on Ulster with the guns of the Channel Fleet, it's making a big mistake. It'll find that out before long."

"If you like, Lord Moyne," said Conroy, "we'll put you under arrest and then nobody will be able to hold you responsible afterwards for anything that happens. You'll be quite safe."

Whatever Moyne's motives may have been in wishing to surrender himself, I am perfectly sure that a desire for his own safety was not one of them. I imagine that he hoped, in a confused and troubled way, to get himself somehow on the side of law and order again. Moyne was never meant to be a rebel.

Conroy's words were insulting, intentionally so, I think. He wished to get rid of Moyne before the committee discussed the defence of Belfast against the Fleet. He may have wished to get rid of me too. He succeeded. Moyne is not nearly so thorough-going a patrician as his wife; but he has sufficient class pride to dislike being insulted by a millionaire. He got up and left the room. He looked so lonely in his dignified retirement that I felt I ought to give him such support as I could. I rose too, took his arm, and went out with him.



CHAPTER XXIII

People who organize and carry through revolutions generally begin by cutting the telegraph wires, with a view to isolating the scene of action. I cannot help thinking that this is a mistake. We kept our telegraph offices open day and night, and I am strongly of opinion that we gained rather than lost by our departure from the established ritual of revolutions. The news which came to us from England was often encouraging, and generally of some value. Nor do I think that the Government gained any advantage over us by the messages which Clithering as their agent, or Bland and others in their capacity of public entertainers, sent from Belfast to London.

When Moyne and I got back to our hotel we found two long telegrams and one short one waiting for us. The first we opened was from Lady Moyne. She had, it appeared, spent a very strenuous day. She caught the Prime Minister at breakfast in his own house, and probably spoiled his appetite. She ran other members of the Cabinet to earth at various times during the day. One unfortunate man she found playing a mixed foursome on a suburban golf links. She impressed upon him, as she had upon all his colleagues the appalling wickedness of shooting the citizens of Belfast. Every one, it appeared, agreed with her on this point. The Government's policy, so they told her and she told us, was to cow, not to kill, the misguided people who were rioting in Belfast. She besought Moyne to use all his influence to moderate the anti-Home Rule enthusiasm of Malcolmson and the Dean.

Moyne smiled in a sickly way when we came to this advice.

The other long telegram was from Babberly. I must say that Babberly at this crisis displayed immense energy and something like political genius. Having been all his life a strong Conservative, and a supporter of force as a remedy for every kind of social unpleasantness, he turned a most effective somersault and appealed suddenly to the anti-militarist feelings of the Labour Party. He succeeded--I cannot even imagine how--in organizing a mass meeting in Trafalgar Square to protest against the murder of the working-men of Belfast in the streets of their own city, by the hired mercenaries of the capitalist classes. The meeting was actually engaged in making its protest while Moyne and I were reading the telegrams. Babberly's case was really extraordinarily strong. Soldiers were shooting off guns in Belfast, and the people they fired at--or as we knew, fired over--were working-men. There was occasion for a strong and eloquent appeal to the sentiment of the solidarity of labour. Babberly was just the man to make it with the utmost possible effectiveness. I pictured him perched on the head of one of the British lions which give its quite peculiar dignity to Trafalgar Square, beseeching a crowd of confused but very angry men not to allow the beast to open its mouth or show its teeth. I could easily imagine that the news of Babberly's exertions, dribbling in during the day to the offices of harassed Ministers, might have reinforced with grave political considerations the hysterical humanitarian telegrams which Clithering was shooting off from the seat of war. A Tory Government might survive a little bloodshed. A Liberal Government convicted of having incited a soldier to shoot a working-man would be in a perilous position.

"I must say," I said, "that Babberly is infernally clever. I don't quite know where he'll find himself afterwards, but--"

"What does it matter about afterwards?" said Moyne, "if only we get out of the mess we're in, nothing that happens afterwards need trouble us in the least."

"If this meeting of his is really a success," I said, "we may feel pretty confident that there'll be no more shooting anyhow."

The next telegram, the short one, rather dashed our hopes of immediate peace. It was from Lady Moyne.

"The Channel Fleet," she said, "has been ordered to Belfast Lough. Expected to arrive to-morrow morning. Advise unconditional surrender."

Moyne is very fond of his wife, and has a sincere admiration for her abilities; but on the receipt of this telegram he lost his temper.

"What on earth," he said, "is the use of advising unconditional surrender when Conroy and Malcolmson are engaged at this moment in making plans for sinking the Fleet with rifles?"

"I quite agree with you," I said. "There's no kind of use our going to them again. But I don't expect they're relying entirely on rifles. Malcolmson always said he understood explosives. He may be laying submarine mines opposite Carrickfergus."

Lady Moyne's telegram was not the only warning we received of the approaching visit of the Channel Fleet. Our system of leaving the telegraph wires intact proved to be an excellent one. Everybody in Belfast learnt that the Fleet was coming. Everybody, so far as I could learn, received the news with joy. Bland was tremendously excited. He called on me next morning, and invited me to go with him to see the British Fleet in action. He had been up very early and

found a place, so he said, from which we could have a capital view of the bombardment of the town.

"I've got two pairs of field-glasses," he said, "Zeiss prism binoculars. We'll see the whole show capitally."

"Was there much other looting last night?" I asked.

"There was none," said Bland. "I hired the glasses. I got them for five shillings. Cheap, I call it; but the optician who owned them seemed to think they'd be safer if I had them than they would be in his shop. More out of the way of shells, I expect."

Moyne refused to come with us. He still cherished the hope of being able to surrender himself during the day to some one in recognizable authority. Bland and I set out together.

We hurried along High Street, past the Albert Memorial and crossed the bridge to the south side of the river. The streets were full of volunteers, marching about, all in the highest spirits. The prospect of being shelled by the Fleet did not frighten them in the least. Having, as they believed, defeated the Army the day before, it seemed quite a simple matter to deal with the battleships.

We made our way along the quays, passed through a shipbuilding yard, deserted by its workers, and came to a long muddy embankment which stretched out on the south side of the channel leading into the harbour. On the end of this embankment was a small wooden lighthouse.

"That's our spot," said Bland. "I've got the key of the door."

I will always say for Bland that he has the true instinct of a war correspondent. From the top of our tower we saw the Fleet far out in the offing. There were not nearly so many ships as I expected. I counted seven; disagreeable looking monsters with smoke pouring out of their funnels. They were too far off for us to see much of them even with the aid of our excellent glasses; but what I did see I did not like. Fighting against men requires courage, no doubt, especially when they have magazine rifles. But men are after all flesh and blood. Fighting against vast iron machines seems to me a much more terrifying thing. I wondered whether Malcolmson were also watching the ships and whether he were any more inclined than he had been the night before to unconditional surrender.

While I was gazing out to sea, Bland tapped me on the arm and drew my attention to the fact that a company of volunteers was marching out along our muddy causeway. They were Bob Power's men and they came along whistling "The Protestant Boys," a tune which makes an excellent quick-step march. They had spades with them as well as rifles, and they set to work at once to entrench themselves.

"They're going to dispute a landing," said Bland, "but I don't see what use that is. The Fleet can shell the whole place into ruins in two hours without coming within range of their rifles--and--however we'll see. The fellow who's running this revolution--Conroy, isn't it?--may have something up his sleeve."

One of the battleships detached herself from her fellows and steamed rapidly into the Lough. Opposite Carrickfergus her engines were stopped, and she turned slowly in a half circle till she lay broadside on to us. I could see her distinctly, and I confess that the look of her terrified me.

"Cleared for action," said Bland.

A boat was lowered, a steam launch. In a minute or two she was speeding towards us, her white ensign trailing astern. Bob Power stood up outside his entrenchment and peered at her. As she drew closer we could see behind the shelter hood, the young officer who steered her. As she swerved this way and that, following the windings of the channel, we caught glimpses of a senior officer, seated in the stern sheets. Pushing through the calm water at high speed she threw up great waves from her bows. Her stern seemed curiously deep in the water. When she was almost abreast of our lighthouse Bob hailed her. Her engines were stopped at once. A sailor with a boathook in his hand sprang into her bow and stood there motionless while the boat glided on. I could see the young officer who steered gazing curiously at Bob's entrenchments. Then the senior officer stood up.

"An Admiral," said Bland.

He hailed Bob.

"Are you in command here?" he said.

As he spoke the launch stopped abreast of the entrenchments and lay motionless in the water.

"I am in command of this detachment," said Bob.

"Then," said the Admiral, "you are to lay down your arms at once."

"You'd better come ashore," said Bob, "and see our commanding officer if you want to make terms with us."

The Admiral flushed. He was quite close to us and we could see his face distinctly. He looked as if he wanted to say something explosive. The idea of being invited to make terms with rebels was evidently very objectionable to him. I suppose he must have had strict and binding orders from somebody. He did not say any of the things he wanted to. The launch's propeller gave a few turns in the water. Then the boat slipped up to the shore. The sailor with the boathook held her fast while the Admiral stepped out of her. Bob received him most courteously. The Admiral glared at Bob. The riflemen, crouched behind their mud bank, scowled at the Admiral. The young officer in the launch gave an order and his boat was pushed off from the shore. Bob and the Admiral walked off together towards the town.

For an hour and a half the launch lay opposite us in the middle of the channel. Occasionally, as the ebbing tide carried her down, she steamed a little and regained her position opposite the entrenchments. Bob's men, realizing that there would be no shooting till the Admiral returned, rose from their trench. They strolled about the embankment, chatted, smoked, stared at the launch, stared at the battleship from which she came, and peered at the more distant fleet which lay hull down far out towards the entrance of the lough.

"Unless Mr. Conroy has some game on that we know nothing about," said Bland, "he'd better climb down and make the best terms he can."

I think that Bland was nervous. He made that remark or others like it several times while we were waiting for the Admiral's return. I candidly confess that I was more than nervous. I was desperately frightened. I am not, I hope, a coward. I believe that I was not afraid of being killed, but I could not take my eyes off the great iron ship which lay motionless, without a sign of life about her, a black, menacing monster on the calm water of the lough. I was seized, obsessed, with a sense of her immense power. She would destroy and slay with a horrible, unemotional, scientific deliberation.

"Conroy had better surrender," said Bland. "He can't expect--"

"He won't surrender," I said; "and if he wanted to, the men would not let him."

"Damn it," said Bland. "He must. I've seen war, and I tell you he must."

At last the Admiral returned. Bob was with him, and was evidently trying to make himself agreeable. He was chatting. Occasionally he laughed. The Admiral was entirely unresponsive. When he got close enough for us to see his face I saw that he looked perplexed and miserable. I was miserable and frightened, but the Admiral looked worse.

Behind them there was an immense crowd of people; men, armed and unarmed, women, even children. It was a mere mob. There was no sign of discipline among them. Some young girls, mill-workers with shawls over their heads, pressed close on the Admiral's heels. Bob gave an order to his men, and they drew up across the end of our embankment. Bob and the Admiral passed through the line. The crowd stopped.

The launch drew to shore again. The Admiral stepped on board her, and she steamed away.

The crowd hung around the end of our embankment. Some children began chasing each other in and out among the men and women. A few girls went down to the water's edge and threw in stones, laughing at the splashes they made. Then a young man found an empty bottle and flung it far out into the channel. Fifty or sixty men and women threw stones at it, laughing when shots went wide, cheering when some well-aimed stone set the bottle rocking. Further back from the water's edge young men and girls were romping with each other, the girls crying shrilly and laughing boisterously, the men catching them round their waists or by their arms. It might have been a crowd out for enjoyment of a Bank Holiday.

The launch reached the battleship, was hoisted and stowed on board. Almost immediately a long line of signal flags fluttered from the squat mast. Smoke began to pour from the funnels. The flags were hauled down and another festoon of them was hoisted in their place. I could see an answering stream of flags fluttering from one of the ships further out.

Then, very slowly, the great steamer began to move. She went at a snail's pace, as it seemed to me, across the lough to the County Down coast. Very slowly she swept round in a wide circle and steamed back again northward. There was something terrifying in the stately deliberation with which she moved. It was as if some great beast of prey paced as a sentinel in front of his victim, so conscious of his power to seize and kill that he could afford to wait before he sprang.

The crowd behind us was silent now. The laughter and the play had ceased. Children were crowding round the women seeking for hands to hold. Some of the women, vaguely terror-stricken, looked into the faces of the men. Others had drawn a little apart from the rest of the crowd and stood in a group by themselves, staring out at the battleship. There

were middle-aged women and quite young women in this group. I raised my field-glasses and scanned their faces. There was one expression on them, and only one--not fear, but hatred. Women fight sometimes in citizen armies when such things have been called into existence. But it is not their fighting power which makes them important. That is, probably, always quite inconsiderable. What makes them a force to be reckoned with in war is their faculty for hating. They hate with more concentration and intensity than men do. These women were mindful, perhaps, of the girl with the baby whom Clithering had seen shot. They realized, perhaps, the menace for husbands, lovers, and sons which lay in the guns of the black ironclad parading sluggishly before their eyes. Remembering and anticipating death, they hated the source of it with uncompromising bitterness. The men in the crowd seemed crushed into silence by mere wonder and expectation of some unknown thing. They were not, so far as I could judge, afraid. They were not excited. They simply waited to see what was to happen to them and their town.

Once more a string of flags fluttered from the ship's mast. Once more the answer came from her consorts. Then for the third time she swept round. We saw her foreshortened; then end on; then foreshortened again as her other side swung into view. At that moment--just before the whole length of her lay flat before our eyes she fired. At first I scarcely realized that she had fired. There was a small cloud of white smoke hanging over her near the bow. That was all for the moment. Then came the horrible sound of the great projectile racing through the air. Then it was past.

Some women in the crowd, a few, shrieked aloud. Some girls ran wildly towards the town, driven, I suppose, to seek shelter of some kind. Most of the crowd stood silent. Then from some young men who stood together there came a kind of moaning sound. It gathered volume. It, as it were, took shape. Voice after voice took it up. The whole crowd--many hundreds of men and women--sang together the hymn they had all been singing for months past, "O God, our help in ages past." I do not know how far back towards the town the singing spread, but it would not surprise me to hear that ten thousand voices joined in it.

Bland had his glasses raised. He was still gazing at the battleship.

"A strange answer," I said, "to make to the first shell of a bombardment."

"Yes," said Bland. "It reminds me of a profane rhyme which I used to hear:

"There was a young lady of Zion
Who sang Sunday-school songs to a
lion."

"But hers, I should say, was the more sensible proceeding of the two."

I was not sure. It is just conceivable--it seemed to me at that moment even likely--that a hymn, sung as that one was, may be the most effective answer to a big gun. There are only certain things which guns can do. When they have destroyed life and ruined buildings their power is spent. But the singing of hymns may, and sometimes does, render men for a time at least, indifferent to the loss of their lives and the ruin of their houses. Against men in the frame of mind which hymn-singing induces the biggest guns are powerless. The original singers fall, perhaps, but the spirit of their singing survives. For each voice silenced by the bursting shells ten voices take up the song.

The battleship, after firing the gun, swung round and once more slowly steamed across the lough. I waited, tense with excitement, for her to turn again. At the next turn, I felt sure, another shell would come. I was wrong. She turned, more slowly than ever as it seemed. No white smoke issued from her. Again she steamed northwards. Again, opposite Carrickfergus, close to the northern shore, she turned. Right in front of her bows the water was suddenly broken. It was as if some one had dropped a huge stone close to her. The spray of the splash must have fallen on her fore deck.

"My God!" said Bland, "they're firing at her. Look! From the hill above the town."

I could not look. My eyes were on the ship as she slowly turned. Her side came gradually into view. Then, quite suddenly and for no apparent reason, she staggered. I saw her list over heavily, right herself again, and steam on.

"Hit!" said Bland. "Hit! Hit!"

He danced beside me with excitement.

Two puffs of smoke hung over the ship's decks, one forward, one aft, and blew clear again. But this time we heard no shrieking shells. She was firing, not at the town, but at the guns on the hill which threatened and wounded her. Then her signal flags ran up again. Before the answer came from the other ships the sea was broken twice close to her. I looked to see her stagger from another blow, heel over, perhaps sink. Her speed increased. In a minute she was rushing towards us, flinging white waves from her great bows. Then she swept round once more. Fire as well as smoke poured from her funnels. She steamed eastwards down the lough. We saw her join the other ships far out. She and they lay

motionless together.

The crowd behind us began to sing their hymn again.

Bland and I left our lighthouse and went back towards the town. We passed Bob and his men in their trench but they scarcely noticed us. We pushed our way through the crowd. We passed the shipbuilding yard, now full of eager people, discussing the departure of the ship, canvassing the possibility of her coming back again.

"What guns have they on the Cave Hill?" said Bland.

"I don't know," I said. "I did not know that they had any guns."

"I wonder where they got them," said Bland. "I wonder who has command of them."

I could answer, or thought I could answer, both questions. As we struggled through the crowds which thronged the quay I told Bland of the visits of the *Finola* to our bay and of the piles of huge packing-cases which Godfrey had shown me in the sheds behind the store.

"But who fired them?" said Bland. "Who have you got who understands them? Those were big guns."

"Malcolmson," I said, "always said he understood guns."

"He does," said Bland. "If he'd shot just the least shade better he'd have sunk that ship."

On the bridge we met McConkey, sweating profusely, taking his favourite weapon along at a rapid trot. He stopped when he saw us and halted his breathless team.

"I have her working again," he said, "and she'll shoot the now."

"You're too late," said Bland.

"Is she sunken?" said McConkey. "Man o' man but I'm sorry for it. I wanted sore to have a shot at her."

"She's not sunk," said Bland, "but she's gone. Steamed clean out of range of your gun."

"I'd have liked well to have got to her before she quit," said McConkey. "Did you hear tell what she did with that shell she fired into the town?"

"No," I said. "Did it kill many people?"

"Sorra the one," said McConkey. "But I'll tell you what it did do." His voice sank to a hoarse but singularly impressive whisper. "It made flitters of the statue of the old Queen that was sitting forinint the City Hall. The like of thon is nice work for men that's wearing the King's uniform."

Bland burst into a sudden fit of boisterous laughter.

"You may laugh if it pleases you," said McConkey, "but I'm thinking it's time for loyal men to be getting guns of their own when the Government is that thick with rebels and Papishes that they'd go shooting at the ould Queen who was always a decent woman, so she was, and too good for the like of them."

McConkey's story was perfectly true. The solitary shell which was fired into Belfast fell just outside the City Hall. It injured that building a good deal; and it entirely destroyed the statue of Queen Victoria. It is a curious evidence of the amazing loyalty of the people of Belfast that many of them were more angry at this insult to Majesty than they would have been if the shell had killed half a dozen volunteers. McConkey was not by any means the only man who saw in the accident evidence of an unholy alliance between the Liberal Government and the men whom Babberly was accustomed to describe as "Steeped to the lips in treason."

CHAPTER XXIV

Bland and I stood together outside the City Hall and surveyed the shattered fragments of the statue. The shell must have exploded quite close to it, and I was immensely impressed at first with the terrific power of modern artillery. Then I began to think about the moral effects of the bombardment, and I saw my way to helping Bland in his profession. He had been very kind to me and very helpful. I wanted to do him a good turn if I could.

"This," I said, "is a magnificent opportunity for you. You'll be able to send off a telegram to your newspaper which will make your fortune as a correspondent."

"I don't see that," said Bland. "If there'd been a little slaughter I might have made something out of it. But a statue! Hang it all! One statue is rather a poor bag for the British Fleet. The people are proud of their navy. They've spent a lot of money on it, and they won't like being told that it has hit nothing but a statue, after a long morning's shooting."

Bland had not grasped my idea. For a moment I was inclined to keep it for my own use and work it up into an article when I got time. But Bland deserved something from me. I resisted the temptation and gave him the idea.

"I wish," I said, "that I were a special correspondent. I'd--"

"Well," said Bland. "What would you say?"

"I should take that New Zealander who stood on the broken arch of Westminster Bridge and--"

"Macaulay's," said Bland. "I don't think that the public would stand him again. He's played out."

"Not in the way I mean to use him. I should, so to speak, spiritualize him, and--"

"Hold on a minute," said Bland.

He got out a note-book and a pencil and prepared to write.

"Now," he said, "go on."

Bland's expectant attitude, and the fact that he was evidently going to take down what I said in shorthand, embarrassed me. When I write essays I like to work deliberately and to correct carefully. I aim at a polished elegance of style. I do not care for the kind of offhand composition Bland asked for.

"Interview with a Revolutionary Peer," said Bland, "'Lord Kilmore on the Ulster Situation.' You were just going to say--"

"Oh, nothing much. Only that the feelings of that New Zealander--"

"Meditating on the ruins of a shattered civilization," said Bland. "I can put in that part myself."

"--Are nothing to yours--" I said.

"Yours," said Bland.

"Well, mine, if this must be an interview; but I'd rather you had the whole credit.--Are nothing to mine when I survey the vacant pedestal of that statue. You catch the idea now?"

"No," said Bland. "I don't. Is there one?"

"Yes, there is. These unrecognizable fragments of stone, the once majestic statue, Ulster's loyalty."

"Good," said Bland. "I have it now." He began to write rapidly. "To the thoughtful mind there was something infinitely tragic in the shattered statue of the great queen, symbol of the destruction of an ideal. England bought the friendship of Nationalist Ireland at a heavy price when the guns of her Fleet annihilated the loyalty of Ulster.' That's your idea."

"You've got it exactly," I said.

"I'll send it off at once."

"Yes. You'd better hurry. It's almost certain to occur to Babberly, and the moment it does he'll put it into a speech. If he does, the whole credit will go to him."

This impressed Bland. He hurried away towards the post-office. I felt that I was not likely to get anything more out of the statue. I put a small bit of it in my pocket to keep as a souvenir, and then strolled along Donegal Place.

I met Crossan, who saluted me gravely.

"The provisional Government," he said, "desires your lordship's presence in the City Hall."

"I'm glad there's a provisional Government," I said. "We want something of the sort. Do you happen to know if I'm a member of it?"

"I've been looking for you, my lord," said Crossan, severely, "for over an hour, and there's no time to waste."

I hurried off. The Government, after driving off the British Fleet, was likely to be in a good temper, but I did not wish to keep it waiting for me too long.

When I entered the room I found Conroy, McNeice, Malcolmson, Cahoon and the Dean seated at the table. Moyne was not there.

"I congratulate you, gentlemen," I said, "on the result of the naval engagement. Malcolmson was perfectly magnificent. It was you, wasn't it, who--?"

"I didn't see anything magnificent about it," said Malcolmson, sulkily.

"We're damned well sick of being played with," said McNeice.

"If the English Government means to fight us--" said the Dean, speaking explosively.

"Do you mean to say," I said, "that you think the Admiral was not in earnest in that bombardment?"

"No more than the soldiers were yesterday," said McNeice. "They fired over our heads."

"And we're not going to stand any more fooling," said Malcolmson.

"We're business men," said Cahoon, "and this sort of play-acting won't do for Belfast."

"Your boss politicians," said Conroy, "have been flooding us out with telegrams."

There was a large pile of telegrams in front of him and some forty or fifty loose sheets of flimsy yellow paper were scattered about the table.

"Their notion," said Conroy, "is that we should send a man over to negotiate."

"An ambassador," I said, "Plenipotentiary?"

"Lord Moyne won't go," said the Dean.

"He's the proper man," I said. "Let's try to persuade him."

"He's up at the barracks," said McNeice. "He's been there all morning trying to get the General to arrest him."

"It would be far better," I said, "if he went to London and handed himself over to the Prime Minister."

"European convention," said Conroy, "makes it necessary, so I am informed, that this particular kind of job should be done by a member of your aristocracy."

I was, I think, with the exception of Moyne, the only member of the House of Lords in Belfast at the moment. The committee had evidently fixed on me as an ambassador.

"There is," I said, "a tradition that the Diplomatic Service should be--but our circumstances are so very peculiar--I am not sure that we ought to feel bound--"

"Will you go?" said Conroy.

"Of course, I'll go," I said. "There's nothing I should like better."

"The *Finola* is lying off Bangor," said Conroy. "I'll run you and Power down there in my motor. He'll land you wherever you like."

"Good," I said. "I suppose I'll go in my shirt with a rope round my neck, like the burghers of Calais."

"If that's the regular costume," said Conroy.

He spoke so severely that I thought I had better drop the subject of clothes.

"Now, as to the terms which you are prepared to offer the Government," I said.

"We will not have Home Rule," said the Dean and Malcolmson together.

"Of course not," I said. "That will be understood at once. Shall I demand Mr. Redmond's head on a charger? I don't suppose you want it, but it's always well to ask for more than you mean to take. It gives the other side a chance of negotiating."

"All we ask," said McNeice, "is that the English clear out of this country, bag and baggage, soldiers, policemen, tax collectors, the whole infernal crew, and leave us free hand to clean up the mess they've been making for the last hundred years."

"Either that," said Malcolmson, "or fight us in earnest."

"They'll clear out, of course," I said. "If it's a choice between that and fighting. But what about governing the country afterwards?"

"We'll do that," said Conroy, "and if we can't do it better than they did--"

"Oh, you will," I said. "Anyhow, you can't do it worse. But--there's just one point more. What about the Lord Lieutenant?"

"I don't know that he matters any," said Conroy.

"He doesn't," I said, "not a bit. But he's there at present, and some arrangement will have to be made about him."

"If the Dublin people like airing their best clothes before an imitation king," said Cahoon, "let them. It won't matter to us."

This showed me that Cahoon, at least, has a statesman's mind. In unessential matters he is ready to yield to the sentiments of his inferiors.

"I understand then," I said, "that the Lord Lieutenant with the purely ornamental part of the Viceregal staff is to be allowed to remain on the condition that he gives--shall we say eight balls and eight dinner-parties every year?--and that every other Englishman leaves the country at once. Those are your terms."

"And no more talk about Home Rule," said the Dean firmly.

"Very well," I said, "I'll start at once."

Bob Power was waiting for me in Conroy's motor when I had packed my bag. The streets were very crowded as we drove through them, and the people cheered us tremendously. It was the first time I had ever been cheered, and I found the sensation agreeable. Besides cheering, the crowd sang a great deal. Some one had composed a song especially for the occasion, which had caught the fancy of the Belfast people, and spread among them with wonderful rapidity. The tune, I am told, dates from the days of the eighteenth-century volunteer movement.

"Do you think I'm a fool
To put up with Home Rule?
For I'm not, as you'll quickly discover,
discover.
For soldier and rebel
I'm equally able;
I'll neither have one nor the t'other, the
t'other."

As poetry this is scarcely equal to Dr. Isaac Watts' version of the ninetieth of David's psalms. The rhyme of "rebel" with "able" is defective, and "discover" and "other" jar rather badly; but poets of high reputation have done worse in times of patriotic excitement, and the thing expressed the feelings of the Belfast people with perfect accuracy. A better poet might very well have failed to understand them.

Bob and I made the sea-passage as short as possible by steaming to Port Patrick. I spent an anxious half-hour while we passed through the squadron of warships. Bob assured me that they would not do anything to us. When I complained that they had a truculent and angry look about them he said that that was nothing out of the common. All warships look truculent. I dare say they do. Warfare has become much more civilized and scientific than it used to be; but we cannot any of us afford as yet to neglect the wisdom of the mediaeval Chinese. They wore masks in order to terrify

their foes. Our battleships are evidently designed with the same object.

I reached London next morning, and at once sent word to the Prime Minister that I was ready to make a treaty with him. He sent Sir Samuel Clithering to act as an intermediary. We met in the library of Moyne House, which was neutral ground. Lady Moyne had been one of the original syndicate which, so to speak, placed our insurrection on the market. Her house was therefore friendly soil for me. She had afterwards disassociated herself, more or less, from Conroy and McNeice; while Moyne had been trying for two days to surrender himself. The Prime Minister's ambassador could therefore go to Moyne House without loss of dignity.

Clithering brought my nephew Godfrey with him.

"Mr. D'Aubigny," he said, "is acting for the present as one of my private secretaries."

Clithering is a man who accumulates private secretaries rapidly. It would not have surprised me to hear that he had a dozen.

"I brought him," Clithering went on, "to take notes of our conversation. I thought that you would prefer him to a stranger."

I should very much have preferred the young man from Toynbee Hall who escorted Marion to the cathedral. I should, in fact, have preferred any other private secretary. But I had not the heart to say so. The experience of the last few days had softened me, and Godfrey looked immensely pleased with himself. He had on a new frock coat, beautifully cut, and a pair of trousers of an exquisite shade of grey. He also had a pale mauve tie with a pearl pin in it.

Clithering began rather pompously. I dare say he really thought that he was in a position to dictate terms.

"I hope," he said, "I sincerely hope that you fully realize the extraordinary forbearance with which the Government has treated this--this--"

"Don't say rebellion," I said; "we're thoroughly loyal men and always have been."

Clithering hesitated. He wanted to say rebellion, but he remembered that he was engaged in a game of diplomacy.

"This *emeute*," he said at last.

French is, after all, a greater language than English. I could not object to *emeute*. I should have objected to any English description of our rising.

"We might," said Clithering, "have shot the people down. We might have bombarded the town. I am sure that you realize that."

"We realize it," I said, "but we don't altogether appreciate it. In fact, we feel that your way of conducting the war has been rather insulting to us."

"You don't mean to say," said Clithering, "that you really wanted us--to--to shoot in earnest?"

"We did. In fact one of the alternatives which I am empowered to offer you--"

"Offer us! But we--we are--I mean to say that the terms of settlement must, of course, be dictated by us."

"Not at all," I said. "Godfrey, you can't write shorthand, I know; but you must try and take down what I'm going to say now as accurately as possible. I'll speak quite slowly. The Government--I mean, of course, so far as Ulster is concerned, the late Government--your Government--must either conduct the war in a proper business-like way--have you got that down, Godfrey?"

"Do you mean," said Clithering, "that you want us--?"

"I mean," I said, "that we have put our money into it. Conroy, in particular, has spent huge sums on cannons. We are determined to have a show of some sort. Your Government must therefore either agree to fight properly and not keep running away every time we get a shot in, or--"

"Yes," said Clithering, "go on."

"I'm waiting," I said, "till Godfrey gets that written down. Have you finished, Godfrey? Very well. Or--now take this down carefully--you English clear out of Ireland altogether, every man of you, except--"

"But--but--but--" said Clithering.

"And leave us to manage Ireland ourselves. Got that, Godfrey?"

"But," said Clithering; "but--I thought you didn't want Home Rule."

"We don't. We won't have it at any price."

"But that is Home Rule of the most extreme kind."

"There's no use splitting hairs," I said, "or discussing finicking points of political nomenclature. The point for you to grasp is that those are our terms."

"Will you excuse me?" said Clithering. "This is all rather surprising. May I call up the Prime Minister on the telephone?"

"Certainly," I said. "I'm in no hurry. But be sure you put it to him distinctly. I don't want to have any misunderstanding."

There was no telephone in the library of Moyne House. Clithering had to ring for a servant who led him off to another room. Godfrey seized the opportunity of his absence to confide in me.

"Poor old Clithering is a bit of a bounder," he said. "Makes stockings, you know, Excellency. And Lady Clithering is a fat vulgarian. It's all she can do to pick up her aitches. I shouldn't think of stopping in their house if--"

"If any one else would give you food and pocket money."

"There's that, of course," said Godfrey. "But what I was thinking of is the daughter. There is a daughter and she ought to have a tidy little pile. Now do you think it would be worth my while to marry into a family like that for forty thou.? Clithering ought to run to forty thou., with the title in sight. I wonder if you would mind sounding him, Excellency?"

"At present," I said, "I'm arranging about the fate of Belfast, which is rather an important matter in some ways. But--"

Godfrey did not seem to care much about the fate of Belfast.

"I suppose," he said, "that it really is settled about Marion and that fellow Power."

"Quite," I said; "they're to be married at once."

"Then I think, Excellency, if you don't mind speaking to old Clithering--I wouldn't like to commit myself until I was pretty sure of the money. There's only one daughter, so he can hardly offer less than forty thou."

I fully intended to tell Godfrey what I thought of him; but words were not easy to find. I was still searching for a noun to go along with "damnable" when Clithering came back. He seemed greatly excited.

"The Prime Minister," he blurted out, "is quite ready--He says he has no objection--In fact it's what we've been trying to do all along. Our Home Rule Bill was simply an attempt--"

"Do try to be coherent," I said. "What did the Prime Minister say?"

"He said we'd leave Ireland with the greatest pleasure," said Clithering.

"Is that all?"

Something in the way Clithering spoke made me think the Prime Minister must have said more than that.

"He added," said Clithering, "that--"

Then he paused nervously.

"Out with it," I said. "It's far better to have no secrets. Godfrey, take down the Prime Minister's words."

"He added," said Clithering, "that there is only one thing which would please him better than to see the back of the last Irishman leaving Westminster, and that is--"

"Go on," I said.

"To hear that at the end of three weeks you'd all torn each other to pieces, and that there was nothing but a lot of trouser buttons left to show that Ireland had ever been an inhabited country. Of course he didn't mean it. If there was the least chance of any internecine strife our conscience would not allow us--after all we have a duty, as Englishmen--but there's no risk of bloodshed, is there, Lord Kilmore?"

"Not the slightest. I may take it then that your Government agrees to our terms. You cart away your army and all your officials, except the Lord Lieutenant. We want him. He's to give parties for the Dublin doctors and the smaller landed gentry."

"But about his salary," said Clithering. "Is that to be an Imperial charge, or are you--?"

"I forgot to ask about that," I said, "but if there's any difficulty I expect Conroy will agree to pay it. It's not much, is it?"

"I'm not sure of the exact figure; but I know it's never supposed to be enough."

"I've no actual authority for saying so," I said, "but I expect we'll want to do the thing decently if we do it at all. Cahoon has the mind of a statesman, and in his opinion something will have to be done to soothe the Dublin public. A first-rate Viceregal establishment was his idea. However, we needn't go into details. The main thing is that we want a Lord Lieutenant. If your Government undertakes to supply suitable men from time to time I think I may promise that we'll find the money. Write that down, Godfrey."

"When you speak of the English clearing out of Ireland," said Clithering, "and leaving you the country to yourselves, you don't of course mean absolute fiscal independence."

"We do," I said.

"You can't mean that," said Clithering. "It's costing us nearly two millions a year to run the country, and if that's withdrawn you will go bankrupt."

"What McNeice said," I replied, "was that you were to clear out, bag, baggage, soldiers, police, tax-collectors, and the whole--"

"Tax-collectors!" said Clithering. "I'm not sure--"

"Didn't your Prime Minister say he'd be glad to get rid of us? What's the use of your arguing on about every little point?"

"But," said Clithering, "the collection of the revenue! Between ourselves now, Lord Kilmore, do you think there would be any risk of your imposing a tariff on--"

"Certain to," I said. "It will be one of the first things we do."

"We can't agree to that," said Clithering. "Free Trade is a principle, a sacred principle with us. You can't expect--We are a Free Trade Government. Our consciences--"

"Very well," I said. "Go on with the war. Bombard Belfast. Kill another woman. Smash the Albert Memorial with a shell."

"Our consciences--" said Clithering.

"Your consciences," I said, "will have to let you do one thing or the other."

"Now take my own case," said Clithering. "I am interested, deeply interested, in hosiery. We do a big business in stockings."

Godfrey winced. I do not wonder. The future Lady Kilmore must, of course, wear stockings, but it is not pleasant for Godfrey to think of her supply coming straight from the paternal factory.

"The Irish trade," said Clithering, "is not among the most remunerative, but--"

"We can only afford to wear the cheaper sorts," I said; "and a great many of us can't buy any at all. I don't think you need bother about the Irish trade."

"Still, it is substantial. Now, a hostile tariff--or a bounty on Balbriggan--"

"You'll have to establish a factory in Ireland," I said, "and dodge the tariff. Tipperary now. Labour is comparatively cheap, and--After all, it's a choice between that and letting the Fleet loose at Belfast again."

Clithering thought this over. I think the idea of cheap labour in Tipperary cheered him up. When he next spoke it was in a most friendly tone.

"I hope," he said, "that the shells which were fired--"

"There was only one," I said.

"I heard that no lives were lost," said Clithering. "I hope that the damage done to property was not serious."

"One statue," I said, "was smashed to bits."

"I'm very sorry, very sorry indeed. Now I wonder if you would allow me--I mean if the people of Belfast would allow me--as a personal expression of the warm feeling of friendliness I've always felt for the Irish people, *all* the Irish people--I wonder if I might offer to replace the statue. I should esteem it an honour."

"It was a very large statue," I said, "and must have cost--"

"Oh, I should not allow considerations of money to stand in my way."

This was handsome. I looked at Godfrey to see how he liked to hear his future wife's dowry being frittered away on statues. I could see that he was anything but pleased.

"I shall convey your offer," I said, "to the people of Belfast. They may not want that exact statue again. We're not quite as keen on Kings and Queens as we were. But I feel quite sure something symbolic would appeal to us strongly. What would you think now of Ulster as an infant Hercules strangling a snake representing Home Rule? Any good sculptor would knock off something of that sort for you; about twelve feet by nine feet, not counting the pedestal. By the way, did we do much damage to your ship? The one Malcolmson hit with his cannon ball?"

"I don't know," said Clithering. "I did not hear any details."

"Because," I said, "if she is injured in any way--But perhaps she was insured?"

"I don't think men-of-war are insured."

"Well, they ought to be. But if that one wasn't I'm sure we'd like to make good any damage we did. Conroy has lots of money, and he'd be sorry if the English people were put to any expense in repairing a battleship we injured."

I am not a practised ambassador, but I have always understood that diplomacy is a trade in which politeness pays. I was not going to be outdone by Clithering. When he offered Belfast a new statue I could hardly do less than promise that Conroy would mend the ship. I was very glad afterwards that I thought of it. Clithering was tremendously pleased, and made me quite a long speech. He said that he looked upon my offer as a kind of first-fruit of the new spirit of amity which was coming into existence between England and Ireland.

This ended our negotiations to the satisfaction of every one concerned.

Lady Moyne returned at once to Castle Affey and spent the summer in planning new ways of keeping the insurgent industrial democracy from invading the rights and privileges of the propertied classes. Last time I dined there she explained to me a scheme for developing the Boy Scout movement, which would, she thought, distract the attention of the public and push social questions into the background. Babberly escaped having to address a labour meeting in Newcastle-on-Tyne. He had promised to do this, but there was no necessity for him to keep his promise once the troops were withdrawn from Belfast. He returned to his duties in Parliament, and, as I gathered from the papers, harassed the Government successfully all through the autumn session. The Dean and Crossan played their hymn tune on our church bells every day for a fortnight. They still--and I am writing several months after the new Irish Government has been firmly established--congratulate each other on the way in which the third Home Rule Bill was defeated by the unfaltering attitude of the Ulster Loyalists.

Godfrey, I regret to say, failed to marry Miss Clithering. She took a violent dislike to him after he had spent three weeks in her father's house. Not even the prospect of becoming Lady Kilmore would reconcile her to the marriage. I am therefore still responsible for his maintenance.

I have, unfortunately, been obliged to give up writing my "History of Irish Rebellions." I do not understand Marion's system of filing, and I cannot find any of the papers I want. I cannot get Marion to explain things to me, or to take any trouble to help me. Since she married Bob Power she has lost all interest in my literary work.

THE END