

THE WASTED ISLAND

EIMAR O'DUFFY

THE WASTED ISLAND

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

BRICRIU'S FEAST: A Comedy

KING GOSHAWK AND THE BIRDS

THE SPACIOUS ADVENTURES OF THE MAN IN THE
STREET

8316

The
WASTED ISLAND

By EIMAR O'DUFFY

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CHAPTER I

A GENTLEMAN'S SON

I

LOVE'S main function is to make the world go round, and he cares nothing for the subsequent fate of the instruments he uses to that end. After tricking that clever young man, Eugene Lascelles, and that sweetly pretty young lady, Alice Reilly, into lifelong union, and teasing them mercilessly on their honeymoon, he took flight a few months later, leaving the man angrily embittered, and the woman meekly wondering. All the rest of her life she was to go on wondering; for her husband, though he was not kind enough to conceal his feelings, was not cruel enough to explain them; and Alice could not understand anything unless it was explained to her, and sometimes not even then. Possessing little passion and no imagination, she had not expected very much from marriage—just affection, that was all—and it never occurred to her that anybody could require any more. Affectionate by disposition, it was her nature to love the persons nearest to her. As she had loved her parents and brothers, so she was prepared to love her husband, and so she expected to be loved in return. When, disconcertingly, his tenderness began to fail, she had no idea that it could be owing to any shortcoming in herself. Remembering some generalisations of her girl friends, she concluded that 'men were like that', that 'love is fleeting', and, being aware also that her husband was 'clever', and therefore queer and incomprehensible, she resigned herself to the inevitable, and went on placidly loving him.

The man took the failure of his marriage less easily. At once better and worse than his wife, he had entered it with a fine ardour and high expectations; and, as he had been unprepared to pay the price of their realisation, he was incapable of making the best of it when they were frustrated. Moreover it even looked as if the blind god had bungled the main part of his business, for an unconscionable time went by without any sign of offspring appearing. Dr. Lascelles, who had drawn no little consolation from the hope of such fruition, accused whatever gods he worshipped of adding insult to injury. His wife, deducing the obvious from his anxiety, began to importune Heaven with prayers and masses, burned many candles before votive altars, and finally, to make assurance doubly sure, consulted a specialist. These cumulative efforts were rewarded in due course by the arrival of a son, a fine healthy child, rather over the normal weight, who was the occasion, as may be imagined, of much jubilation. Dr. Lascelles, swelling with the pride of proven manhood, cracked many bottles of wine with his club friends, filled the birth chamber with sheafs of daffodils and narcissi, and, in the intervals of his work, hung about his wife's bed like the tenderest lover imaginable.

'He'll be like his father, won't he?' said Alice.

'He's a Lascelles all right,' assented the father. 'But he has your eyes,' he conceded.

'Really? Do you think so?' she said happily.

He hated her habit of answering everything with a fresh question, but on this occasion forbore comment. His wife smiled to see him take the tiny fist of his son in his fine white capable hand.

'My son!' he said with emotion, then kissed them both and went out.

He went through his work that day in a state of pre-occupation, making plans for the future life of his boy. Though still in his thirties, Dr. Lascelles already had his carriage, and expected soon to make it a carriage and

pair ; for he was not only a very capable physician, but had all the qualities that make for popularity and social success. A man of taste and culture, open-handed and hospitable, he was at home in any circle, while his charm and tact made him particularly agreeable to ladies. He could confidently hope to be among the heads of his profession, and, in consequence, high in the fashionable society of the capital, at no very distant date. For his son he envisaged a career no less useful and brilliant.

'He'll have the best of opportunities. Public school and Varsity, of course. After that . . . the Army perhaps? No,' he decided, thinking of certain possibilities. 'We can do better than that. What about the Diplomatic Service? A Public School and Varsity man has the Empire at his feet.'

He pictured wonderful things ; then abruptly realised :

'Dash it, I'd forgotten his religion. Must keep my promise, of course. He'll have to go to Clongowes, or some such hole, I suppose. . . . Good Lord! What would my poor father have said to that? Break with the family traditions, isn't it?'

The Lascelles, be it noted, were descended from a Huguenot who had settled in Queen's County early in the seventeenth century, and, owing to the laws then in force, acquired at a very low price an estate which had been confiscated from the native owners in the name of civilisation and religion. This gentleman had married a lady of his own faith and nationality, and reared his family along with the neighbouring Protestant settlers in such a manner as to preserve them from all contact with the surrounding Papist multitude. Fortune, industry, and the turn of history favoured the Lascelles. From being persecuted they became persecutors, and in defence of their rights in this prerogative they fought for William at the Boyne and helped to rivet the chains on their beaten countrymen after Limerick. During the century-long swoon in which Ireland then lay they gained prosperity in peace, and eventually, finding their pros-

perity threatened by their erstwhile protector, flew to arms, inscribed 'Free Trade or Else ——' on their banners, and along with their kind almost succeeded in disrupting the British Empire. They helped to dragoon the rebels in '98; petitioned violently against the Union in '99; and protested as violently against its repeal in 1845. Throughout the nineteenth century they had supplied the British Empire with soldiers and minor politicians, and their native isle with landlords, law officers, and magistrates.

For the scion of such a line Clongowes seemed anything but the right environment.

'Stop though,' Dr. Lascelles adjured himself. 'Wasn't Alice's father at some Catholic place in England? Ashbury, I think they call it. Ranks almost as a public school, I'm told. That'll be the thing. And he'll go to Oxford, anyway.'

It had not occurred to Dr. Lascelles to take into account the traditions of the other half of his son's ancestry; indeed he knew nothing about them; but they are worth recording nevertheless. In Mrs. Lascelles's veins flowed the attenuated blood of a very ancient Ulster clan. Stripped of their lands by the same circumstances which enriched her husband's forbears, the bolder spirits of the family left their country and carved themselves careers in the armies and at the courts of France, Spain, and Austria. The tamer ones remained at home, where, debarred from politics and the professions, they took to business, dropping from their name the dangerously distinctive patronymic O. At first they made wool. They made it so successfully that England, in the interests of her own trade in that commodity, was obliged to stop them. They then turned resignedly to the making of silk, whereby they flourished exceedingly until the whole industry succumbed in the general economic ruin that followed upon the Act of Union. They managed, however, to survive their fellows long enough to have their derelict premises bought up by one of the newly-formed

railway companies ; after which they made nothing, but lived, in modest respectability, on the interest on the proceeds.

Mrs. Lascelles herself knew and cared nothing about traditions, whether family or political. She was engaged in loving and nourishing the tender mite who had been so miraculously, as it seemed, entrusted to her. She hoped he would be a priest—a Jesuit, like her two uncles—and pictured herself kneeling at his first mass and receiving communion at his hands.

Her first visitor, when the time for visits came, was her bosom friend Mrs. Harvey, wife of the rising young oculist. She was a handsome sprightly woman, with very large and lively black eyes and a vivacious spirit, which however was sadly incommoded by a spreading of the flesh which even the rigid corsetry of those days could not control.

'My dear !' she said, beaming, while she panted from the stairs. 'Welcome to the ranks of Motherhood ! And how is my *sweet* godson ?'

Having kissed Mrs. Lascelles, she sat down by the bedside.

'My dear,' she said, still panting. 'The very first thing I must tell you is this. You must call him Philomenus.'

'Philo—*what* ?' asked Mrs. Lascelles.

'Philomenus.'

'Honoriam ! You must be mad.'

'Not at all, my dear. Just let me get my breath and I'll explain.'

'But his father has already decided to call him Bernard—after his grandfather, you know.'

'Yes. But you see, I've made a sort of vow. Ever since I saw how things were, and how much it meant to you—my dear, I know what men are—I've been praying to Saint Philomena for you—you know I've always had *such* a devotion to her, and she's *so* splendid—never refuses me anything—so I just asked her for this, and promised

her that you'd call it Philomena, but of course as it's a boy you'll have to call him Philomenus—like Julius and Julia, you know.'

'But it's impossible, Honoria,' said Mrs. Lascelles weakly. 'Such a dreadful name—and I know Eugene wouldn't hear of it.'

'It would be an awful thing to break a solemn promise, though,' said Mrs. Harvey.

'Awful,' Mrs. Lascelles agreed. 'But what can we do? I'm *bound* to obey my husband.'

'I know, my dear. I know. We must pray for guidance, that's all. . . . Tell me, Alice, did you have a bad time? I had such a *dreadful* time with Jack. You can have no *idea* what I suffered.'

'Indeed I can,' Mrs. Lascelles objected.

'Of course. I wasn't thinking,' said Mrs. Harvey, and the two women began intimate confidences which were at last interrupted by the entry of the nurse.

Mrs. Harvey took the hint. Bending over to kiss her friend, she whispered:

'I've a secret to tell you. I'm expecting . . . Yes. I do hope it will be a girl this time. Well, good-bye. And oh, listen. Why not make Philomenus his second name. Eugene couldn't possibly object to *that*.'

The next visitor was Alice's brother, Christopher Reilly.

'Am I an uncle or an aunt?' he asked, surveying the pair from the foot of the bed.

'Don't be absurd,' said Alice. 'It's a boy, of course. Who do you think he's like?'

'There's far too much of his Majesty in him,' Christopher replied. 'I wish he was more like you.'

A long rambling talk followed. She was much more at home with her brother than with her husband, and she became quite animated with tales and praises of young Bernard. Christopher listened sympathetically. He was a tall, self-possessed young man, who never seemed completely serious, a perpetual puzzle to his brother-in-law. He closely resembled his sister in features, but the

play of thought and intelligence across them caused a world of difference in expression.

'How's his Majesty been behaving himself lately?' he asked. 'Oh, you needn't answer. I can read it in your eyes.'

'I wish you wouldn't call him that name, Chris.'

'It suits him better than his own, anyway. You'd think he was the hero of a novel with that mouthful.'

'You'll be his godfather, won't you, Chris?'

'What does he want with a godfather at his age?'

'Chris, you silly! I didn't mean Eugene's. I meant the baby's.'

'It's a big responsibility. Don't I have to guarantee that he'll renounce the Devil and all that sort of thing?'

'No. If you hold him without dropping him at the christening it's all we'll expect from you.'

Dr. Lascelles, returning from work, seemed little pleased at meeting his brother-in-law. Christopher he knew to be a 'disloyal beggar', who had been suspected of complicity in an abortive Fenian conspiracy in his youth.

'Still clinging to effete old Yurrop?' he said, speaking jocularly to conceal his annoyance. 'I thought Wall Street would have recalled you to her yearning bosom before this.'

Christopher answered seriously. The Doctor's pleasantries never moved him to laughter.

'I meant to go to-morrow,' he said, 'but now I must wait for the christening. Alice has asked me to be the godfather, you know.'

The Doctor said 'Oh?' colourlessly, and changed the conversation. A few minutes later the two men left the room together and descended to the hall. Here Lascelles drew Christopher into his consulting-room and confronted him nervously.

'Look here,' he said, 'you're going to be my boy's godfather. I trust you won't abuse that position.'

'He shall have a christening mug as good as can be

got,' replied the other impassively, 'and on every birthday an increasingly valuable present.'

The Doctor seemed nonplussed.

'Look here,' he said irritably, 'you don't seem to catch my meaning. I don't want him to be taught any disloyalty, or any of that sort of thing.'

'Of course not,' replied Christopher. 'Neither do I.'

Dr. Lascelles's irritation increased.

'You and I attach very different meanings to the word disloyalty,' he said.

'I know of only one meaning to it,' Christopher parried him. 'Well, good-bye, old man. I'm off to see about that mug.'

2

YOUNG BERNARD broke no traditions in the early years of his growth. He grew normally; he laughed and cried normally; he ate normally; he got sick normally; his teeth erupted normally; his fontanelles closed normally; he walked and talked at a normal age. His mother adored him and his father gave him first place among all his possessions. He had a normal number of brothers and sisters: two of each, to particularise.

He passed his childhood in a bright airy nursery surrounded with toys and comforts. Pleasant pictures adorned the walls. There were illustrated nursery rimes; photographs of Queen Victoria and her consort and the Prince of Wales; coloured representations of victorious British soldiers charging Zulus; and a supplement from a Christmas annual depicting a little boy wearing his father's red tunic, labelled '*A Chip of the Old Block*'.

With his brothers and sisters he grew up as a gentleman's child should. He was washed and combed regularly, and neatly and prettily dressed. He was trained to be 'good', which meant not being a nuisance to nurse; and to be polite to visitors, which meant answering their inane questions nicely without sheepishness or giggling. He learnt his A B C and how to count and how to recite

simple verses about lambs and spiders. He was taken to the seaside in the summer and to the Pantomime at Christmas. In short, he had a very pleasant time, and he was a very nice little boy.

Every morning and every afternoon the family set out in decorous procession for Stephen's Green: nurse with the baby in the perambulator; the nursemaid with Alice in the mailcar; Eugene, in petticoats, holding to the skirt of one or other of these; and Bernard ranging free in all the glory of trousers and superior years. Stephen's Green contained a pond, where there were ducks and geese and swans to be fed, and horrible big eels browsing in the mud under the bridge, from which one could watch them, leaning over the parapet, held firmly by a kindly lounge. There was an island in the pond, where the ducks nested in a little house that looked like a dwelling for elves; and there was a boat moored under some shrubs on the bank opposite, in which a keeper, one supposed, used to visit that enchanting spot, but never at any time when the children could see him do it. All his life Bernard had hoped in vain to see him make the journey. Near by there was an iron seat which was generally occupied by a witch—a hideous old woman from the adjacent slums, clad in a black shawl that had gone green with age, and encumbered by a mysterious bundle done up in a filthy cloth. She used to make faces at the children, who always clung to nurse when in her neighbourhood, for fear she might grab them and carry them off in her bundle. There was another witch who sat on a seat near the Grafton Street gate. She was even more decrepit than the first, and was always either asleep or brewing tea in a can. She paid no attention to people who paid her none; but once, noticing Bernard staring at her, she gave him a look that kept him at a respectful distance ever after. There was also a third witch, whose usual seat was under the laburnum tree near the gate opposite the University. She was a tall heavily built woman in a fur-trimmed overcoat and a round fur hat.

She had a large yellow face, and used to talk to herself and sometimes shouted at passers-by. Moreover she was peripatetic in her habits and might be met with anywhere. The children called her Mrs. Boo, and dreaded her more than either of the other witches. When they were naughty their nurses could always bring them to order by threatening to give them to Mrs. Boo.

Sometimes, instead of going to Stephen's Green, they would be taken up Earlsfort Terrace, past the Royal University, with its tall clock tower from which the hours and quarters boomed over the city, and along Harcourt Terrace to the Grand Canal, where they could look at the trams being hauled up the steep slope of Charlemont Bridge with the help of a spare horse, and watch the water pouring over the floodgates, and the barges being raised and lowered in the lock, or unloading cargoes of deep brown turf from the bogs of Connaught. One winter the canal was frozen over, and all the common children of the neighbourhood came out to skate on it. The Lascelles children watched them enviously. They were not allowed to skate, partly on account of the common children aforesaid, and partly because their mother was afraid they might hurt themselves.

A tendency to play the politician early manifested itself in Bernard. He organised the inhabitants of the nursery into a monarchical state, with himself as King, Alice as Queen, Eugene as chief secretary of state, and baby Alexander as private citizen. The laws were made at an Annual Meeting held every three or four days, or oftener if it rained, by a procedure which was both impressive and expeditious. An orator, draped with an antimacassar, and with a tea-cosy on his head, would mount the arm-chair that served for rostrum, and propose that 'Anybody who spits at anyone when in a temper shall be banished for three weeks', or that 'Anyone who cries when banished shall have his banishment doubled', or whatever other measure he thought would add to the greatness of the state. If the King approved the Bill, he said 'Passed'

very gravely, and it became law, to be duly inscribed in the scribbling-book of the nation ; if he did not approve, it was at once dropped.

With his toys too Bernard played at statecraft, though here he was hampered by annoying restrictions. The children, it should be mentioned, were well brought up, having a stringent code of behaviour, one of whose clauses forbade asking for presents. Toys, of course, came to them in a flood at Christmas time and on their birthdays, but invariably they were of father's or mother's choice, and consequently not always exactly what they wanted. Their railway tracks, for instance, were nearly all curved, and therefore quite useless for running from point to point ; and their bricks were too few to build anything of decent size with, besides being really picture blocks. All this mattered little to Eugene and Alice, who played from hand to mouth, as it were, without caring very much what they were up to. But it was a sad nuisance to Bernard, and played havoc with his schemes of city building and railway construction. The only way out of the difficulty was to cajol or coerce the too individualistic Eugene and Alice into joining their materials with his for the erection of one great city state under his own controlling genius. On such occasions something approaching his dreams would be realised.

First the railway lines would be laid, the few straight tracks being used in the stations, while in between it had perforce to turn and twist in serpentine fashion. Then battered bricks eked out with cardboard boxes formed the framework of a wonderful metropolis. Stables, cottages, shops and temples lined its thoroughfares, which were paraded by soldiers, cows, lions, and chessmen. The railway ran under tunnels made out of draper's boxes, on the roof of one of which a shepherd tended his sheep, while on another Noah and his family, a brass band, and a cat with her kittens formed harmonious groups. Proportion was flouted. A fox terrier filled a whole carriage of the train, while a family of china elephants reposed

comfortably in the tender. And as for the train, it visited strange places in its journey, travelling frequently from Dublin, via New York or Timbuctoo, to Howth.

The principal occupations of the citizens were travelling, wolf-hunting, and courts-martial. One day the train would buzz round and round transferring the population of New York to Howth ; the next all commercial activity would come to a standstill while the wolves from the neighbouring woods were repulsed in a marauding raid on the suburbs with horse, foot and artillery. A third day would see a reign of terror in full swing, Noah, chessmen and visitors from Japan being tried in batches and blown from the cannon's mouth. (All offences were thus treated, from treason to overcrowding on the railway.) Time and again the whole mighty Babylon was swept away by the barbarian hand of nurse, only to rise again on its ruins as glorious as ever. Thus hour after hour through the seemingly endless days of childhood they played, each suiting the game to his own tastes. For Alice liked best to gather her citizens round a table and entertain them to a banquet, and Eugene loved to arrange æsthetic groups on the station platform and then sit and gaze at them, while Bernard was for ever and ever dissatisfied, and built and destroyed, and reconstructed, and destroyed again, and in the intervals dreamed great projects which he never found himself able to accomplish.

Bernard also set himself to the organisation of war, but here he was less successful. He could invent nothing better than to line up the opposing soldiery, like Frederick's Prussians, for the generals to mow down with marbles. When one side was exterminated, the survivors of the other were rewarded with a triumphal march through the streets of the capital. It was an unsatisfying game, especially as Eugene had no will to victory, and preferred to use his army for parade purposes. In his disappointment Bernard would seek consolation in books. There were beautiful illustrated editions of Cinderella and Bluebeard in the nursery, but his favourites were a big

History of England, British Battles, and a bound volume of the Navy and Army Illustrated. From these he drew much of the inspiration of his games, and back to them he went after his recurring failures. There was also a big Shakespeare, plenteously illustrated, which he found very hard to understand, though he managed to appreciate the story of many of the pictures by referring to the text beside. Passages and characters here and there had a strange fascination for him. MacDuff was his favourite character, and next to him came Sampson and Gregory. Indeed their scene was the only part of Romeo and Juliet that held any interest for him. He loved the line 'No, sir. I do not bite my thumb at you, sir. But I bite my thumb, sir,' and the sonorous ring of some of the speeches in the tragedies pleased him long before they conveyed any meaning.

3

STEPHEN'S GREEN was the playground for all the children of the neighbourhood of every social grade. The nice children came with their nurses; the others had only their mothers to look after them; and there were some quite impossible barefooted urchins who came there by themselves. The favourite spot for the nurses to congregate was the wide central circle, where the fountains were, and King George the Second rode aloft on his pedestal like a big toy cavalryman. There they could sit and gossip while their charges played in their sight. Our young friends, arriving at this spot one morning, found that none of their usual playmates had yet arrived, except the MacInerneys, two little girls much too small for Bernard, at any rate, to play with. He stood about resourcelessly while Nurse sat down beside Nurse MacInerney.

'Have you seen them new electric trams they're runnin' on the Blackrock line?' asked Nurse MacInerney.

Nurse Lascelles had not.

'I saw one on Northumberland Road yesterday,' said Nurse MacInerney. 'They're awful things! If you saw

the sparks flyin' out from under the wheels! Glory be to God, I wouldn't go in one o' them things,' said Nurse MacInerney with intense conviction, 'if you gave me a hundred pounds.'

'What's electric, Nurse?' asked Bernard.

'Ah, go along an' play now,' said Nurse, 'an' don't be askin' questions.'

Eugene and Alice were already playing tig with the MacInerney children, so Bernard wandered off by himself, and thus came presently to the secluded spot where Hector O'Flaherty was drilling his merry men. These were a fascinating gang of desperadoes who played bushrangers and soldiers and other such thrilling games in the shrubberies, in defiance of all by-laws and of the keepers thereof. Bernard had long yearned to join them, but had been prevented by shyness from asking to do so. To-day, however, by an effort he braced himself up to the issue, and approaching the young general, said: 'Can I play with you?'

The hero looked him over critically, while a blush spread over Bernard's countenance.

'All right,' said Hector at last. 'Fall in!'

A glorious hour of drill and marching followed.

That evening Dr. Lascelles came up to the nursery to see his children, and Bernard poured out a rapturous tale of his doings. His father listened impatiently and then asked:

'Who is this Hector?'

Bernard had no more definite information, but nurse said he was one of them O'Flaherties of Baggot Street; at which the Doctor's brows contracted, and he said that Bernard must on no account play with Hector again.

'Why, daddy?'

'Because he's not a nice boy.'

'Sure he's awfully nice.'

'Don't say "sure." You're not to play with him because I tell you so, and that's all about it.'

Then, with a parting injunction to Nurse to see that

his wishes were carried out, he kissed his son hurriedly and left the room.

For a few days Bernard obeyed his parent's behest, but this was mainly due to his nurse's vigilance. In those youthful days he did not appreciate the difference between Stephen's Green and Upper Baggot Street, and his whole soul revolted against the tyranny which robbed him of the only thing in life which at the moment seemed worth having. At last, realising one day that Eugene and the perambulator would be a severe encumbrance to Nurse's pursuit he seized a favourable moment to slip from her side, and dodging through a shrubbery, rushed off to find the gang.

Hector received him coldly, asking why he had stayed away so long. Bernard explained that his nurse had kept him.

'Well, if you're afraid of your nurse you needn't come here,' said Hector, whereat the Army laughed loudly.

'Silence!' bellowed the general. 'Remember you're on parade.'

The warriors smothered their laughter and wiped out their smiles, while Bernard explained that he had just run away from Nurse in defiance of orders. He could see that he rose considerably in Hector's estimation at this, and finally the latter bade him fall in with the rest.

'Number!' said Hector.

The Army proceeded to do so. Number one was a rather coarse boy called Har'ld, who lived in Cuffe Street. He was the second in command, and would have been a bully if Hector had not kept him well in hand. Number two was Hector's younger brother Michael. He ought really to have been in Har'ld's place, but Hector, rather than suspect himself of nepotism, relegated him to the ranks. Number three was another Baggot Street boy called Hugh. Number four was Har'ld's brother Willy, a dirty little youngster with a perpetually dripping nose. The rest of the Army, acting as the enemy for the time being, was waiting in an adjacent shelter intending to

hold it to the death against Hector's attack, which was to be delivered as soon as the departure of a keeper in the vicinity rendered it possible. Meanwhile Hector divided his forces into three parties. Hugh and Willy were to attack the right flank ; Har'ld and Bernard were to deliver a frontal attack ; while Hector and Michael were in reserve, ready to fling themselves into the fray when needed to push home a victory or stave off defeat.

The uniformed figure of law and order having taken its departure, the battle began. Bernard, rushing blindly into action was at grips with a wiry little newsboy, when he felt himself drawn out of the fight from the rear. The nursemaid had come up, taken him by the slack of the pants, and hauled him ingloriously home.

Words cannot describe the pain and anger of Dr. Lascelles on learning of the plebeian tastes of his son. 'Your conduct', he explained, 'has been unworthy of a gentleman's son,' and hastened to apply with a strap the recognised cure for such behaviour.

After this incident the children were taken to the Leinster Lawn for their recreation, so the young mutineer saw nothing of his hero for some months. Then Nurse was taken ill and had to return to her home in the country, and her place was taken by a much less conscientious person, who openly ignored the Doctor's instructions and brought the children once again to Stephen's Green, where henceforward Bernard played to his heart's content with Hector and his followers : a happy state of things which lasted until the flowing tide of social and pecuniary prosperity carried his father to Merrion Square, where the children were more desirable if less original.

4

MR. CHRISTOPHER REILLY kept his promise to Dr. Lascelles. The christening mug was orthodox and very expensive, and each of Bernard's birthdays brought a present over from America. First it was a rattle, a wonderful silver rattle, with melodious little bells attached.

Next year came a cow, a most life-like animal, with horns of cow-horn, and a realistic 'moo'. The third year brought a huge wooden railway train with doors and windows that opened and shut. After that came soldiers and cannons, and clockwork trains, and a magic lantern which he was not allowed to use, for fear of accidents, and which eventually rusted away from neglect. For his eighth birthday—— But let us turn to his mother's letter of thanks.

My dear Chris,

I'm so glad to hear that you are quite well and getting on so splendidly. Why don't you hurry up and get married? Are the American girls not so charming as we are told?

Why on earth did you send Bernard that Child's History of Ireland? You might have known what would happen. Eugene was perfectly furious, he flung it straight into the fire, and Bernard was crying for hours after. The whole birthday was spoilt. Now, please don't think that I mind myself, because I don't. I should like Bernard to be a patriotic Irishman, but his father simply won't have it, and it's impossible, as you know, for me to have any say. Besides, I'm not going to have politics spoiling the happiness of my home.

I haven't much news. Old Dr. Wilton is dead. The children had chicken-pox but are well over it. Eugene gave me a Christmas present of a new drawing-room suite, but like most of his presents it's for himself as much as for me, and it's not as if I hadn't hinted enough for a necklace.

When are you coming over to Dublin again? I'm longing to see you, and you'll be delighted with your godson, he's such a pretty child.

Try and come soon.

With much love from

Your loving sister,

Alice.

Her brother's reply was brief.

I shall be in Dublin on business, he wrote, next month, and I'll take a short holiday there as well. I am sending Bernard another present to replace that which his father did in beastly rage destroy.

I see old England's on the warpath again for Justice and Mammon, so I suppose His Majesty is in fine imperial fettle. Don't heed him. The Boers are a small people standing up for their rights against a bully, and that's all there's to it.

*Thine,
Chris.*

Mrs. Lascelles ran upstairs to the nursery with this letter and its accompanying parcel. The children deserted Babylon and rushed to her arms in a body.

'A present from Uncle Christopher,' she said, giving the parcel to Bernard. 'He's coming to see us soon. Won't that be nice?'

'Oh, mummy, what's he like?'

'Like his photograph of course.'

'Yes, but I mean how big is he, and how does he talk?'

'Such a boy! He's tall, and you'll hear him talk when he comes.'

'Mummy, come and see my new invention.'

'I haven't time, darling. Some other day.'

Bernard looked dismayed.

'Just for a minute, mummy,' he pleaded.

He drew her over to the city and tried rapidly to impress her with some wonderful piece of railway engineering. She listened absently with an occasional insincere 'Yes', or 'Really', her glazed eyes showing that her thoughts were elsewhere—in Chatham Street with the butcher and grocer most likely. Bernard, disappointed, let her go without completing his lecture.

'Mummy never seems to listen to us,' he complained when she had gone.

'Why don't you open your parcel?' asked Eugene impatiently.

5

'I SEE that we are about to fight the Boers,' said Dr. Lascelles one day, unfolding a large map of South Africa at the dinner-table.

'How terrible!' said his wife.

'Serve them right,' answered the Doctor. 'They've been asking for trouble this long time, and by Jove they'll have it.'

Mrs. Lascelles remembered her brother's letter.

'It's a shame for a big country to be attacking a little one,' she said.

'Do you think England's going to let herself be bullied by a pack of Dutch farmers?'

'I don't think anything. I only know the Boers are standing up for their rights.'

'Rights!' scoffed the Doctor. 'Precious lot *you* know about rights. These Boers are a truculent, narrow-minded lot of money-grubbing, psalm-singing bigots.'

Mrs. Lascelles would sacrifice anything for peace.

'Perhaps you're right, dear,' she admitted.

'There's no "perhaps" about it,' rejoined her husband irritably. 'Of *course* I'm right.' Dr. Lascelles had nothing but scorn for his wife's belief in the infallibility of the Pope, but he had not the slightest doubt of his own.

'Very well, dear,' said his pusillanimous wife with a sigh, mentally comparing her husband's hectoring behaviour with Chris's considerate statement of a case. The Doctor went on studying his map.

6

BERNARD impatiently waited for his nurse to finish brushing his hair. It was an annoying process at the best of times, for at the end of every stroke of the brush she brought the bristles down on to his ears or some other sensitive part; but now it was intolerable, for Uncle Christopher had come from America and was waiting below to see him. The operation being at last concluded

to Nurse's satisfaction he rushed downstairs to the drawing-room, but, shyness overcoming him at the door, he entered with commendable decorum.

A tall gentleman was talking to Mrs. Lascelles beside the fireplace. He looked over at Bernard's entrance and said :

'Hello! Is this Bernard?'

'This is your godson,' said Mrs. Lascelles, beaming on them both. Bernard came nearer.

'Do you remember me at all?' said Uncle Christopher, to which Bernard solemnly answered 'No'.

'That's strange,' said Uncle Christopher, 'because it's barely eight years since we parted.'

'How absurd you are, Chris!' giggled Mrs. Lascelles, and Bernard, forgetting his shyness, laughed outright.

'I was only a baby then,' he said.

'May I take Bernard out to tea?' inquired Uncle Christopher; and, on his sister's assenting: 'Will you come along to Mitchell's with me?' he asked Bernard.

'Oh, yes,' said Bernard.

Mitchell's was a fashionable teashop in Grafton Street, a thoroughfare as yet unfamiliar to Bernard. It was a bewildering place thronged with swishing, chattering women, and sumptuous carriages, with great glossy-skinned horses foaming at their silver bits, and impossibly stiff coachmen and footmen wearing incredibly spotless white breeches and shiny cockaded hats. It was associated in his memory with intolerably long waits while his mother stood gossiping about nothing with dull grown-ups who chucked him impertinently under the chin, or while she pondered over the mountains of fabrics unrolled on counters before her captious eye by polite long-suffering shopmen. Uncle Christopher had an outside car waiting, which took them there at a spanking pace. Within a quarter of an hour they were seated at a table laden with good things.

'Have an éclair?' said Uncle Christopher, holding a plate towards his nephew. Bernard, remembering previous teas when his father had been the host, asked :

'Aren't they unwholesome?'

'Very,' said his Uncle with his eyes twinkling. 'Take two.'

For a time there was silence while Bernard made devastating raids on the gorgeous contents of several plates. Afterwards by sympathetic questioning the man set the child sufficiently at his ease to let him talk spontaneously, and Christopher was delighted with the intelligence of his nephew and the clear voice and accent in which he spoke. Enthusiastically Bernard told him of his wars and cities, and Christopher, casting aside all the difference of age between them, joined with him in an eager conversation. The dreams and limitations of his own childhood came back to his memory, and he became a child again comparing notes with another child. Bernard on his side was gloriously astonished to find in his uncle a kindred spirit. Nobody had ever listened to him in this way before. When he tried to interest his father in something that was all the world to him it was 'Yes, yes' impatiently, and 'I must be off, darling. I'm busy.' How he hated that word 'busy', the spoiler of a thousand joys. Why were grown-ups always busy? Why wasn't his uncle busy?

'What does being busy mean?' he asked suddenly.

'It means having something unpleasant to do. And that reminds me, I'm busy this evening, so I'll leave you home at once.'

'But you'll come and see my toys to-morrow, won't you?' Bernard inquired anxiously. His uncle promised to do so, and the pair parted company at Dr. Lascelles's hall door, each mightily pleased with the other.

Home again, Bernard felt a kind of chill come over him. This was the land of absent-minded 'Yes, yes,' and 'I'm busy, darling.' His thoughts went back down the street after his uncle, and he resolved to confide in him many dreams and fancies such as he had never wanted to divulge before. Slowly he ascended to the nursery, and blinking after the darkness of the stairway entered the

gas-lit room. Its familiarity struck oppressively to his heart. Eugene and Alice—dull homely figures in their overalls—called him joyfully in their everyday voices to come and join in their game, but he shook his head and retired moodily to a chair apart.

‘Sometimes,’ Eugene remarked to Alice, ‘Barnie goes on like a grown-up.’

By and by Bernard fetched the Army and Navy Illustrated from a shelf and immersed himself in it. Eugene and Alice, weary of play, began to make remarks.

‘Granny!’ said Eugene, and Alice tittered. Bernard pretended not to hear.

‘Granny!’ repeated Eugene, giving the book a shove by way of emphasis.

‘Shut up!’ snapped Bernard.

‘Temper cat!’ said little Alice.

Something snapped inside Bernard’s head. He was seized with a violent desire to wring Alice’s neck, but knew better than to touch her, for punishment of the direst kind always visited any assault on his sister. ‘The boy who would strike a girl is a coward’ was his father’s dogma, the natural result being that, since Alice was an irritating little tyrant, both boys heartily detested her. So it was on Eugene’s head that the blow fell. The corner of the chronicle of Britain’s glories drew blood from his pudgy nose and he fled to Nurse howling. Instantly the culprit was arrested and brought to justice before the bar of the dinner-table. Sullenly determined that his brother, chief witness standing by in all the glory of injured innocence, should not have the pleasure of seeing him punished, he began by stubbornly denying his crime: a disastrous course. Such an attitude could not long be maintained in the face of systematic brow-beating, and eventually he was forced to admit the truth.

‘To think that my son could be a liar!’ said Dr. Lascelles solemnly. ‘A liar!’ he repeated. ‘Don’t you know that the most despicable of all faults is dishonesty,

and honesty the first of all virtues? Think how splendid it would be to look back on a long life and say, "I never told a lie." You can never say that now.'

Bernard hung his head and traced the outlines of the pattern of the carpet with his toe.

'And to think that you should deliberately strike your little brother so as to make him bleed. Your behaviour to-day has been that of a liar, a bully and a coward. Go away. I'm ashamed of you.'

But in spite of his crimes his mother came up to his bedside and put her arms round him and kissed him.

So ended an eventful day, eventful enough even as here related with perhaps the most important event left out. For as his father delivered his homologue upon truth Bernard had looked once into his eyes, and in that look doubt for the first time entered his soul. The age of acceptance was over.

7

UNCLE CHRISTOPHER came several times to the nursery during the remainder of his stay in Dublin. Mrs. Lascelles smiled indulgently on him, calling him 'a great child', and pitying this weakness in an otherwise sensible nature. Bernard liked to see him standing watching their play (he was one of those men who never sit down), his hands in his trousers' pockets, an amber-stemmed pipe between his fine white teeth, making now and then in his pleasant voice some illuminating suggestion on engineering or politics. Alice too confided to Bernard that she loved Uncle Chris 'because he had such twinkly eyes'.

Babylon improved marvellously between his suggestions and his gifts. Uncle Chris appreciated Bernard's needs better than his parents, and commenced by remedying the shortage of building materials. Babylon immediately solved her housing problem and shook off a great slumland of cardboard.

'What do you think you need most now?' he asked another day.

'It's a pity we haven't more *straight* tracks,' said Bernard. 'It's not very real to have the train always going on a curve. Oh, I'm not hinting, you know,' he added with a sudden blush as he remembered the code.

'I'd noticed that myself, old man,' and Christopher produced a parcel.

One day he arrived to find a battle in progress between the armies of Eugene and Bernard.

'Go it, Ireland!' said Bernard triumphantly as a cannon-ball ploughed a lane through Eugene's cavalry.

'Why do you call yourselves Irish and English?' asked Christopher, surprised to hear the elements of treason coming from his father's son.

'I know it's funny,' replied Bernard, 'because they're both the same, aren't they? But, you see, when we used to be French and English neither of us wanted to be the enemy. So now Eugene is the English because they have the biggest city in the world, but I'd rather be Ireland because we live there you know.'

'An excellent reason too,' said Uncle Christopher.

'Do you notice,' said Bernard afterwards to Eugene, 'Uncle Chris sometimes says things in a queer way as if he meant something else.'

'You're always thinking queer things,' was Eugene's reply.

Soon after that Uncle Christopher went away, leaving behind him as a last present for Bernard a book in a grey-blue cover called *Cuchulain of Muirthemne*. 'Kewkelayn of Murthem,' Bernard pronounced it. He read it, fascinated, and, as soon as he had finished it, re-read it, and re-read it again, till he came to know it almost by heart. The great stand-up fights between champions and the clash of armies in battle delighted him immensely, but the descriptions of costumes appealed to him almost more keenly. He used to try and imagine himself clad in a shining white shirt striped with purple down the sides, a gold shield on his back with a border of silver and edge of white bronze, a great spear in his

hand, and a mighty two-edged sword with silver hilt at his jewelled belt.

But most of all, as in after days he loved the catalogue of the ships in Homer, he loved the catalogue of the troops on the eve of a battle. One passage always thrilled him tremendously. This was where MacRoth, describing to Fergus the arrival of the Ulstermen on the field of Ilgairth, tells at last of a downhearted troop of leaderless men, to which Fergus replies: 'I know them well, and it is well for those on whose side they are, and it is a pity for those they are against, for they are Cuchulain's men from Muirthemne.'

Up till then his favourite heroes had been Sir Walter Raleigh, Nelson, Wellington, and Lord Roberts, but now Cuchulain and Conal and Fergus and the rest displaced them entirely. They were more heroic, more lovable, and infinitely more real. He longed now to talk to Uncle Chris about his treasure and to ask his explanation of the strange discrepancy with accepted history which it involved. But Uncle Christopher was gone away.

CHAPTER II

GLENCOOLE

I

A SOLITARY cyclist was wheeling his machine up a narrow and uneven road winding through the Dublin mountains. It was a hot summer day and the cyclist's clothes were covered with dust and his brow with sweat. For a mile he plodded on in grim determination, till at length he reached the highest point of the track and looked down into the valley beyond. It was a beautiful scene that met his gaze: a verdant glen well wooded with beech and pine and mountain ash, and watered by a little stream that splashed and sparkled down the centre. A wisp of lazy smoke and a splash of white proclaimed the presence of an occasional cottage, and far below the road could be seen to cross the tiny rivulet by a totally disproportionate bridge. The cyclist stood admiring the view for some minutes, then sat down by the roadside and lit a cigarette. When it was finished, he mounted his bicycle and free-wheeled down the slope into the glen. Reaching the bottom he again dismounted to climb the farther slope, and just before reaching the gap that led out of the glen stopped at the garden gate of a two-storied cottage. This he opened, and advancing up a short walk rapped with his fingers on the sun-blistered green-painted door. A step sounded on the flags within. Then the door was opened by a stately old man, with longish but well-groomed white hair and neatly-trimmed beard, who stood for a moment in the doorway, looking inquiringly at the cyclist.

'Don't you recognise me, Ward?' said the latter.

'Well, if it's not Chris Reilly!' cried the white-haired man in a hearty voice. The voice was strangely inconsistent with the hair, which, one suspected, was prematurely white.

Christopher looking at him could see that this was a young man made old; that it was suffering that had furrowed his brow and sorrow that had sunk his eyes so deep in their sockets.

'I'm glad you haven't forgotten me,' he said. 'It must be twenty years since I saw you last.'

'You were only a lad then,' replied the other, 'but those twenty years haven't changed you as much as they've changed me. . . . Come inside. You can leave your bicycle against the wall there.'

Christopher followed him into a small red-flagged hall from which a flight of plain deal stairs led to the upper story. Ward put his head through a doorway on the left, told someone to prepare tea, and then motioned his guest to enter the room opposite. The furniture of this apartment was in striking contrast to the modest exterior of the dwelling. The chairs and table were of mahogany; there were two comfortable arm-chairs; and a cottage-piano stood in a corner. The walls were lined from floor to ceiling with books. There was a big open hearth, filled with golden-flowered furze branches.

'Yes. Twenty years. Twenty mortal years,' said Ward pensively as they sat down. He remained silent a few moments meditating.

Christopher, watching him, allowed his mind to travel back to the last occasion on which he had seen him. Before his mind's eye passed a vision of an attic in London, in which five men, including himself, a boy of seventeen, and Ward, a young man of twenty-three, were preparing to sit down to a meal. In imagination he felt again the tense anticipatory excitement of the moment, for these men were going from that meal to certain death. All of those present seemed to be in a greater or less degree

affected by the imminence of the crisis except the leader, a quiet determined-looking man with iron-grey hair and beard, who appeared to have no care in the world except the proper preparation of the supper. As the party was about to sit down this man suddenly exclaimed: 'By Jove, we haven't enough butter. That won't do at all. A death-feast without butter would be unthinkable. . . . Chris, like a good fellow, run down the street for some butter.' And he saw himself leave the room.

He was roused from his reverie by the voice of his host.

'You went out to fetch something, didn't you?' queried Ward.

'Butter,' said Christopher with a smile, and added, 'I had some trouble in getting it, and when I got back I found the police-van at the door, and over the heads of the crowd I saw the helmets of the policemen who were arresting you.'

'You had a lucky escape. What did you do afterwards?'

'I lay in hiding in East-end attics for the best part of a year, and then got away to America. I've lived there ever since.'

'And what brings you over here now?'

Christopher looked round the room hastily as if to assure himself that nobody could overhear him, and sinking his voice replied:

'You know that the English are going to fight the Boers?'

Ward nodded.

'Well,' Christopher went on, 'there are a few people who'd like to give a helping hand where it's needed.'

Ward suddenly became convulsed with energy.

'For God's sake, Reilly,' he exclaimed, 'think what you're about. You're going to waste yourself . . . waste yourself.'

Christopher was amazed at this outburst, and was about to speak when he heard a tap at the door.

'Come in,' said Ward, and a girl entered with a tea-

tray, which she deposited upon the table. As Ward went to pour out the tea a dark shy boy of about ten years of age came into the room.

'Well, laddie, where have you been?' asked Ward.

'Over in Glendhu, father,' said the boy.

'This is my son, Stephen, Chris,' said Ward.

Christopher held out his hand, which Stephen touched hurriedly, immediately afterwards retiring to a distant chair.

'How did you find me out?' asked Ward in the course of the meal.

'I met Magrath in Brunswick Street the other day, and he told me.'

'Is he with you in that business?'

'Not he. He was always a quitter.'

They talked on indifferent subjects for a while. All the time Stephen sat silent, and Christopher's attempts to draw him into conversation extracted only monosyllables or a somewhat sheepish smile. Christopher was beginning to think the boy stupid and to compare him unfavourably with his bright little nephew in Dublin, when in the middle of something he was saying he happened to glance in Stephen's direction and saw that the boy's eyes were fixed intently upon himself as if he were analysing what he was saying. Stephen at once looked away, but as long as he remained in the room Christopher felt uncomfortably conscious of being under constant inspection.

Tea over, the men produced their pipes and adjourned to a seat in the garden where they basked in the mellow warmth of the afternoon sun. Stephen whistled up a dog and went off with him for a walk. After a short silence Christopher spoke.

'I was very much surprised by what you said before tea. I thought you were unchangeable.'

'So did I—once,' said Ward grimly.

'But how much have you changed?' asked the younger man anxiously.

'Just to this extent: that I see no good in wasting

one's life pursuing the unattainable, or serving those who don't want to be served.'

'I'd like to know', said Christopher thoughtfully, 'what brought a man like you to that frame of mind?'

'It's a long story,' said Ward. 'Have you patience to listen to all that has happened to me since—since you went out for the butter?'

'That's what I came for,' said Christopher.

2

'You know, of course,' said Ward, 'that Doyle turned Queen's evidence. As a matter of fact he had betrayed us from the beginning. If ever a man looked honest and trustworthy that man was Doyle. I thought I knew him inside out, and I trusted him like a brother. You remember, I was engaged to his sister. However . . . there you are. And when a man like Doyle is found wanting, Chris, it shakes your faith in human nature, and makes you ask whom you can be sure of. But Doyle wasn't our only disappointment. You'd think that even a race of slaves would have been fired by what we had intended to do. Just picture it. England's Government imprisoned in their own council house, and the very heart of the Empire held against her by a handful of determined Irishmen. If there had been a spark of manhood in the race it should have been struck by the mere idea. But what happened? The weaklings joined with their masters in thanksgiving for the unmasking of the conspiracy; the strong man and his parliamentary following politely deprecated our folly; and the best that anyone said for us was that we were honest but misguided. . . . Misguided! We were called misguided by men who mouthed the name of Robert Emmet on the election platforms for a foreign Parliament.

'Meanwhile we rotted in jail. They kept Rafter twelve years, till he went mad, and Milligan only came out to die. As for me, I was young and they let me off with seven years. Seven years of hell they were. They didn't think

it enough to take my freedom from me and rob me of the sight of the sky and the trees and the grass, but they made the ten square feet of ground they gave me as uncomfortable as the inventions of petty spite could make it. I had only one window, which was so small and ^{high} from the floor that the sun never reached me. Just a little bar of sunlight used to shine high up on the opposite wall for half an hour of the day. I used to wait for it and watch it all the time it was there, and if that hour was cloudy then my whole day was black. I had only a stool to sit on, and it was clamped in the centre of the cell, so that if I wanted to rest my back I had to sit on the floor leaning against the wall. And my table was also clamped down at such a distance from the stool that I had no comfort in eating my food.

'They talk of the rack and the scavenger's daughter of Elizabethan days. Well, modern England is civilised and her tortures are more refined.

'They wouldn't even let me sleep. On the pretext of making sure that I hadn't escaped (as if I could escape through a window ten feet up and fifteen inches square with two thick bars to it, and the door locked and bolted) they flashed a light through the spy-hole every hour. They flashed it on my face deliberately to wake me, and soon I came by force of habit to wake beforehand in expectation of it. Do you wonder Rafter went mad?

'They took seven years out of my life that way. Took my youth clean away from me so that it was worse than if it had never been. I went into that cell a young man of twenty-three and I left it at thirty, tottering and half crazed.

'How I love the sunshine! It's the greatest gift of God to man, and well do they know it who send their fellow creatures to jail. When I got my release I wanted to leave cities behind and begin a new life out in the open where the sun could shine on me and the breezes blow through and through me and bring me new strength.

'And I wanted sympathy. When for seven years

you've heard nothing but sharp commands shouted at you, you want kindness, you want to be praised and made much of. And then it was for Ireland I had suffered, and I had lived for the day when Ireland should tell me I deserved well of her. But Ireland had forgotten me. The old spirit had passed away and except for a few faithful souls men looked on me as an ordinary criminal.

'The only one who remembered was Mary—Doyle's sister. She had waited for me all those years, and at the end of them, knowing what I would like, she got me this cottage and filled it with my books and brought me here from the jail gate.

'And now I could have been happy but for the spiteful minds of men. Minds that are too small to take in anything else, take in suspicion with a wonderful facility. When I married the sister of Doyle the traitor, men looked at one another knowingly. Insinuating talk was in the air. Some people suggested that my short sentence was a sign that I had given information; others hinted that my imprisonment was not genuine.

'Strange that the one name remembered out of all who took part in our enterprise should be the traitor's.

'But the suspicions of men mattered little to me. Why should I mind the glances of village gossips when the sun shone upon me? No. I care nothing for what men think; but serve them again? Never.

'And then, as if I had not suffered enough, my wife was taken from me when Stephen was born. She was too good for this world altogether, but there was no one to follow her coffin but myself.'

Michael Ward paused, gazing vacantly in front of him. The accumulated misery of twenty years was working upon his soul. As for Christopher, he remained silent. There was no comment to make upon this record of a broken life.

After a time Ward by an almost visible effort of the will, cast his brooding memories aside and turned to his companion.

'Can't you understand me now?' he said. 'Can you free a slave who uses his very chains as a weapon against his liberator?'

Christopher hesitated before replying, and when he spoke his words came haltingly. It was as if he weighed each before he let it fall.

'After such a story as yours,' he said, 'one like me, who has suffered nothing, must feel that any opinion he offers must to a certain extent contain some element of—impertinence. But what I think is this. Your sufferings might be ten times worse than you have said, and men ten times more unjust, ungrateful and small-minded than you have found them to be, and yet there still remains—Ireland.'

He reddened slightly as he said this, for he was not given to voicing primal things. The words seemed to touch some responsive chord in the older man's soul, for he looked up suddenly with a strange light in his eye. But this was only momentary. His head drooped again and he said:

'You're young and vigorous. I'm old and broken: old and broken at forty-three.' Then, almost beseechingly: 'Leave me to my trees and sunshine. I'm tired out.'

Christopher was reminded of Mangan's lines:

And lives he still then? Yes, old and hoary,
At thirty-nine, from despair and woe,

and felt that this wreck of a man, clinging so desperately to what was left of the youth within him, was too pathetic a creature to argue with.

Suddenly Ward sprang to his feet.

'But this is a melancholy reception to give you', he said, 'after twenty years' separation. Let's take a stroll down the glen.'

Christopher looked at his watch and said:

'I'm afraid it's nearly time for me to be off. I've a long ride before me.'

'Nonsense. You'll stay the night surely?'

After some persuasion Christopher agreed, and they set out for the gap at the far end of the glen. Here they left the road and ascended the tree-clad hill-side, treading a carpet of pine-needles.

'Twelve years ago,' said Ward, 'when I first came here, this district was thick with woods, but this is the only one left to-day. Over the hill there, there was another until a few months ago. I can't bear to visit the spot now. It's damnable, this wholesale destruction of irreplaceable beauty. To think that because some infernal young fool of a landowner is drinking and whoring in London, these trees that I've known and loved for years must be taken to pay for it. . . . However, let's enjoy them while they last.

'It's the same all over the country,' he added, as they resumed the ascent. 'Why the devil can't our people make a stand against that, instead of fighting one another like savages over the name of a dead adulterer?'

'Search me,' said Christopher.

They continued to climb, and emerging from the belt of trees reached the top of the hill. A magnificent panorama spread itself before them. Across the valley were the gently curved Three Rock and Two Rock Mountains, bare and barren, with little woods in the valleys beneath. To the south the Sugar Loaf, threatening and volcanic-looking, domineered over his little brother. Away to the left Bray Head sloped to the sea.

'Such a compact little country!' said Christopher, mentally comparing it with the great sprawling bulk of America.

'I find it sufficient,' said Ward. 'I haven't travelled more than a couple of miles beyond the glen since Mary died.'

Skirting the edge of the wood they descended to the valley. As they neared the house they overtook Stephen and the dog. Ward slapped the boy heartily on the back, asking had he had a good walk, to which Stephen merely

answered 'Yes', and taking his father's arm accompanied them home in silence.

3

poor Christopher, under Ward's questioning, of America and of his life there, and when Christopher endeavoured to shift the conversation to Ireland, Ward skilfully fenced him off and reverted to the original topic. All the time young Stephen sat silent, listening intently, and, so Christopher fancied, taking in as much of what was unsaid as of what was said. After supper the father put a match to a pile of wood which had been substituted for the furze boughs on the hearth.

'Curious primeval instinct, isn't it?' he remarked. 'It's a fine warm night, but without a fire we always feel something lacking. . . . Go and get your Horace, Stephen.'

'He's young to have got to Horace,' remarked Christopher, as the boy left the room.

'Eleven. Well, yes. I was only doing Caesar myself at that age, but then that was at school. I teach Stephen myself.'

Stephen returned carrying a slim copy of the Third Book of Odes and stood beside his father's chair.

'Where are we now?' asked Ward.

'First half of Ode Two.'

'Read it out then. You won't mind?' he added, looking apologetically at Christopher, who shook his head.

Stephen began to read the ode beginning: '*Angustam amice pauperiem pati.*' He then translated the first three stanzas into very fair English, and began on the fourth.

"*Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori,*" he read. "'It is sweet and proper to die for one's country.'" Is it?' he asked, looking up.

'That's only one of Horace's attempts at nobility,' said Ward.

'Then he must have thought other people would think it noble,' said Stephen.

'Not necessarily,' said Ward.

Stephen looked hard at his father for a moment, seemed to realise that he shirked being questioned, and picked up the translation where he had left off.

Stephen went early to bed, and after his departure Christopher said :

'That boy has brains.'

'So I think,' replied Ward. 'But he's a queer lad altogether. You've noticed how seldom he speaks. That's not shyness. He's always like that. And yet he's not mopy. He spends most of his time out ratting or rabbiting with his dog, and he's as healthy as can be.'

'Does he read much?'

'Next to nothing. To my knowledge he's only read one book in his life, and he hasn't finished that one yet. It's a big history of France, and he's been working his way slowly through it for the best part of a year. It seems to me that though he has plenty of brains they work very slowly and methodically, but when they once get hold of a thing they never let it go again. When I give him new information on any subject he doesn't make any remark: just looks hard at me and then goes away to let it sink in. Yes. He's a queer lad.'

'Yesterday', said Christopher, 'I was entertaining a little boy who is his opposite in every way. He's a nephew of mine and my godson, and he's all chatter and questions—questions that take some answering too. And though he's only eight he's a tremendous reader. Your boy is luckier than Bernard, though. He has room for full development up here, but my nephew will have to shake his active little mind free from shackles, and hammer it against walls, if it is to grow at all. His father's a narrow-minded irreligious bigot and a violent Unionist, and my sister is completely under his thumb, so I know the kind of upbringing he'll get. They'll train his mind to run in a groove, and a damned twisty groove it will be, dodging obstacles, and downhill all the way. They'll try to prevent him thinking too much, and fix

his attention on the accepted. They'll teach him that things as they are are all for the best ; that it is unwise to probe too deep into ideas which it would be dangerous to follow to their logical conclusion ; and that the connection with England is part of the established order of the universe. " Eat, shirk, and be respectable, for to-morrow you may be knighted," is the motto they'll set him, and if he's the boy I take him for he'll be struggling most of his youth with the fog they'll raise round him, like Peer Gynt with the Boig. If I could only be near, I'd be some help to him, but God knows what this war may bring.'

'So you fully intend to throw your life away for a people who are only a name to you?'

'No. I fight against England. Those I fight with don't matter a damn, though for that matter they've as good a cause as England ever fought against.'

'Well, it's no business of mine. But I hate to see life wasted.'

'So does any man. It all turns on what you mean by waste.'

'Any life given for this island of slaves and traitors is wasted. And I tell you this, I'm not going to let Stephen waste himself for such a people. You're afraid that your little nephew may drift into one kind of slavery and you'd like to hurry him into another. My Stephen shall be slave to nothing. Written or spoken word about this country's politics he has never seen or heard, and never shall so long as I can prevent it.'

'Then he becomes a slave to you and to ignorance.'

Ward was momentarily taken aback. He fumbled for words for a minute and then stammered out :

'I don't want him to suffer as I did.'

'Not even of his free choice?'

'There's no free choice,' Ward almost shouted in his excitement. 'This damnable old island gets her spell on you and you're no longer your own master. Well I know it, and so do you.'

his attention on the accepted. They'll teach him that things as they are are all for the best ; that it is unwise to probe too deep into ideas which it would be dangerous to follow to their logical conclusion ; and that the connection with England is part of the established order of the universe. "Eat, shirk, and be respectable, for tomorrow you may be knighted," is the motto they'll set him, and if he's the boy I take him for he'll be struggling most of his youth with the fog they'll raise round him, like Peer Gynt with the Boig. If I could only be near, I'd be some help to him, but God knows what this war may bring.'

'So you fully intend to throw your life away for a people who are only a name to you?'

'No. I fight against England. Those I fight with don't matter a damn, though for that matter they've as good a cause as England ever fought against.'

'Well, it's no business of mine. But I hate to see life wasted.'

'So does any man. It all turns on what you mean by waste.'

'Any life given for this island of slaves and traitors is wasted. And I tell you this, I'm not going to let Stephen waste himself for such a people. You're afraid that your little nephew may drift into one kind of slavery and you'd like to hurry him into another. My Stephen shall be slave to nothing. Written or spoken word about this country's politics he has never seen or heard, and never shall so long as I can prevent it.'

'Then he becomes a slave to you and to ignorance.'

Ward was momentarily taken aback. He fumbled for words for a minute and then stammered out :

'I don't want him to suffer as I did.'

'Not even of his free choice?'

'There's no free choice,' Ward almost shouted in his excitement. 'This damnable old island gets her spell on you and you're no longer your own master. Well I know it, and so do you.'

'Metaphysical rubbish!' said Christopher coolly. 'Eye-wash, my friend. The will to serve a cause comes from oneself. There's no Granuailing about it. And as for you, if you jail your boy's mind you'll go one worse than those who jailed your body. . . . My God!' he exclaimed suddenly, 'are children's minds always to be at the mercy of the fools who beget them?'

'You have no son, Reilly,' said Ward.

'True,' replied the other, 'but quite off the point.'

He put his pipe in his pocket and lit a cigarette. Ward refilled his pipe, and for a quarter of an hour they smoked in silence. Ward was thinking hard, and the younger man, watching him intently, seemed to follow his meditations.

'Besides,' he said at length, 'you can't keep him ignorant for ever. And when knowledge comes he'll be hard on those who tried to keep it from him.'

'There's something in that,' Ward admitted. He yawned heavily.

'Let's go to bed,' he suggested.

4

NEXT morning after breakfast Ward went off on some farm business, leaving Christopher in the garden to enjoy the cool freshness of the air. By and by Stephen approached and without any preliminary asked:

'Is it a sweet and proper thing to die for your country?'

'Yes—and more.'

'Why?'

'All the children of the same fatherland are in a sense brothers, and for the good of all they must stick together. And if anyone attacks them they must unite and help each other, and if necessary be ready to die in the fight. So that dying for fatherland really means dying for the sake of your friends and brothers. You see, the safety of each one depends on the safety of them all, and the safety of all depends on the readiness of each man to sacrifice his own safety for the rest.'

'Then Horace was telling the truth?'

'For once. But you needn't mind Horace. He was a nasty little beast who only told the truth when it sounded clever. And now, to turn to more interesting subjects, how's your rabbiting?'

'I was just going to see to some snares I set. Would you like to come?'

'Sure thing. Lead on and I'll follow.'

They went up the slope behind the cottage, crossing some of Ward's fields, and emerged on some waste land which was a veritable rabbit warren. They went to each snare in turn, Stephen pocketing the prey. Some of the rabbits were still living, and these Stephen killed in spite of Christopher's appeal to let them go free.

'I couldn't bear to kill a thing like that,' said Christopher.

'They rob us and they're good to eat,' replied Stephen in matter-of-fact tones.

'I know. I might reason that way myself, but their screams and the look in their eyes would be too much for me.'

'You wouldn't bother much about the look in their eyes if you saw them eating your cabbage patch.'

'Dulce et decorum est pro patchia mori,' said Christopher, and Stephen grinned.

'Young barbarian,' thought Christopher. 'Puts his head before his heart every time. He'll be a great man some day. Wonder will he and Bernard ever meet.'

Stephen having despatched the last of his victims, they turned homewards.

In the early afternoon Christopher got ready to return to town.

'Good-bye, old man,' said Ward, standing at the gate. 'Good-bye, and the best of luck.'

'Good-bye,' said Christopher, and they shook hands warmly.

'I'll see you to the top of the glen,' said Stephen.

They set off together, Christopher wheeling his bicycle

and Stephen by his side. They said very little. Christopher joked about the size of the bridge, and Stephen told him disjointed stories about the other people in the valley. At length they reached the top of the rise and looked down on the city in the distance.

'I've never been in Dublin,' said Stephen.

'You'll go there soon enough,' replied Christopher.

'Why do you say that? Won't I like it?'

'Glencoolé's a better place.'

'It's a lonely place then.'

'There are worse things than loneliness.'

'You know better than me. Are you ever coming back here again?'

'If I have luck,' said Christopher. 'Good-bye, Stephen.'

'Good-bye.'

They shook hands. Christopher mounted his bicycle and slid down the road towards the city.

5

MICHAEL WARD was profoundly moved by his last talk with Christopher. He had been leading a self-centred and monotonous life for years, a perpetual Achillean sulk which he had considered rather fine and which was really an emotional luxury. The preservation of his son's ignorance also it had pleased him to regard as a Heaven-appointed task. Now he began to see things in a new light. He saw how much of personal pride and selfishness had been in his whole attitude, and though he could not bring himself to change his own mode of life and thought he began to be ashamed of the restrictions he had imposed on Stephen. Pride yields slowly, and this self-revelation occupied some time. Meanwhile life at Glencoolé went on much the same as ever save that Ward became gradually more communicative on subjects he had formerly shirked.

At last, about nine months after Christopher's departure, he quietly unlocked a cupboard underneath one of

the bookshelves. Some time before Stephen had come to the end of his history of France and was now starting on a history of ancient Greece ; so his father felt that the risk of the contents of the cupboard being soon discovered was but small. However, one day not long after, Stephen suddenly said at breakfast :

‘ Father, you never told me we’d been conquered by the English.’

‘ It happened a long time ago, Stephen.’

‘ Well, oughtn’t we to do something to drive them out ? ’

Stephen was a disconcertingly logical child.

CHAPTER III

END OF A STORY

I.

THE Empire was at war; and, as usual, for Justice and Liberty against a villainous and contemptible foe.

'That fellow Kruger', said Dr. Lascelles, full of virtuous indignation brought on by a character sketch in the Morning Post, 'ought to be shot.'

England's little colony in Dublin was not to be outdone in fervour or fever by its mighty mother. Red-white-and-blue bunting flaunted a gaudy farewell to the dust-coloured troops when they marched away; Kipling's songs were on every loyal lip; badges were sported in every loyal button-hole. Fond mothers dressed their little boys in khaki, much to the envy of Bernard, who, forgetful of purple-striped shirts and silver-rimmed shields, tormented his mother into getting the like for him. But by the time he had got it the craze had died out, and finding himself alone and conspicuous he soon returned to his sailor suit. Later on his father gave him a badge with a photograph of Queen Victoria on one side and one of Lord Roberts on the other. This he wore in his button-hole for a few days until he met Hector O'Flaherty in Stephen's Green, who, with contemptuous words which greatly puzzled our hero, tore it from its place and ground it under his heel. The children also inserted a new invocation into their prayers: 'God bless the Queen and give her victory over her enemies,' and Bernard used to add under his breath: 'And don't

let the Boers come and kill us.' It was a thrilling and exciting time.

'Why don't we always do these things?' he asked his mother.

And the war went on.

Bernard used to steal the illustrated papers from his father's waiting-room and make tableaux with his lead soldiers after the manner of the battle pictures. He feasted full of glory and great deeds and longed to be a man and out in the fighting. He used to picture himself holding the pass alone like Cuchulain against tremendous odds, or slaying Kruger in single combat while two armies looked on. He wanted to talk to Uncle Christopher about it all, but his godfather had mysteriously vanished, and when he asked his mother was he gone to the war she only shook her head.

A year went by and still the war went on.

Dr. Lascelles was knighted, and Bernard wondered what dragon he had slain and was very disappointed when he donned no shining armour to go out and fight the Boers. But the war was forgotten in the excitement of moving to the new house on Merrion Square, and exploring the new nursery, and making new friends, and playing new games in the secluded walks of the Square itself. And Bernard was somewhat compensated for the loss of Hector O'Flaherty by his own attainment of an analogous position among his new associates.

2

WHEN Bernard was ten years of age he made his First Communion.

His early religious training had been the work of his mother. She was what is generally called a good pious Catholic: that is to say, she went to Mass frequently, fasted on Fridays, had numerous 'devotions' and superstitions, had no code of ethics, and was totally ignorant of the philosophy of the Catholic religion. Destitute as she was of reason and knowledge she nevertheless

considered it her maternal duty to instruct her son in the fundamentals of both. If her watch had gone out of order she would not have dreamt of meddling with its mechanism herself, yet she felt in no way incapable of revealing infinity to the subtle and complicated mind of a child. So when Bernard was very young she took him on her knee and told him pretty stories about angels, and good little children who went to heaven, and bad big children who went to hell. She told him that if he was good he would sit on a jewelled throne in heaven wearing a crown and a pair of oh such lovely wings (which last was what most appealed to Bernard in the prospect), and that if he was bad he would be burnt to ashes with the devils in hell. Later on she taught him his catechism, and was annoyed to find that Bernard was more interested in finding out the meanings of the long words than in the doctrines they expressed.

Then he was sent to a preparatory school where the good nuns (as they love to be called) prepared him for his first confession in much the same way as his mother had employed. He was eight years of age when he first presented his soul to be cleansed of its iniquities, and after that he was compelled to repeat the process monthly. Frequently he was so ashamed of his cleanliness as to invent sins, and once he even went so far as to accuse himself of Lust, not knowing in the least what it meant, but because it was a new sin, and a deadly one.

And now came the first Communion Day. 'The greatest day of your life,' he was told,—'and the happiest.' He bent his head and joined his hands as reverently as any, and his mother thought he looked a little cherub in his white sailor suit. Afterwards there was a magnificent breakfast, and the good nuns went about saying pious things to the First Communicants and presenting them with what are called Holy Pictures. Towards the end of the day Bernard dismayed his mother by saying in a disappointed tone :

'Mother, when is the happiness going to begin?'

'Aren't you happy now, darling?' she remonstrated.

'Oh, I'm all right; but nothing extra.'

'Oh, Bernard, what a thing to say!'

'Well, it's true.'

His mother sighed. He was no longer the innocent thoughtless boy she would have liked him to remain. She had noticed his growing roughness and impatience of caresses, and as his golden curls darkened into brown and his chubby cheeks lengthened she felt that he was becoming more and more independent of her. She almost resented his growth to boyhood, and indeed wished him still an infant. She remembered the days when he came with all his questions to her as to the fount of wisdom and knowledge; when her answers were taken for granted without hesitation or demur. Now it was always to his father that he went, or to a book, and she began to regret the 'Don't bother me; I'm busy' with which she had too frequently fended off his inquiries.

3

THE war still went on.

And one day Bernard came upon his mother in tears with an open letter in her lap. He asked her what was wrong, and she put her arms round him and told him that Uncle Chris had been killed in the war, and the two of them wept together for a little while. Then Bernard went away to think of Uncle Chris by himself, and he fancied him fighting his last fight like Cuchulain, driving his chariot through the hosts of the enemy till they overwhelmed him.

That night he slept with Cuchulain of Muirthemne against his cheek, and his father going up to the nursery saw it and took it downstairs to read. Perceiving it to be a dangerous book he put it away on a shelf in the dark.

4

It was through Mrs. Harvey, Bernard's godmother, that the news leaked out that Sir Eugene's brother-in-

law had been killed fighting for the Boers. The young man was unknown in Dublin and the plausible physician might have glossed things over but for this woman's meddling tongue. Where she learned the truth is not known, but once it was in her possession she was as anxious as Midas' barber to spread it abroad, and her weekly at-home gave her the opportunity.

'Isn't it sad about poor Lady Lascelles's brother?' said her first visitor, Mrs. Moffat.

'Doubly sad, isn't it?' replied the hostess, significantly enigmatic.

'Why doubly?' inquired Mrs. Moffat.

'Oh, don't you know? . . . Well, perhaps I'd better say nothing about it.' This was Mrs. Harvey's usual preliminary to telling everything.

'But I wouldn't let it go any farther,' said Mrs. Harvey after the revelation. 'Don't you think I'm right?'

'Perfectly right,' said Mrs. Moffat.

But to make quite sure that she was right to keep the matter secret each guest in turn had to be told the story and her advice on the point requested, and one and all were agreed that it should go no farther.

When the truth came out in Merrion Square it caused quite a flutter in that tranquil dovecot. Mrs. Gunby Rourke openly proclaimed her intention of cutting Lady Lascelles on the first opportunity, and actually did so, but the general feeling was one of sympathy for the sorrow and disgrace that had befallen an unquestionably loyal family, and condolences in very guarded phraseology began to trickle in. Mrs. Harvey's were among the first: eight pages of conventional consolations and religious tags.

'I know, dear Alice,' she wrote, 'that your grief is greater than that of others who have lost their dear ones, for your sorrow for his death is increased by the knowledge that he fought for the enemy. I pray that God may give you grace to bear this doubly bitter trial,' and a great deal more in the same strain.

'Damned hard lines on Lascelles, this news about his brother-in-law,' said old Colonel Delamere in the Kildare Street Club. 'Damned hard to know what to do in a case like this. One can't feel sorry when a traitor meets his deserts, but one can hardly be unfriendly to people one knows. I suppose I'd better leave my card.'

And he did.

Mrs. Heuston Harrington, who was intellectual and very superior to the little island in which she deigned to live, remarked :

'Fancy an intelligent man bothering like that over ancient grievances ! I can't understand how a man with big interests in a great country like America should worry his head over a silly little place like this.'

Mrs. Heuston Harrington did not leave her card, but that was because she was too intellectual to possess such conventional things.

5

THE death of his godfather wrought a great change in Bernard. Deprived of his one confidant he turned in on himself more and more, reading and dreaming instead of playing with his brothers and sisters. Wearied of the limitations of toy states and toy wars he sought solid things in the wars and politics of English History, which he read right through from the Roman Invasion to the accession of George the First, where it became too complicated for his understanding. Historical stories like those of G. A. Henty also attracted him, and a little book called *Stories from Roman History* set him hunting among his father's books for a full history, which when found he read from *Anno Urbis Conditæ* to the *Battle of Actium*. The Empire somehow failed to attract him.

Then he got dissatisfied with the ways of real history, where the countries and people he favoured nearly always came off worst, and must needs construct an imaginary history free from those blemishes in his own head. He invented an island and divided it up into a number of

states each with its own laws and customs. One of these—it was a small state on the north-east coast—was his favourite and he made it the hero of his political drama. It was inhabited by a brave and enlightened people who made up in quality what they lacked in numbers. In the south-west was the largest and most powerful state inhabited by a bullying and treacherous population. This was the villain state, and between it and the hero state was a deadly feud. As they were separated by neutrals the wars which perpetually broke out between them were of necessity preceded by diplomacy and the making of alliances. Interests and principles pulled the different states in varying directions and were responsible for ever-changing enmities and friendships. If Bernard could possibly manage to keep control over events the weaker and better cause always won, but a train of events once started he frequently found it impossible in the interests of verisimilitude to thwart the unfavourable course of fate, and then the triumph of might over right made of his island another Europe.

Into this imaginary continent Bernard would frequently retire, building up a history of war and intrigue sometimes for hours at a time, while those who observed him thought he was merely absent-minded. This occupation lasted well on into his school days, but as he grew older the character of his imagination changed. His mind became less political and more constructive. He thought less of warfare and more of building and law-making. He envisaged beautiful cities, pleasant villages, roads, bridges, harbours, and fortifications. Formerly he had drawn for himself maps, physical and political, of his island, colouring the different states as in a map of Europe. Now he took to making plans of cities and harbours, and even elaborated an imaginary census. These documents he drew up in moments of privacy; he would have died sooner than let anybody see them.

But before he had reached this stage a notable event occurred. A History of France came into his hands, and

the tale of the French Revolution made him at eleven years of age a red republican. Hitherto his affections had been generally given to peoples rather than to causes. He backed the Yorkists against the Lancastrians, the Carthaginians against the Romans, because for no discoverable reason he liked them better. Patriotism itself meant nothing to him, for love of Ireland, that fruitful mother of rebels, could find no place in his father's teaching, and a way has not yet been found to inculcate love of the United Kingdom. An indefinable pride in Britain's glory was all Bernard possessed as a substitute for the basis of citizenship. But now he had obtained a creed, and by degrees it became a passion. The very name of king soon came to affect him as it had affected the ancient Romans. Back to English history he went with his new viewpoint: no more partisanship for this apostle of an idea. Gone his championship of York against Lancaster: it was but a petty dynastic squabble in the eyes of this young republican. Gone his enthusiasm for the Cavaliers: all his favour was transferred to their opponents, and the star of Prince Rupert paled before the sun of Hampden. His imaginary island shared in the general revolution, and his hero state became a republic of extraordinary virtue in desperate contention with the villain state, now a bigoted upholder of the *ancien régime*.

His father knew nothing of all this mental activity, and it was just as well that he did not, for the truth would have frightened and annoyed him. He would indeed have been rather ashamed of his son's precocity, of his imagination, of his preoccupation with ideas: all of which conflicted with his own conception of what a boy should be, and was associated in his mind with queer-mannered undesirable people with strange collars and long hair.

6

It remains to be recorded how the news of Christopher Reilly's death was received at Glencole. It came in a

letter from a comrade in arms who had been beside him when he died and heard his last words. Michael Ward read it in the porch of his cottage on a grey morning in April.

'My God!' he groaned. 'What waste!'

Entering the sitting-room he found Stephen lying on the floor engrossed in a huge volume. The mysterious cupboard was open, and the book was the History of the Four Masters.

CHAPTER IV

ALMA MATER

I

SIR EUGENE LASCELLES gave some fatherly advice to his son on the eve of his departure for school.

'Don't push yourself forward too much at first,' he said. 'And don't try to be too clever. If the boys question you, answer them straight, unless it's about your sisters, in which case I leave it to your own wit to find a way out. Don't be too friendly with masters or you'll get a bad name among the boys. Try and make friends with decent gentlemanly fellows. Never funk anybody, but don't do any more fighting than you can help; I believe it's out of date at Public Schools nowadays. I needn't tell you never to do anything dishonourable, because you're my son. Good-bye, my boy, and God bless you.'

'A good sound manly talk,' thought Sir Eugene, 'and no nonsense about it.'

A cab was at the door bearing Bernard's luggage. He said good-bye to Eugene, who was still at a preparatory school, and to Sandy who was too young to go to school at all. Then he kissed Alice and the baby and entered the cab with his mother.

'I've asked Mrs. MacBride to ask her boy to look after you,' said Lady Lascelles as they drew near to Kingstown. 'So you'll have one friend to start with.'

Bernard mumbled something. He dared not speak, being on the verge of tears. He nearly broke down as she kissed him good-bye on the deck of the steamer.

' Good-bye, darling.'

A bell clanged and there was a cry of ' All for the shore '. After a last kiss Lady Lascelles went down the gangway. With tear-dimmed eyes Bernard watched her as they cast the vessel off. The pier seemed to glide away. He waved his handkerchief in reply to hers until it had become a fluttering white speck indistinguishable among a multitude of others.

Then he looked around for MacBride, but that youth was too much occupied with his own friends to trouble himself about ' a kid my mater asked me to look after '. So he made the journey alone, miserable, and sea-sick.

2

He stood in the vast playground of Ashbury College, a forlorn little figure, very shy, very unhappy, and very cold. His hands were thrust deep into his breeches' pockets, partly to keep them warm and partly because he did not know what else to do with them. Also, jingling his money gave him some employment.

Interminable hour! He was too shy to stand still: too shy to walk about. He shifted his weight from one foot to another. He took out his watch and replaced it without observing the time. He studied the pattern of the railings. Looking out through them he felt like a caged animal in a zoo. There were cows outside which looked at him stolidly like spectators.

He turned back to view the scene in the playground. Some of the boys were playing football; others were strolling about conversing. No one noticed the new boy.

Just then a chattering group passed by and suddenly turned upon him. He seemed to be surrounded by gigantic figures and jeering faces.

' Hello, new fellow! What's your name? '

' How old are you? '

' Where do you come from? '

' What's your father? '

' How many sisters have you? '

'What class are you in?'

Bernard answered as politely as he knew how, amid facetious interruptions.

'Great Scott! What a name!'

'Oh, an Ahrishman, sure and begorrah!'

'God! You must be an awful stewpot to be put into Rudiments at eleven,' said one boy after Bernard's reply to the last question.

'Awful cheek of a new kid to be put above you, Sexton,' said another: whereat all burst out laughing at Sexton and took themselves off.

Bernard watched them go, hating their laughter and their loud voices. The monotonous standing about continued. He wished he had come to the school earlier, so that he might have been a new boy amongst new boys, instead of being the only one of his grade in that condition. Presently his cogitations were again interrupted by the usual salutation.

'Hello, new fellow!'

This time, however, the speaker wore a friendly smile. Bernard had heard his name—Jack Willoughby—and had liked him from a distance. He twirled a football skilfully on the tips of his fingers.

'Like to play bummy?' he asked.

'Rather,' said Bernard.

'Well, come along. Murray and I have a wall bagged.'

Bummy was a football game suited to the shorter recreations, played by three or four players. You kicked the ball against a wall, aiming above a line three feet from the ground, and the next man had to take it on the volley or first bounce. The first person to miss three times became 'bummy', which meant that he had to bend over while each of the others had a free shot at him, with an extra for every hit. On the second round two misses qualified for the position, and on the third, one, while the penalty shots increased in inverse proportion. It was a jolly good game to keep you warm on a winter's morning. Willoughby and Murray were practised hands at it, so it

was not long before Bernard had to double up. He managed to escape on the second round, when Willoughby went to the wall, but he went down again on the third round, and was still being bombarded when the whistle sounded.

As the boys streamed indoors, Willoughby asked Bernard: 'Are you any use at footer?'

'Well, I've *played*,' said Bernard deprecatingly, and added: 'At a preparatory school, you know.'

'I must keep an eye on you,' said Willoughby. 'You look like a runner, but you need weight.'

'I generally won the hundred at my last school,' said Bernard, 'but I'm not much at the half-mile.'

'You're Irish, by the way, aren't you?' Willoughby asked.

Bernard admitted it.

'I knew it at once by your brogue,' said Willoughby.

Bernard could not help laughing to hear his very slight Dublin accent described as a brogue, but before he could comment, Murray said:

'I say, I'm Irish too. Shake hands.'

Bernard did so, a little puzzled at the warmth of the greeting. 'You didn't cross with the rest of us,' he remarked.

'No,' said Murray, a pleasantly ugly black-haired boy. 'I live in Liverpool. I've never been in Ireland except for a week last summer. But my pater and mater both come from Cork.'

They went in to second schools, which were devoted to mathematics. Then came dinner in the Great Hall amid the din of four hundred voices. There was excellent roast beef, with mediocre potatoes, and cabbage aptly described by the boys as 'boiled grass'. This was followed by a suet roll larded over with treacle. Bernard could not stomach suet, but he dipped his bread in the treacle, and filled up the remaining gaps in his interior with dry bread. There was beer on the table in a copper jug as large as a bedroom hot-water can. He got to like that by degrees.

This day being a half-holiday, the afternoon was

devoted to football. Games were compulsory at Ashbury. Bernard therefore found himself picked in Third Match, a curious institution which naturally resulted. Here congregated all those who, out of distate or slackness, took no interest in football. The physically unfit, the corporally clumsy, the intellectual, the cricketer, the naturalist, the cyclist, the loafer—all were collected together and compelled to spend the afternoon at a pretence at the game. Nobody cared which side won, or even bothered to count the goals; and the match was frequently broken off while a free fight was waged over some question of foul or offside. Bernard was much disappointed with these proceedings, for, though not particularly athletic, he liked whatever he was doing to be done right. At last, on a flagrantly vexatious offside claim by one of the other team, which had checked one of his own side on the point of scoring, he so far forgot himself as to engage in a heated altercation with the opposing captain. Suddenly he became conscious of a hush round about him. His was the only voice to be heard. He faltered in the middle of a sentence, and then came to a stop, his cheeks burning, his skin pricking. 'What business have *you* to shove yourself forward?' the silence plainly demanded. It was probably one of the most terrible moments of his life, but it was mercifully ended by the resumption of the argument round about him, and he thankfully sought oblivion.

Walking in after the game, alone among the laughing, chattering crowd, he was presently overtaken by Willoughby and Murray, who asked him how he had enjoyed Third Match.

'It was awful,' said Bernard.

'Glad you think so,' replied Willoughby. 'We must see about getting you into Second with us. . . . I say, would you like to go thirds in a cake for tea?'

'I've already asked that ass Molloy to join us,' said Murray.

'Good Lord!' groaned Willoughby. 'What did you do that for?'

'Couldn't get anyone else who wasn't booked.'

'Anyone worse, I suppose you mean. Has he paid up yet?'

'No.'

'Then let him go to hell.'

'What's wrong with Molloy?' Bernard asked.

'Oh, nothing much,' replied Willoughby. 'He's just an ass, that's all.'

'He's a rotten snob,' said Murray. 'He's always talking about some lord or other who happens to live near him at home—as if that would go down in this place.'

'He sucks up to the masters too,' said Willoughby. 'What on earth did you annex him for?'

'I told you before. I couldn't get anyone else.'

After washing and changing, Bernard descended to the refectory, where Murray had already purchased a Windermere cake and divided it into three great chunks, which were soon disposed of.

'There's Molloy looking at us,' said Murray as they sat at tea. 'But don't worry. He'll be too proud to butt in on us now.'

'Most likely he'll apologise to us later for having forgotten us,' said Willoughby.

Tea over, they adjourned to the recreation-room, where Willoughby and Murray played billiards while Bernard marked.

Molloy approached, smiling apologetically.

'I say, you chaps,' he began, 'I'm frightfully sorry——'

'All right, old chap. I forgive you,' interrupted Murray.

'Sure you don't mind?'

'Delighted,' said Murray. 'Anything to oblige.'

Molloy turned to Bernard.

'Hello, Lascelles, how are you getting on? Our people know each other, you know, and my mater asked me to look you up.'

Bernard expressed his gratitude.

'I say,' continued Molloy, 'you know Lord Clondalkin, don't you?'

'Three more for plain,' sang out Murray, with a wink at Bernard.

Bernard, turning to the marking-board to conceal a grin, denied acquaintance with the nobleman referred to.

'Ah, I thought perhaps you might,' said Molloy. 'I know him pretty well—or at least his sons. They're at Harrow, you know. Well, be good,' and Molloy went for conversation elsewhere.

The day wore on: evening studies; supper; recreation; night prayers. It was restful at the end to kneel in the half-lit chapel, knowing that the long day was done, and, looking at the tabernacle, to say the little homely prayers he had learnt at his mother's knee. Then the official prayers began.

'Blessed be the holy and undivided Trinity now and for evermore,' said the mechanical voice of the prefect.

'Amen,' faintly and sleepily from some of the congregation.

'Come O Holy Spirit fill the hearts of Thy faithful and kindle in them the fire of Thy love,' rang out the meaningless unpunctuated monotone.

For Bernard custom had not yet taken the significance from the words. 'Do people really mean prayers like this?' he wondered.

'Enlighten me I beseech Thee and give me an humble and contrite heart.'

'I don't feel very beseeching,' thought Bernard. 'Does anyone else, I wonder.' He looked round at his fellows. Their desire for humble and contrite hearts did not seem to occasion them much uneasiness. The prayers went on and came to an end.

A pause. Then in a slightly lower voice the prefect read out:

'Death is certain: the time and manner are uncertain.

'Whether by long disease, or by some unexpected accident.

'The Son of Man will come at an hour when we little expect Him.

'Be ready therefore every moment, seeing that you may die at any moment.'

At this conclusion the boys in the front benches rose and began to march down the sides of the chapel in single file, and bench by bench the others followed them.

Pad—pad—pad went their feet on the parquet flooring, with an occasional squeak of new boots. Pad, pad, pad, squeak. Pad, squeak. Pad.

First the tall Higher Line fellows, young men almost, many of them, whom Bernard found it hard to picture sitting at school desks. Here and there a small precocious youth appeared among them, high-collared and self-conscious. Bernard watched their faces as they passed along: ordinary faces most of them under every shade of hair. Sunny faces and sniggering faces. Heavy brutal faces. Broad good-natured faces. Strong mature faces and weak chinless faces. One went by with the careless fine-featured kind of face that Bernard liked to look at. He had heard someone call to another: 'I say, Clarence!' A good name, Clarence. This must be Clarence. (He turned out to be Smithers.) What different walks there were. Long paces, short paces, quick paces, slow paces. Heavy steps, light steps, springy steps. Somebody went by who bobbed up and down at each pace. Higher Line tailed out into Lower Line, ranging from hulking adolescence to graceful boyhood, long-legged, slim-hipped, and large-headed like himself. Big anachronisms whose bodies had outgrown their brains. Very young monkey-like children. His own turn came at last.

'That's for staring at me, brat,' said someone, kicking him from behind. It was Clarence (or rather Smithers).

Up the stairs and to bed, where he lay awake for an hour or more thinking of things: Sexton, Molloy, Willoughby, Clarence. He remembered the football incident and suddenly blushed all over his body.

'What an ass I must have looked!' he thought. 'And father *told* me not to shove myself forward.'

'Why *shouldn't* I shove myself forward?' he asked himself a little later, and soon after fell asleep.

3

A BOY's first few days at a big school are all mystery and confusion. He is like a swimmer tossed helplessly about on a stormy sea, thrown hither and thither with no volition of his own, and never knowing what is going to happen next. After a time, however, the mystery is dissipated; what appeared to be chaos is recognised as insuperable order; the bewildering herd of boys analyses itself into individuals with names of their own; and life settles down to the monotony of a familiar and invariable time-table.

The boys of Bernard's own class were the first to assume their individuality. The studious head boy was found to be White, and the gay and idle second boy (who would have been first if he took the trouble to work) was Neville, while in the back bench were the heavyweights, Sherringham, Lashworthy, Roden, and others, who were never expected to work, and indeed could not by any known means have been made to work, since Nature had so constructed their frames that punishment was to them a thing of no account. Between these extremes came the centre, ranging from idle competence through solid mediocrity down to studious incompetence. Here were to be found Rumpworth, the self-satisfied, who worked because his hands were soft; Beaton, who was so much ashamed of the brains he possessed that he was put to endless shifts to avoid learning things; Ledbury the plausible deviser of cribs and excuses; Sedgwick the athlete who worked like a Trojan in the ambition to be an all-rounder; and half a score others, among whom may be mentioned Molloy the snob, the friend of Lord Clondalkin, and de Valona and Tolmeda the Dagoes. Willoughby was generally to be found within the first eight places, whilst his friend Murray might be first or fifth according as his mood was studious or the reverse.

Amid these surroundings Bernard entered upon the

strange process which is known as a classical education, learning how to write Latin and Greek prose by the help of gradus and dictionary, how to translate sonorous Latin and spirited Greek into bald English, and how to cram crowded years of ancient history into a couple of paragraphs. Having a natural aptitude and fondness for learning, besides having been well grounded at his preparatory school, he rose rapidly to the head of his class. This earned him the reputation of being a 'stewpot', a term of opprobrium implying a contemptible addiction to hard work, which was a gross libel on our hero, who had achieved the position without half the exertion expended with less result by his accusers. He never defended himself, however; for he was already beginning to react pugnaciously against his environment. He would work if he wanted, whether the boys liked it or not; and he would slack if he wanted, whether the masters liked it or not.

Bernard had come to school with high standards of manliness, acquired mainly from Tom Brown's School-days, which he fondly believed must hold sway in a great school like Ashbury. But it was not long before he was disillusioned. There was no bullying of the crude Flashman kind, but it was a world of violence, in which might was right and the big and strong did what they liked, while the weak had to get out of the way. If a gang of big boys chose to sweep with linked arms along one of the corridors, nobody questioned their right to drive in front of them all the little boys they met, and to kick or trample on any who resisted. If a small boy spiritedly resented some unprovoked act of aggression by a senior, he could be punished for 'cheek' with the entire approbation of all around. No great harm was done by such outrages—except perhaps to the perpetrators—but they kept Bernard's probably abnormal sense of justice in a chronic state of exasperation.

Again, if a boy was popular, he could do no wrong; if unpopular, he could do no right. Smithers, the popular sport and humorist, could kick a boy out of his way, and

be told 'quite right : he's a cheeky kid'. But when poor Tolmeda, the Dago, persecuted beyond endurance by Lashworthy and Rumpworth, tried to defend himself by hacking their shins, he was bent across a billiard-table to receive a collective castigation by all who resented this un-British form of fighting.

But the qualities which secured popularity were even more amazing to Bernard than the licence which it enjoyed. That the heroes of the school should be more distinguished for athletic prowess than for intellect was only to be expected ; indeed, in his early youth he paid homage to such stalwarts himself. But some of the most popular boys in the school were mean, brutal, vicious fellows for whom he could feel nothing but contempt. In the class above him there were two specimens of this breed, by name Tomkins and Tracy-Sidbotham, who took a dislike to Bernard at first sight, and set themselves out, with complete impunity, to make his life a burden to him. The cause of this dislike Bernard never found out, and probably they were unaware of it themselves. Perhaps it was because Bernard was not of the public-school type. Tomkins and Tracy-Sidbotham would not have been accused of this crime by their worst enemies. They were typical Ashburians. Tomkins was gross and truculent ; Tracy-Sidbotham slender and sneering. They were in the class above Bernard's and two years his senior in age. Tracy-Sidbotham's persecution was occasional and mainly verbal, except when a retort from Bernard called for suppression by violence. Tomkins' attacks, on the other hand, were perpetual, and consisted in smacking him on the head with a book or tripping him up at every possible opportunity—a procedure which infuriated Bernard not so much by the pain or annoyance caused him as by its utter uselessness. He soon came to hate Tomkins with a murderous hate, the one personal hatred of his life.

One day as Bernard was going along a gallery Tomkins came up behind him and for the fiftieth time banged him on the head.

'You bloody fool!' said Bernard, turning on him. Somehow his individualism had not saved him from adopting the prevailing dialect.

'You dare give cheek to me?' demanded Tomkins, striking him again.

'You were asking for it, you cursed ass.'

This was too much for Tomkins. He seized Bernard's arm and twisted it. Thereupon the pent-up fury of months instantaneously exploded, and Bernard's free fist shot out and caught his tormentor under the eye.

'Fight!' shouted someone, and an eager crowd gathered round.

There was no story-book hero to interpose and point to the inequality of the combatants. Tomkins advanced confidently on his victim, who put up his hands weakly in a futile effort at defence. His rage was of the fierce, short-lived type, and without it he had little fighting spirit. Tomkins would have pulverised him in a minute but for the timely arrival of a prefect.

'Nix!' said a voice, and the crowd dispersed, the principals mingling therein as inconspicuously as possible.

Bernard dreaded the vengeance of Tomkins, who, he noticed with a certain amount of satisfaction, bore a black bruise under his left eye. In this predicament he looked about for Willoughby, but failed to find him before afternoon class.

'I say,' whispered Willoughby, 'your ear's bleeding.'

Bernard mopped it with his handkerchief and gave Willoughby a whispered account of what had happened.

'Tomkins is a beastly rotter,' said Willoughby. 'He used to be the same to me once. Look here, you stick with me and Murray next rec. and we'll see what'll happen.'

'Right oh.'

'Willoughby and Lascelles, stop talking and get twelve ferulas each.'

Willoughby grinned, but Bernard's heart almost stopped beating. It was his first punishment.

At tea Willoughby told Murray Bernard's story, and Murray said :

'Look here, let's smash him up, the three of us.'

This was agreed. Next recreation had barely begun when Tomkins strolled up to the three, arm in arm with Tracy-Sidbotham.

'Lascelles,' commanded Tomkins, 'come here and be kicked for your bloody cheek.'

'Go to hell,' said Bernard.

'My God, wait till I get you.'

'Go to blazes out of this, the pair of you,' said Murray fiercely.

'God, these blasted kids are too bloody cheeky for anything,' drawled Tracy-Sidbotham. 'Come on, Tomkins, and toe their fundamentals.'

At this point Willoughby took the offensive and kicked Tomkins with all his might, Bernard following up with a punch in the solar plexus. The languid Sidbotham began a scuffle for form's sake with Murray, and then the two big boys beat a retreat, Tomkins vowing vengeance, and Sidbotham covering his cowardice with a sneer.

After this episode Tomkins discreetly ignored Bernard.

That evening another ordeal had to be faced. After supper Bernard and Willoughby took their places in the queue outside the prefect's room waiting for punishment. Three big boys and a small boy were there already. The prefect came along fumbling for his keys. He opened the door, and the first boy followed him inside. Twelve resounding cracks rang out, after which the victim emerged, looking deliberately careless. The second boy was less stoical, blowing upon his swollen fingers as he walked away. The third boy imitated the first. It was the small boy's turn next, but he hesitated, looking at Willoughby, assuming that his right of priority would count for nothing since he was not big enough to defend it.

'Go on, kid,' said Willoughby. 'Get it over,' and the youngster hurried in gratefully.

'Your turn now,' said Willoughby, and Bernard entered the lion's den.

The black-robed prefect stood waiting inside, the implement of the law held mercifully out of sight. Bernard was so nervous that he forgot to announce his master's name and the amount of his sentence, as he had been instructed to do, so the prefect had to ask for the information. Then Bernard's wrist was taken, and something broad and heavy smote his palm so hard that he had to bite his lips to avoid crying out. A moment later he stood waiting, with burning hands that felt swollen to the size of footballs, while the prefect opened the door to let him out.

'Stiff?' inquired Willoughby, passing him on his way in.

'Easy as hell,' replied Bernard through his teeth. . . .

The tyranny of the Tracy-Sidbotham type was not the worst trial a little boy had to face. One day, in the dark lobby by the washroom, a big Higher Line fellow approached Bernard with an unpleasant sort of smile. He was a flabby-looking person with a nasty loose-lipped mouth. Putting a hand on Bernard's shoulder, he said, 'Hello, kid!' in a hoarse voice, looking at him in a way that puzzled and rather frightened him. With a virginal shudder, Bernard wrenched himself free, and fled into the washroom. Like a hunted animal he crept along the galleries to his class, glancing around in every direction in a fearful search for the boy with the nasty mouth. All through class he sat wondering at his fear, puzzling after the big fellow's meaning and thinking what a horrible mouth he had.

'That must have been Musgrave,' said Willoughby later, after Bernard had described his questioner. 'He's an awful sloppy idiot.'

Willoughby's explanation came as a horrible and disconcerting surprise. Musgrave's nasty mouth recurred to Bernard's memory.

'Good Lord!' he said. 'There are things in life I'd never dreamt of.'

'Nothing to wonder at in that, Methuselah,' said Willoughby, whereat Bernard laughed.

'Yes. That was a queer thing for me to say,' he admitted.

'Don't let this turn you against Ashbury, now,' said Willoughby. 'You'll run into a lot of this kind of slop, but it's not the fault of the school, only the crowd that's in it. My pater says this is a degenerate age. He was here, you know, and so were my uncles, and so was my grandfather. It's one of the oldest schools in England, and I hope you'll come to be proud of it and not call it a hole, like some of the rotters here.'

Bernard looked at Willoughby. His face, usually impassive, was lighted up now by enthusiasm. His general air of cleanliness and health was very pleasing. Bernard felt that he liked him tremendously, and resolved to try to look on Ashbury through his eyes. Moreover school life still held many pleasures. There were holidays and concerts; there were cross-country runs and paper-chases; there was skating when the frost came; there was a splendid performance of the 'Prisoner of Zenda' in the school theatre. Bernard was soon promoted into Second Match. At the half-term examinations he won first place in his class, and he enjoyed the cheers of the boys as he marched up the Great Hall to receive his medal, and the kind words of the Rector as he pinned it on his breast.

And Ashbury began to charm him with her beauty and stretched out the tentacles of her traditions to enfold him. Beautiful she certainly is, and beautiful are her surroundings from the wild majesty of her fells to the soft luxuriance of her valleys and the trim neatness of her fields. The tawny Avon gliding at her feet receives its laughing tributary the Dawe under the shadow of her towers, and the sprawling waste of the Pennine Range thrusts a finger-like process down to her very gates. As you approach her by the rolling avenue lined by noble elms, she reveals herself as a grey stone mansion old and stately, battle-

mented and turret-crowned, and you cannot help but love her. Then you hear her story and her ancient legends ; and old as the school is its home is older. You hear how it gave hospitality to Queen Elizabeth and Charles I ; how Cromwell battered its gates down ; how Constable painted it ; and how Tennyson wrote some beautiful lines under its inspiration. You will also hear of the clandestine school kept in the harsh old days by the good fathers in a neighbouring farm-house and attended by the sons of sturdy Catholic squires, and how when better times came Sir James Osterley presented them with Ashbury Manor for their habitation. Then come tales of the school life of last century, when all was hard Spartan simplicity ; when on winter mornings the boys had to break the ice in the washing-trough and did an hour's work before breakfast ; when food was scarce and tough ; when discipline was strict and punishments terrible ; when Ashbury played her own games, and rough games too, a tax on lungs and limbs ; when, in short, the world was a finer place and men a finer race than in these degenerate days.

Old Ashbury ! Bernard learned to love her with all the sudden devotion of youth. Grey walls, bold mountains, mingling rivers ; well-sounding names, old customs, oft-heard legends ; he loved them all, and when, after the half-term results had been read out and the medals distributed, the Great Hall rang with the melody of the Ashbury song, his heart swelled with pride and joy in being part of it all. In the emotion of the moment the unpleasant events of earlier days were forgotten. He was an Ashburian, he told himself, and to be an Ashburian seemed then to be all-sufficient. The very name of Ashbury was robust and breezy, bluff and honest ; typical of all that was best in old England . . . Ashbury . . . The word was satisfying to pronounce. Could meanness, beastliness, nastiness be associated with such a name ? No, he told himself. Such things were only accidental blots, with no deeper roots than the lichen on her old grey walls.

The song came to an end, and abruptly Bernard realised that he had not been singing it.

'Absent-minded idiot,' said someone, jostling him as he made for the door.

4

To Ashbury College a boy was a mass of crude metal to be fused in the flame of her tradition, cast in the mould of her curriculum, and finally exported to Oxford for the finishing touches. Her duty as she conceived it was to prepare her children's souls for heaven and the rest of them for governing the British Empire; to which end she aimed at producing a type of character which was a skilful blend of that of St. Aloysius with that of Nelson and Squire Brown, and which could be recognised at any time and in any corner of the world as Old Ashburian.

St. Aloysius, it must be explained for the benefit of heretical and infidel readers, was the scion of a noble Italian family who renounced the world to enter the Society of Jesus, and was much distinguished for his self-flagellations and other austerities. His biographies (which were commended to the boys as edifying reading) relate with every evidence of approval that he always kept his eyes on the ground in order to escape the temptations of female beauty, and that in his childhood he would never stay in a room alone with a woman, even with his own mother, on the ground that one could never be too careful. How admiration for such a character could possibly be compounded with admiration for Squire Brown or Lord Nelson it is difficult to understand; but it was achieved, somehow or other, by the authorities at Ashbury. On the same principle they taught Christianity from the pulpit, and imperialism in the classroom. The Christianity was of a rather attenuated kind. While the virtue of purity was preached with almost indecent frequency, honour, justice, and that highly dangerous doctrine, the brotherhood of man, received but cursory mention. But the imperialism was full-blooded. A boy

who went through the Ashbury curriculum never had his innate conviction that the conquest of weaker countries is an eminently noble action in general, and the divine right of England in particular, disturbed by the least whisper of criticism.

The young Briton was prepared for his task of bearing the White Man's Burden by being stuffed with as much Latin and Greek as he could hold, a modicum of mathematics, and what French he could pick up in a class which, with true British contempt for the 'Froggie' who taught there, he did his best to turn into a beargarden. In his own language he learned by heart a number of selected lyrics, 'did' a couple of eviscerated and annotated plays of Shakespeare, and carried away a general impression that Tennyson is the greatest of all poets. History (which stopped short at Queen Anne) was a tale of dynasties, with England as hero, France as villain, and the rest of the world nowhere. Geography was concerned only with those parts of the map that are coloured red. A little elementary science was thrown in at one stage, but it was a half-hearted business, which was but natural in a school where the names of the great scientists were constantly held up as examples of unbelief and infamy.

Compulsory games completed the curriculum. Theoretically they occupied the third place, but in reality the second. Religion, games, studies : that was the order of the ingredients which made up the typical Ashburian. It showed itself in the character of the head boy of each year, who, as sodalist and member of the eleven, combined piety with athleticism, but was rarely known to have brains ; and it was beautifully illustrated in the ideal Old Ashburian celebrated in after-dinner speeches and in the school song : a creature of simple faith and loyalty, who accepted the world as it is with a decorous unquestioning cheerfulness.

But far more important than either tradition or the curriculum in framing the Ashburian character was the unwritten law, the code built up by generations of the

boys themselves. The principal article of this code was that one must be as like everybody else as possible ; must know nothing, care about nothing, have no ideas. One must not, for example, be interested in politics, beyond being passively Conservative and detesting the beastly Radicals who were just beginning to ruin the country. One's conversation must be studiously ignorant except on matters of sport. If Bernard made the most casual remark on literature or history, or employed a word of more than three syllables, he would be assailed with cries of ' You *bloody* stewpot ! Why can't you talk like everybody else ? ' It was not that the boys merely preferred games to learning ; that would have been reasonable enough in healthy youngsters : it was rather that they feared and hated intellect.

If the type thus produced had been simply brutal and primitive it would not have been quite intolerable. There were some boys who were brutal and primitive, and Bernard rather liked them. He could have forgiven all that he disliked in the type if it had also been manly. But it was not manly. It was mean and sniggering. It was snobbish about birth and money. A group of Ashburians would chatter and jape about the parentage of some schoolmate like a crowd of old maids talking scandal at afternoon tea. If a boy was suspected of falling short of the general standard of wealth, someone would question him publicly about his pocket-money ; or a visit would be paid to his wardrobe, and the gloriously funny information would run through the school that so-and-so had but two suits of clothes, or was deficient in underclothing. Nor did they always stop at sneering. M. Moulin, the French master, was poor. It was whispered that he had but one suit of clothes, and certainly he was never seen in any other. It was accordingly decided that the miscreant must be punished ; so a valiant gang of the bigger boys raided his room in his absence, where they burnt his books and collars, smashed his pictures, cut up the tyres of his bicycle, and poured ink into his chest of drawers.

Bernard, because he could not laugh at this exploit, was voted 'no sport'.

He came in time to hate and despise his schoolfellows, lumping them all in his mind as ignorant, narrow-minded, arrogant, and hopelessly uncivilised. This, of course, was an exaggeration : there were many exceptions ; but they were of little account, and public opinion was set by the type. Except for Willoughby and Murray he had no friends, and as they had other friends whom he could not stand at any price, he was often deprived of their companionship too. Having liked nearly everybody at his preparatory school, and been generally liked in return, he was naturally disappointed at first to find himself so much at variance with his new surroundings. There is no need, however, for the sentimental reader to snivel over our hero as if he were a misunderstood and lonely child. Living one's own life has more compensations than drawbacks. He could forget himself and everything else in books, find plenty of entertainment in his own imagination, and extract all the happiness he needed out of scholastic success. Indeed he suffered less from loneliness than from being too little alone. To the Jesuit mind it was undesirable to leave a boy for any length to himself, the theory being that the Devil would immediately seize upon the opportunity to work up an acquaintance. Every instant of the day was therefore allotted its task of work or play, the boys being always shepherded in mass from one to the other and back again. There was not a moment to call one's own : not a moment in which to do as one liked, to think, to do nothing, to play the fool in one's own way. One must be always with the crowd, always looking at their odious faces, always subject to their brainless criticisms and asinine sneers.

5

THEY never made an Ashburian of Bernard. His instincts were all hostile to the traditions of the place. He despised Saint Aloysius ; he never forgave Nelson for ' Kiss me,

Hardy'; and he regarded Squire Brown as an old fool. Moreover, he never conformed to the code; he openly proclaimed his republican faith; he gloried in the French Revolution (which, of course, all true Ashburians look upon with horror, as Catholics and English gentlemen should); and he even went so far as to deny the dogma that the Battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton. His heterodox essay on this subject is still remembered with dismay at Ashbury.

It was in his second year at the school and he was approaching his fourteenth birthday. His class-master, Mr. Wallhead, was a dull, conscientious, overworked man who feared Bernard more than all the rowdies of the class on account of his cruelly obvious contempt for his intellect. (Bernard's one intolerance was for stupidity, and from thirteen years of age to sixteen, Boy is at his cruellest.) It was Mr. Wallhead's habit to set a weekly English essay, and to read out and comment upon the themes sent in, hoping thereby to impart instruction and guidance for the future, but in reality giving the boys light amusement and a much-appreciated respite from work.

'Osgood, your essay may be excellent for all I know, but your handwriting is like the track of a beetle, wandering over the page, so I couldn't read it. I'll have to get you a headline copy-book. Rumpworth, your ideas are good, but your grammar would bear improvement, and you've spoilt the effect of what would otherwise have been an excellent final sentence by using slang. "When all is taken into consideration one thing stands out clear, that Waterloo was a soldier's victory won by the men of England made tough by games over the softies of France." "Degenerate sons" would sound better there; don't you think so, Rumpworth?'

'Yessir,' said Rumpworth.

'Ledbury's essay is so good', went on Mr. Wallhead, 'that I shall read it to you in full.'

There was suppressed excitement in the class at this, for Ledbury had copied his essay word for word from a

book on essay-writing which he had picked up at home, containing sample essays on stock subjects such as Hobbies, A Country Walk, Friendship, and the like, and every one knew of the trick. Suppressed laughter punctuated Mr. Wallhead's reading of the platitudinous disquisition, which was about as much in Ledbury's style as *Paradise Lost*. Mr. Wallhead, in a tone he fondly imagined to be scathing, told them that their minds must be deficient if a piece of beautiful writing roused them to ridicule, but almost simultaneously Ledbury's self-control gave way and he exploded with laughter.

'What's the meaning of this?' thundered Mr. Wallhead.

Ledbury, slow of wit, decided on the spur of the moment to tell the truth. It frequently paid.

'Please sir, I copied it out of a book.'

'Dear me! I might have known. Why did you do that, Ledbury?'

'I couldn't think of anything to say myself, sir,' said Ledbury.

'Try and use the brains God gave you, Ledbury. Well, you owned up, so I'll say no more about it.'

There was a grim look on Mr. Wallhead's face as he picked up the next essay.

'Lascelles,' he said gravely, 'you may think this kind of thing funny, but it isn't, and it's certainly not gentlemanly. An Ashbury boy should be ashamed to write such stuff.'

The gist of Bernard's essay was that the title was an implication that the Battle of Waterloo had been won by the skill of the British officers, whereas the victory was really due to the stubbornness of the British rank and file and the good marching of the Prussians. This paved the way for a strongly democratic thesis which wound up the essay.

'I didn't mean it to be funny,' said Bernard. 'I meant every word of it.'

'So much the worse,' said Mr. Wallhead, handing back

the theme book. Underneath the essay was a large blue nought.

After class Bernard was surrounded by the curious and overwhelmed with questions.

'Why was Walleye so shirty?'

'What did you write?'

'I said the battle was really won on the fields of Yorkshire and in the slums of London.'

'What bloody rubbish!' exclaimed Rumpworth. 'I suppose you thought that clever?'

'Damn sight truer than the subject, anyway,' said Bernard.

'Rot!' said Ledbury with tremendous scorn.

There was a general feeling that Bernard was not very good form.

'If you think things like that you've no business coming to Ashbury,' remarked someone.

The last word had been said on the discussion. Every one felt that his own opinion had been spoken.

Even his friend Willoughby could not support Bernard on this occasion, though Murray, who was democratic in outlook, put in a word or two. They were both equally unsympathetic towards his views on Saint Aloysius. Murray, who was pious, would not discuss the subject at all; but Willoughby lent a reluctant ear.

'I'm fed up with that angelical youth,' said Bernard one day. 'I wonder how many more times we're doomed to have him dinned into our ears.'

'You shouldn't talk like that about a saint,' said Willoughby, looking rather shocked.

'Saint! What's a saint? Is it saintly to go about the world with your eyes stuck on the ground? Is it saintly to half starve yourself so that you die young? I call that slow suicide. Is it saintly to be afraid to remain alone with your own mother? I call that having a dirty mind.'

'That's a rotten thing to say about a saint, Bernard. I don't like it.'

'You've read his life yourself. Didn't you see every word I've said there in black and white?'

'Well, yes.'

'And you think these things are signs of goodness?'

'I suppose they must be.'

'Do you mean to say you think a chap would be right to think like that about his mother?'

'I don't know. I don't worry about these things.'

'Do you mean to say you can go on praying to a saint with a mind like that?'

'I don't do such a lot of praying, you know.'

'That's not the point. Do you admire a chap who thinks that way about his mother?'

'I tell you I don't bother about such things.'

'But you should bother.'

'Look here, Bernard, if you want to argue about theology try it on a J. Come on to the playground.'

Bernard saw that further discussion with his friend was useless, but he seized an early opportunity of tackling Father Bowman the Chaplain. He would have liked to continue with the question of St. Aloysius' relations with his mother, but abstained from doing so from a feeling that this aspect would not make much appeal to a celibate; moreover he had a fear lest Father Bowman might decline discussion on such a delicate matter altogether. Accordingly he commenced in a non-committal way.

'Tell me, Father, why is St. Aloysius the patron of youth?'

Father Bowman was a saintly-looking man, white-haired, and of serene manner and appearance. Doubt, one felt, had never disturbed those placid features. He always professed himself ready to answer questions; indeed, he invited them. But never had any question been submitted to him that a few words and an encouraging smile had failed to dispose of. This he felt sure was one of them, and the kindly tolerant smile and lambent voice were ready to be poured like oil upon the seething waves of puerile doubt.

'Because he was young himself, my child, and was a model of those virtues which youth should aim at.'

'Then are we supposed to imitate him in our lives.'

'Certainly; at least so far as it is possible for us to do so.'

'Then should we keep our eyes always on the ground, and scourge ourselves, and—and never look at women?'

'Oh, no. That is not expected of everybody.'

'Who is it expected of, then?'

'It is only expected of those who feel called to a life of perfection.'

Father Bowman felt that the argument was finished and made as if to move away, but Bernard was persistent.

'But shouldn't we all try for perfection?' he said.

'We all cannot,' replied Father Bowman, a little impatiently.

Bernard felt the thread of the argument slipping from his grasp, so he plunged headlong for facts.

'Well,' he said, 'if the prefect found me scourging myself in the dormitory, I know jolly well I'd get into a row.'

'Yes. It's a college rule that when you go to the dormitory you must undress at once and get into bed. Obedience to rules comes before voluntary austerities.'

'But even if I wasn't breaking a rule I'd be told I was an ass and made chuck it.'

Father Bowman sighed impatiently.

'It all depends on your motive,' he said.

'I don't feel that you've answered my question, Father,' Bernard reproached him.

'Don't worry your head about speculations like that,' said Father Bowman with his complacent smile. 'Run off to the playground and kick a ball about.'

Bernard moved off pensively. Doubt was hammering at the gates of his soul.

'What sort of a Church is it', he pondered, 'that puts St. Aloysius above Newton and George Washington?'

'Clever little chap that pupil of yours, Lascelles,' said Father Bowman to Mr. Wallhead. 'But he thinks too

much about religious questions. Not good at his age. I'm afraid for his faith.'

'He has very revolutionary ideas,' said Mr. Wallhead, which, though he knew it not, meant that Bernard had the faith that moves mountains.

6

THERE was a boy called Reppington in the class below Bernard's who violated the code even more thoroughly than our hero, though less flagrantly. He was a quiet retiring youth who spoke little and moved through life in a perpetual dream. He had mousy hair, large ears, and ungainly feet, and the natural ugliness of his face was enhanced by a pair of huge glasses, over which he peered timidly at the tumultuous world. His was a hard lot, masters and boys equally despising him, for he took no interest either in play or, outside mathematics, in work. Mechanics was the one thing he cared for, a taste little catered for at Public Schools. However Ashbury had a well-equipped carpenter's shop, and here Reppington spent most of his time, dreaming, experimenting, and constructing.

One day it became known that he had succeeded in making a working model of a steam engine. At first it attracted a good deal of honest admiration. Reppington became quite a celebrity, and was often seen surrounded by admirers whose praise of his handiwork made his eyes beam behind his spectacles with happiness, like a young mother being congratulated on her offspring.

But the Code had zealous defenders at Ashbury, and none more zealous than in Bernard's class. When the news of Reppington's achievement reached them Rumpworth and Ledbury and Lashworthy and Sherringham and other defenders of tradition held a council of war.

'This business can't go on,' said Ledbury.

'It's a disgrace to the school,' said Lashworthy.

'Playing trains!' snorted Sherringham. 'We'll have kids coming here soon with dolls or teddy-bears.'

'It's got to be stopped,' said Rumpworth.

'How is it to be stopped?' said Ledbury.

'Let's take the engine from him,' proposed Rumpworth.

'Come on, boys, he's probably playing with it now,' cried Sherringham, and the half dozen of them made a rush for the carpenter's shop.

In the carpenter's shop Reppington was eagerly and proudly explaining the workings of his engine to Bernard, who listened with interest. It was the fruit of months of thought and work, and Reppington obviously loved it, as a creator does. Bernard felt hostility in the atmosphere as the gang entered. Sherringham approached Reppington with that smile half assertive half sheepish which Bernard detested. The Ashbury smile he called it, for it symbolised a great portion of the Ashbury mind.

'Let's see the engine, Repp,' said Sherringham.

Reppington indicated his treasure. Instantly with a sweep of his hand Sherringham knocked it to the floor and hacked at it with his heel.

'Sherringham!' cried Reppington, making a vain attempt to rescue his toy.

'Shut your mouth!' said Rumpworth, shoving him away.

The suddenness of Sherringham's action had taken Bernard by surprise, and this vision of callous cruelty left him for a moment paralysed with anger. Reppington was gazing helplessly with tear-blinded eyes at the wreckage of his engine, which Sherringham kicked over to Lashworthy, who kicked it into the fireplace. Suddenly Bernard stepped up to Sherringham, breathing hard.

'You beastly swine!' he said.

'Shut up and mind your own business,' growled Sherringham.

'Will you fight?' demanded Bernard.

'Not with a bloody outsider like you,' sneered Sherringham.

Bernard struck him across the face with his open palm.

Sherringham stepped back a pace and clenched his fists, whilst the blood flooded the injured cheek.

'Smash him, Sherry!' cried Lashworthy.

'Make a ring,' shouted Rumpworth.

Immediately every one sprang into action. The furniture was cleared away from one end of the shop, and a ring was made, which, owing to the narrowness of the room, was bounded on three sides by walls, whilst the fourth consisted of the spectators sitting on tables and benches. In the centre were the combatants: Sherringham, gross and ungainly; Bernard, slim and graceful. Sherringham was by a few months the elder; slightly taller; and a good deal heavier; but Bernard, as a compensation had science, being a member of the boxing club. Well-grown healthy boys of fifteen both of them, they seemed fairly matched, and the spectators waited keenly for what must prove a hard battle. Bernard glanced round at them once. He was fighting the cause of the weak against the strong, but save for the boy he was defending all present were backing his opponent.

'Time!' said Rumpworth, who had appointed himself referee.

Bernard came rapidly into action and got in two blows at Sherringham's jaw before the latter had time to decide on his guard. Sherringham, however, could take punishment, and owing to Bernard's own impetuosity and carelessness countered heavily on his cheek. Bernard forthwith cooled down and became more wary.

'I say, Lascelles—thanks awfully, you know,' stammered Reppington in the interval as he flapped his defender with a handkerchief.

'Don't mensh,' said Bernard.

He went into the second round determined to finish Sherringham as quickly as possible. His anger was of the quickly raised, quickly cooled kind, and without it he had little stomach for fighting. But confidence in his own skill made him underrate his opponent's staying power. After some brisk sparring he delivered a hasty

and ill-conceived attack, and before he could recover his guard Sherringham got in a terrific blow behind the ear, and then followed up, driving Bernard into a corner, who, dazed and shaken, was only saved from a cruel battering by the call of Time.

'Good man! One more round will finish him,' said Sherringham's backers, crowding round him.

'For God's sake be more careful,' whispered Reppington. 'He's no match for you if you keep your head.'

In the third round it was Sherringham who was overconfident, whilst Bernard remained on the defensive, content to rest his lungs and legs.

'Go in, Sherry!' shouted his friends.

Sherry went in and came out rather mauled, and the round ended uneventfully. In the next round Sherringham, goaded on by the cries of his supporters, made a second determined attempt to pulverise Bernard, who, having warded it off successively, began to drive his panting opponent up against the wall. Crack! Bernard's left catching him on the chin drove his head back against the wainscoting, and his right following up beneath the jaw repeated the performance.

'Time!' called the referee.

Sherringham was no Spartan. He completely collapsed, while his supporters clamorously assailed the referee.

'It wasn't fair to hit him against the wall,' was the general complaint.

Rumpworth smiled judicially. He did not care for Bernard, but he realised that Sherringham was beaten, and he enjoyed the feeling of being absolute dictator which refereeing gave him.

'Sherringham should have had more sense than to go near the wall,' he said.

'He was driven there,' protested Ledbury.

'Then he was beaten,' replied Rumpworth imperturbably.

'Well, it's not fair,' grumbled Ledbury.

'That's my decision, anyway,' snapped Rumpworth. 'Time!'

'Stay where you are, Sherringham,' counselled Lashworthy, his second. Sherringham nodded, but as a matter of fact he had no intention of rising from his seat.

'I give you ten seconds,' said Rumpworth, looking at his watch. 'Then it's Lascelles' fight,' he added after a pause, and walked off in a huff.

Bernard approached Sherringham.

'Look here, you swine,' he said, 'you've just destroyed something you can't replace, like the clumsy ass that you are. Don't think you'll get off without making some sort of amends.'

'That's a rotten thing to say to a chap after you've beaten him,' said Lashworthy.

'You've had your fight and that ought to be enough for you. Can't you shake hands like a gentleman?' Ledbury was the speaker.

'Look here,' said Bernard, 'I didn't fight this rotter for fun, and a fight is no excuse for dodging out of doing the right thing.'

'Sherringham was right to smash the engine,' said Ledbury. 'We don't want Ashbury turned into a nursery.'

'I don't care a damn what you want,' retorted Bernard, 'but Sherringham's got to pay up.'

'Look here, Lascelles,' broke in a new speaker, 'are you going to shake hands or not?'

'I won't touch his dirty hand until he makes amends to Reppington.'

'Well, come on, Sherry. Leave him alone. He's hopeless.'

The crowd, full of virtuous scorn, moved off with the battered Sherringham in their midst, leaving Bernard speechless with indignation. He had fought for Right against Might and triumphed, but against the stone wall of the Ashbury mind he might beat for ever in vain.

'What's to be done with people like that?' he demanded, turning to Reppington.

'God only knows,' said Reppington, and added, 'I say, you *can* box.'

But the worst was yet to come. The story of the fight spread round the school, and there was great speculation as to the cause. The true cause, however, could not possibly occur to the Ashbury intelligence, and before long it was hinted abroad that Bernard took a sentimental interest in Reppington.

'Have you heard the latest?' said Robinson to Fortescue. 'Lascelles is gone on Reppington.'

'My God!' said Fortescue. 'Well, he's not hard to please.'

People took to coughing if ever Bernard and Reppington were observed in the same vicinity, and occasionally a wag would inquire of Bernard after Reppington's health.

'Great Scott!' thought Bernard. 'If those idiots who write school stories only knew——'

7

MEANWHILE Bernard was being educated.

Much has been said both for and against classical education; but all it amounts to is that it is not suitable to everybody. To Bernard and a few others of his classmates with quick wits and good memories, Latin and Greek were excellent mental training; and this, not the accumulation of inaccurate and unco-ordinated knowledge, is the real business of education. To the average boy, however, the study of these dead languages was just such a useless accumulation, and was no real training at all. As for Lashworthy, Rumpworth, and the deadheads, who after four or five years of schooling could not run through the present indicative of *Anno* correctly, or construe the simplest passage, it was an absurd waste of the time in which they might possibly have been taught something useful.

Bernard was able to swallow all the Latin and Greek he was given, and still be ready for more. Composition bored him, but he enjoyed the reading of authors in

spite of his masters' conscientious attempts to make him hate them.

'Incipe Maenaios mecum mea tibia versus——'

While some clown like Rumpworth droned his murderous version of such lines as this, Bernard's mind would be away in the pastures of Sicily or Campania with the flocks and shepherds and silvan deities, listening for the pipes of Pan, or fancying the savour given to the goats' milk by the salt mixed, by the poet's advice, with their herbs. Or perhaps, while some other fellow wrestled with the passage in the *Crito* in which Socrates makes the Laws argue against his escape from prison, he would be furiously formulating an answer to them. From such occupations he would be roused by a sharp command to 'go on there', and, when he failed to find the place in the text, would be sent down for ferulas, or set some ridiculous imposition for his spare time. Occasionally too he was beaten for failure in some allotted task consequent on his having spent the previous evening reading Shakespeare or Greek history. It was a perfectly idiotic business, especially as Bernard, unlike most boys, always regarded punishment not as a thing to be gloried in, but as a degradation. He went his own way in spite of it, scamping more and more, as he grew older, his allotted tasks in favour of the catholic, but unsystematic reading in the excellent school library which was his real education. He read all the histories he could put his hands on: Greek, Roman, European, French, and English, together with articles in Chambers' Encyclopædia on all sorts of out-of-the-way lands such as Iceland and Abyssinia. He spent enchanted hours poring over maps. Though history and geography always interested him more than literature, he also read much of the work of the great novelists, and several plays of Shakespeare. He had no use for boys' adventure stories, but he read a large number of Henty's dull works for the sake of the history they contained. He eagerly devoured all Jules

Verne's books, certain fantastic tales by Max Pemberton, such as the House under the Sea and the Iron Pirate, and the early scientific romances of Mr. H. G. Wells.

Nor did he neglect the affairs of the day. He became a subscriber to the Saturday Westminster Gazette, which he used to read week after week from beginning to end. He chuckled over the cartoons of F. C. G. and the witty essays and poems of the competition page, and once he ventured to write a letter to the Editor on the subject of Modern Schoolboys, which duly appeared in print. But most of all he relished the trenchant political articles. It was pleasant to find at last that there were people in the world who thought as he did. The Liberal Government was at this time steadily pursuing what Ashbury regarded as its nefarious policy of social reform, taxing the rich, interfering with land monopoly, and undermining the self-respect and thrifty habits of the poor by providing a small pension for their extreme old age. Later on came the angrier controversy over the Budget of 1909 and the powers of the House of Lords. Naturally Bernard took the strongest Radical standpoint on all these questions, and the Conservative arguments, quoted in a column on the back page of the paper entitled 'From our Weekly Contemporaries', amazed him by their stupidity. He found it hard to believe that grown-up men could write so absurdly like Ashbury boys, and longed to be able to walk into their offices and refute them in their teeth.

Finally he read Philip Snowden's Socialism and Syndicalism. Needless to say it was not in the College library; but during the holidays the title caught his eye in a bookshop window, and, as he knew nothing about Socialism except that it was regarded unfavourably at Ashbury, he went in and bought it. Next term he informed Willoughby that he was a Socialist.

'Impossible, my dear man,' said Willoughby very decisively. 'Unless, of course, you've given up your religion.'

'And why not?' said Bernard.

8

It is necessary here to retrace our steps a little. We left Bernard, at the time a mere child of fourteen, struggling with the doubts born of an interview with Father Bowman on the subject of St. Aloysius. The struggle did not last very long. It was a mere accident of birth that Bernard was a Catholic. Of his own accord he would never have joined that religion, for his mind was by nature sceptical and hostile to dogma, the heritage of his Protestant ancestry. His revolt against the St. Aloysius legend was symptomatic of this. That young man's prudishness was merely an exaggeration of the Church's attitude to sex, which exalted virginity to what seemed to Bernard an unwarranted position among the virtues. Not that he worried much about sex itself—he was, in fact, quite innocent as yet of most of its processes—but he could not understand why abstention from marriage and children should be pleasing to the God who said 'Increase and multiply'. This led him to a contemptuous anti-clericalism, which was intensified by his not unnatural association of religion with the anti-democratic spirit of priests and boys at Ashbury.

He was carried farther along the road to unbelief by conversations during the holidays with one of his cousins, a youth somewhat older than himself, a Protestant in name, but of no definite faith, who said to him :

'You religious people say that God is infinitely just, infinitely merciful, and infinitely loving, and yet you believe that he condemns people to eternal torture for offending him. Now, I don't claim to be anything wonderful in the way of justice, kindness, or mercy, but I wouldn't dream of doing that to anyone, no matter how badly he offended me.'

Bernard had no answer to this. It seemed entirely convincing to him. And at once he realised its full implications. One cannot reject one item of the teachings of an infallible Church without denying its infallibility,

and therefore its whole *raison d'être*—not, at least, if one has a logical mind like Bernard's. This step, however, was so drastic that he decided first to seek advice in confession.

'I'm always being tempted to sins against faith, Father,' he said.

'Against what articles of faith, my child?'

'Hell, for one, Father.'

With a little further questioning the priest extracted from Bernard the source and substance of his heresy. Then he proceeded to confute it.

'You must remember, my child, that God is infinite perfection, and that therefore any act of disobedience to his commands, however trivial it may seem to us, is a gross affront to his majesty. Remember too that God is a loving father, ever anxious for the sinner to repent, and instantly ready to grant forgiveness. If therefore anybody goes to hell, it is only because, through obstinacy and pride, he refuses to repent, and deliberately rejects the mercy of his Creator. In fact, it is not God who condemns him to hell, but he himself by his own act.'

Bernard was silenced, but not convinced. The priest resumed :

'Against what other articles of faith have you been tempted, my child?'

Bernard faltered a moment.

'Oh, against all religion altogether, Father,' he said.

'But, my child, when these temptations come to you, you must pray against them. Pray to our Blessed Lady and our holy patron St. Aloysius to intercede for you. Pray to the Holy Ghost to give you this precious gift of faith.'

'But how can I pray to the Holy Ghost if I don't believe he exists?' asked Bernard desperately.

'Have you been reading irreligious books, my child?'

'No, Father,' he said. He would have liked to say that it was religious books that were mainly responsible for his downfall, but dared not.

'I've only been thinking,' he put in weakly.

'My child, you must put these thoughts away from you. The mysteries of faith are beyond our mortal comprehension, but I would ask you to look around at the wonderful world about you; at the stars, those gigantic bodies that seem mere pin-points lost in the immensity of space; at the intricate workmanship of a simple daisy; and ask yourself was there no designer of all this. Also, my child, read good books, and above all things pray. Any other sins, my child?'

Bernard went away but half satisfied. The wonderful world was all very well, but how material it was. *Could* there be immaterial things? Was his mind limited because he could not conceive the immaterial? Could other fellows conceive it? Could Willoughby? Yes. Could Lashworthy or Rumpworth? Well, they didn't care enough about these things to bother about doubting them. . . . Then, beyond all mere questions of doubt, there was this hopeless contradiction of the beneficent God and his ferocious punishments.

| Finally there came the challenge of Evolution to the whole theistic scheme of things. Until they were fifteen or so the boys were given to understand that the Book of Genesis was an accurate account of the origin of man, and all that they heard of other theories was the words Darwin and Evolution uttered in tones of horror as if they were synonymous with Devil and Damnation. When, however, the time approached for their exit into a world where their faith would be less sheltered than at Ashbury, it was deemed wise to qualify the matter a little. It was admitted that Genesis was only figuratively true, that the seven days of creation might each have lasted a million years and so forth. Evolution, it was declared, had never been condemned by the Church. One might believe it if one liked—though several arguments against it, more or less valid, were suggested for consideration—but one was bound to believe that, whatever might be the origin of the body, the soul was not evolved, but was a separate creation.

This pleading alienated Bernard more than ever, such phrases as 'allowed to believe' and 'forbidden to believe' seeming to him to be contradictions in terms. Darwin's theory appeared, without examination, to be reasonable enough, so he stopped saying his prayers and drifted into a cold indifferent atheism.

Such an attitude, however, was incompatible with his whole temperament, and gradually his atheism became positive and missionary. He began to feel that it might be his duty to save others from the slough of superstition from which he had dragged himself, and commenced operations by breathing doubts into the ears of Eugene. The latter was pious and the very reverse of sceptical, and he staved off the tempter by showers of dogmata. He also, in the holidays, told his mother about Bernard's delinquencies, to the terrible dismay of the good lady, who had an immediate vision of devouring flames searching the soul of her darling boy, and seized the first opportunity when she was alone with Bernard to approach him about it.

She was amazed to find that he did not deny the charge. Nay, to her grief and dismay, he appeared to take pride in it. She tried tearful remonstrance, but in vain. She tried argument, but proved to be no theologian. Bernard himself knew more about the religion she was defending than she did. Then she said to him :

'I see you are quite hardened, and I've done all that *my* conscience requires in trying to reclaim you. Well, go your own way if you like, but one thing I insist on. Let Eugene and Sandy alone. I won't have *their* faith undermined.'

'But look here, mother,' replied Bernard. 'If I sincerely believe Atheism right and Christianity a demoralising superstition haven't I as much right to preach my views as you have?'

'No. I'm your mother.'

'That has nothing to do with it.'

'Now, Bernard, I don't want any argument. I can't

prevent you going wrong yourself, but I forbid you to lead others astray.'

'I'm not leading anyone astray.'

'I say you are.'

'But, hang it all, mother, can't you understand that——?'

'No. And I don't want to. Now that's enough.'

And so the conversation closed.

Lady Lascelles in her perplexity consulted his god-mother, Mrs. Harvey.

'I shouldn't worry,' said Mrs. Harvey wisely. 'He's clever, you know. Clever boys always get notions like that. But they come back in the end,' she added with a knowing smile. 'They always come back.'

'But what can I *do*?' demanded Lady Lascelles.

'Pray,' said Mrs. Harvey. 'It's no use arguing with him. Just pray, and you may be sure God will put everything right in his own good time. I'll pray for him too.'

But the mother was not comforted. Mrs. Harvey's faith, amid all her worldliness, was sincere and firm. She always asked Heaven for what she wanted, and she frequently got it. Lady Lascelles, on the other hand, was too unimaginative to believe that God would really do anything practical at her request. She was by nature a materialist, and only a theist by accident of birth. So it was in no very hopeful mood that she seconded with her entreaties the confident demands of her friend.

From his father Bernard gained a more sympathetic hearing. For the sake of his practice Sir Eugene was an orthodox Protestant, but he was in reality an agnostic. More than once he had regretted his matrimonial promise in respect of his children, but he was an honourable man and had never broken it.

'You're quite right, my boy,' he said. 'It's all a lot of damned superstition. I wish I'd never allowed your mind to be soiled with it, but a promise is a promise, you know.'

9

It was while this spiritual development was in progress that Bernard heard for the first time of Socialism. He heard it spoken of invariably in accents of condemnation, which alone was enough to make him think favourably of it, and the fact that its strongest enemies were the Church and the boys of Ashbury made him ready to acquit it unheard. 'This leads to Socialism' was one of the accepted final arguments in the debating society against any democratic principle under discussion. 'Atheists, anarchists, and Socialists,' generalised the preacher in the pulpit.

Snowden therefore found in him an easy convert. Bernard's ideas on economics of course were of the vaguest description, but philosophically Socialism gripped him. It became his creed, a creed as fixed and based on as much ignorance as his mother's Catholicism, but ten times more ardent. He set out to make converts, but failed miserably. Willoughby agreed with everything he said about the evils of the existing order, but considered remedial measures sufficient. Murray said that competition was the soul of effort and that Socialism would simply kill initiative. Rumpworth asked where would England be without her aristocracy, and Ledbury said :

'You wouldn't be a Socialist, Lascelles, if you owned a jolly good bit of land for shooting.'

Then the motion 'that this house disapproves of the principles of Socialism' was discussed in the Debating Society, and Bernard undertook to lead the opposition. He had much difficulty in collecting speakers. Willoughby agreed to speak in favour of a 'moderate' kind of Socialism, and Murray gave his adherence because he hated to be on the reactionary side even when he disapproved of the other. To his surprise Reppington, who was not a member of the society, promised to join and make his maiden speech. One other member volun-

teered his services as there was no room for him on the ministerial list. He would speak, he said, but not vote.

Rumpworth opened with the usual speech demanded on such occasions. Political platitudes, economic fallacies, and religious insincerities made up the bulk of an oration which was warmly applauded. Then amid ironic cheers and encouraging remarks Bernard rose. He had decided to reserve his most crushing arguments for the closing speech, which was his privilege as leader, when he could pulverise the arguments of his opponents who had concluded, and so he now contented himself with a dispassionate definition of what Socialism really was, and then sat down. The debate then ran its course, differing in nowise from its predecessors and contemporaries. Competition, initiative, and encouragement of idleness were the main planks in the ministerial programme, with occasional appeals to religion and 'our glorious aristocracy'. The opposition was half-hearted, but Reppington astonished every one by his extraordinary knowledge on the subject. He was the only person in the room who understood a word of economics. Finally Bernard returned to the charge. He attacked each of the main ministerial arguments in turn. Socialism, said his opponents, would abolish competition. All the better. Competition, he held, was an evil. (Oh! oh!) Yes. He would substitute for it a better thing, Co-operation. Capitalism made the world a waste of selfish striving, every man for himself and the weakest to the wall. Why not look upon mankind as a community in which every one strove to improve the world in which all had to live? Let their motto be each for all and all for each. Poverty must be abolished because it was as injurious to the rich as to the poor. (Bernard had been reading Shaw.) Then as to the killing of initiative, had they so low an opinion of themselves and of the rest of mankind as to imagine that human initiative could be measured in terms of shillings and pence? Did they not know that there was such a thing as love of a work for its own sake?

The ministry also claimed that Socialism would encourage people to be idle at the expense of the rest. Did not Capitalism do the same? Were not the unemployed a perpetual burden? And what about our pampered idle aristocracy? (Voices: 'Not idle!') Yes. Idle aristocracy. Anyone who lived on the work of others, be he rich or poor, was an idler. Well, they knew what bees did to drones. He would do the same to the aristocracy. (Booh!) Some honourable members had said that Socialism was an attack on property. That was quite true. But so, in another sense, was Capitalism. Socialism attacked the superfluous and often illgotten wealth of the rich. Capitalism, as Chesterton, an opponent of Socialism, pointed out, attacked the necessities of the poor. (Boohs, and slight applause.)

The motion was carried by twenty-six votes to four, and Bernard marvelled at the unreasonableness of man.

10

ALL this time there was one subject of which Bernard remained in complete ignorance: that of his native land. He regarded himself simply as British, and his island as part of Britain. The references to Ireland in the histories he had read, whether in or out of class, were in accord with this conception, since they mentioned it only on its intrusions into English affairs, when it appeared as a turbulent province generally fighting on what Bernard regarded as the reactionary side—for the King against Parliament, and for James against William.

The first person to bring the matter more prominently into his notice was Murray. His father was a leading figure in Irish circles in Liverpool, and he was himself, at sixteen, beginning to take an interest in politics—by which he meant Home Rule. Murray was an enthusiast, but no rebel. The case he made for Home Rule seemed to Bernard quite reasonable, though he could not feel excited about it. If Ireland's domestic affairs could be managed better by a local parliament than by

the present arrangement, well and good. The Liberals were going to sponsor the proposal, and the Tories were against it. That was in its favour. There the matter rested for the moment.

Then came the curious incursion of Brian Mallow. Mallow was a big soft Irish boy in the class below Bernard's. Easy-going and rather stupid, he was something of a butt, a position which he accepted as a rule without protest, though when really roused he was like a lion in combat.

A discussion arose in the recreation-room one evening during Bernard's second last term at Ashbury. A boy called Osgood had been reading the Exploits of Brigadier Gerard and was moved to relate to his friend Sedgwick the incident where Gerard comments upon the delusion common to all nations that their soldiers are braver than those of any other nation.

'And then', Osgood said, 'the Brigadier says that isn't true. "All nations are equally brave," he says, "except that the French are slightly more courageous than the others."' '

Every one laughed, and then Mallow interjected in his deep voice :

'I bet you English think you're the bravest nation in the world.'

'Yes. But it's true in our case,' said Sedgwick.

'What price Gerard now?' said Bernard.

'You needn't laugh,' said Sedgwick. 'Doesn't our history prove it?'

Bernard shrugged his shoulders and remained silent. He had grown tired of arguing with fools. But Mallow was not so constituted.

'That's all my eye,' he said. 'The French or the Spanish or anybody else could say the same. Give me a decent proof.'

'We all know it's true,' said Sedgwick, calmly entrenched in self-complacency.

'It's well known,' put in Lashworthy.

'Rot!' said Mallow.

'Your opinion doesn't matter a damn,' drawled Lashworthy. 'You're only a dirty Irishman.'

The light of battle leaped in Mallow's ordinarily dull eye at this insult. He went for Lashworthy in a trice and they had a tussle. It was no regular fight. They just bashed each other for a while and then left off as if by mutual consent.

The episode left Bernard amused and a little puzzled. A few days later came the debate on Socialism already mentioned. When it was over Mallow came up to Bernard and growled: 'You're a great rebel except where your own country is concerned.'

'What do you mean?' asked Bernard.

'The English have treated Ireland a jolly sight worse than their own workers. Why don't you spout about that?'

'I suppose the remedy is the same for both,' said Bernard. 'Why are you so confoundedly touchy about Ireland? Aren't we all one country?'

'Well, God help you for a rotten West Briton!' exclaimed Mallow. 'Don't you know the English conquered us, and broke the Treaty of Limerick, and used to be hanging people in Ninety-Eight for wearing a bit of green in their coats?'

'I dare say they did,' said Bernard. 'But wasn't it rather a long time ago?'

'You're hopeless,' said Mallow, and left him. Nor would he ever discuss the matter again.

Bernard's knowledge of his native land remained in this state of development until the evening of Felim O'Dwyer's speech on Home Rule in the Debating Society.

Felim O'Dwyer was another of Ashbury's failures. He was a small, slight, fair-haired boy two classes below Bernard, and therefore a neophyte to the Debating Society. Owing to that strange clannishness that keeps boys in cliques and sets of their own, and also to the disparity in their ages and position in the school he was known to

Bernard only by name and repute. From the viewpoint of the average schoolboy he was a person of no account, being weak in body, timid in character, and indifferent to athletics. But he was at the top of his class without appearing to exert himself unduly, and he was known to have a sharp and witty tongue. Besides being a classical scholar he was the best essayist in the school, and had beaten Bernard in the contest for the Senior Essay Prize. In addition to this literary distinction he acquired notoriety from a notebook he always carried in his pocket in which he scribbled satirical verses and lampoons about his fellows. These he used to recite to his companions, and in consequence received many kicks from big boys infuriated by hearing their rimed failings chanted in public. Ledbury nearly wrenched his arm from its socket for a cutting Limerick, while Mallow on the other hand was rather flattered by a little quatrain which ran :

Brian Mallow
Will die on a gallow
By hook or by crook.
It's his favourite nook.

And Bernard himself was made to wince by a similar one :

Bernard Lascelles
In Spain has castles.
That's why
You never can catch his eye.

There was also a comic opera which introduced most of Ashbury's celebrities. Bernard figured in a stage direction which read :

Enter Lascelles on a high horse, very much in earnest.

It can be easily understood that O'Dwyer was unpopular. His only friend was Bernard's brother Eugene, and he seemed to take pleasure in his isolation.

A Home Rule debate at Ashbury always ran on certain traditional lines. It had no reference whatever to any

Home Rule Bill that ever had been or ever would be introduced. The Unionist side simply abused Ireland, talked of her 'crimes' and 'disloyalty', and asserted that if England had not conquered her some other country would, or that she held Ireland 'not by Might, but by Right backed up by Might'. Occasionally some original genius would proclaim that to be governed by England was freedom enough for anybody, England being herself the land of the free. As for the advocates of Home Rule, they were mainly amiable people who believed that it would make the Irish more 'loyal'.

Bernard, who had decided not to join in the debate, sat listening to all this with growing bewilderment. He began gradually to realise that the disputants on both sides regarded his countrymen not as fellow-citizens, but as subjects whose fate was at the disposition of their imperious neighbours, or as a people rightly conquered and wrongly resentful of it: a disconcerting revelation which helped him far towards an understanding of Brian Mallow, who sat in a corner scowling and biting his nails, and occasionally interjecting 'Rot!' and 'Rubbish!'

When it came to O'Dwyer's turn to speak, he leaped to his feet, flushed with anger and trembling with impatience. He had been immediately preceded by that ineffable ass Molloy, who had declared that 'the best Irish people' did not want Home Rule, and he seized upon this as the text for his attack.

'The honourable member is quite right,' he said. 'The best Irish people—and I am quite aware that the honourable member and I hold different views as to who *they* are—don't want Home Rule. But what do they want? They want—and I want—separation. We want a republic. (Hisses.) Yes. A Republic. But I don't intend to argue the point here. It would be quite useless, and I don't consider that it's any concern of this house. I only got up to set your doubts at rest as to what Ireland really wants, and having done so I'll sit down.' (Groans.)

Bernard observed Lashworthy approach O'Dwyer after the debate and say :

'You ought to keep that kind of thing for your pigsty in Connemara. Remember you're in England now.'

'I thought I *was* in a pigsty,' replied O'Dwyer. 'Silly mistake, wasn't it?'

Bernard determined to make O'Dwyer's acquaintance. The supreme contempt with which he had treated the society rather appealed to him, and the fact that O'Dwyer was like himself an outsider and a revolutionary was a further recommendation. But their meeting, brought about by Eugene, was a failure. Bernard sought eagerly for information about Ireland, but O'Dwyer was one of those quick impetuous people who are too impatient to give full explanations, and too patently contemptuous of views they disagree with to be successful propagandists. Their talk was all at cross purposes, for O'Dwyer persisted in arguing as if Bernard were a malignant enemy of his country's freedom, or a craven assentor in her enslavement, while Bernard still regarded the matter as a small problem of local government over which O'Dwyer was needlessly excited.

'I don't see why Home Rule shouldn't satisfy you,' he said, and against this breakwater the torrent of O'Dwyer's eloquence dashed in vain. 'This republic business seems to me a mere piece of narrow-minded selfishness. It just means cutting yourself off from your fellow-men in England and the world. It isn't progress at all. It's reaction.'

They got more and more on each other's nerves. O'Dwyer thought Bernard self-satisfied, and Bernard thought O'Dwyer needlessly offensive, for the latter made difference in argument a personal matter and always broke out sooner or later into heated language. And with the egotism and confidence of clever youth each felt that anyone who disagreed with him must be a knave or a fool.

One day Bernard wound up the controversy by saying :

'Anyway, the question isn't of tremendous importance. The world is a big place and Ireland a very small part of it. I think it's sheer waste of time to bother about such a piffling little corner.'

'I suppose you think that a bloody fine broadminded sort of thing to say!' sneered O'Dwyer.

'I think it's common sense.'

'Common highfalutin excuse for dodging what you don't understand.'

'Don't excite yourself over nothing.'

'Is your intelligence nothing then?'

They descended to vulgar abuse after that and their acquaintanceship terminated.

One other incident occurred a little later. O'Dwyer was a private in the section of the Officers' Training Corps of which Bernard was sergeant. Although a rebel, like Bernard, against everything Ashburian, he was the keenest man in it, never grumbled, as the others did, at having to sacrifice recreation for drills, and was assiduous in his attendance at the rifle butts. One day on parade, while the section stood easy, Bernard heard someone chaff O'Dwyer about his military zeal.

'I don't care a bit about it really,' O'Dwyer answered. 'But it'll come in useful when we decide to drive you chaps out of Ireland.'

'That would be a rotten lowdown way to use the training we've given you,' said the other.

'Hell!' said Felim O'Dwyer.

II

BERNARD'S schooldays were now drawing to a close. A fine golden down was on his upper lip, and his voice had cracked. Strange urges and curiosities were growing stronger within him—'impure thoughts and desires', as he had been taught to regard them—and in superstitious dread of that hell which had first turned his mind against his religion, but which yet haunted his consciousness after all belief in the more gracious features of the faith

had left him, he frequently sought to cleanse himself in confession. Sometimes he stood amazed at the things his imagination prompted. And yet they taught him almost nothing. He remained innocent for an unprecedented time.

One day when he was sixteen, Ledbury showed him, with many sniggers, a passage in a history relating to the mistresses of Charles the Second.

'Sloppy idiot!' was Bernard's comment on the Merry Monarch. He had never associated such behaviour with 'impure thoughts and desires', but imagined it merely as a silly addiction to excessive spooning. It interested him no more than the love passages in books, which he always skipped.

Ledbury divined something of the sort from Bernard's tone.

'You're an innocent ass,' he said with huge contempt. 'Don't you know what mistresses are for?'

Finding that Bernard didn't, he told him, crudely.

The revelation came as a shock to our hero. It seemed to have no relation to any of his desires, sensual or romantic. The former had been entirely subjective; the latter amounted to no more than the feeling that it would be rather nice to kiss a pretty girl. This new fact stood out stark as something distinct, unwanted, almost monstrous. At the same time the knowledge took a load off his conscience. He saw himself again as comparatively pure, and shook off his former scruples. Presently, as there were no girls available to fall in love with, he fell in love, as big boys will, with a little boy. There was no harm in the feeling, and both his sense of humour and his sense of fitness, together with the remembrance of his own disgust at the Musgrave incident years before, combined to prevent him from making a fool of himself. He suffered romantically in silence, but got over it in time.

At last his final term opened. He came back from the holidays hotly impatient to get through those three months as quickly as possible and be done with this tire-

some business of schooling for good. It seemed ridiculous waste of time to go on sitting in classrooms listening to pedagogues who had never taught him much, and could not now teach him anything; to spend long afternoons at the futile, and ever more futile, pastime of cricket, when the great world stood ready, waiting to be reformed. He idled atrociously all through that summer term. The ambition to win prizes had long since left him. He had fallen as low as fifth and sixth in the previous terms, and had not cared. He did not care now what place he might occupy. He was a man; and in the Ashbury environment he could feel himself only as a grotesque parody of one, an overgrown boy.

Yet he had felt on the whole more kindly disposed towards Ashbury during this last year. Whether because he had himself become more tolerant, or because the Ashburians, in growing older, had become more tolerable, the hatred he had borne them at fourteen and fifteen had changed to a dispassionate contempt. He even came to like some of them, and once found himself rather enjoying a conversation with Sherringham.

The term dragged itself along. When it was over there would be ten days at the Public Schools Camp at Aldershot. Then he and Murray were to spend a week at Willoughby's home in Warwickshire, where they would meet some of his brother's friends from Oxford. After that he was going to Paris, Vienna, and Rome with his father. Then home, and, in the autumn, Oxford.

And after Oxford? That remoter time stood out clearest in his imagination. Very definitely the world would be a better place for the advent of Bernard Lascelles.

12

THE last day arrived. The O.T.C. was drawn up in the quadrangle for the final inspection. Bernard in khaki with three stripes on his arm cursed his section in truly military style. Then came the inspection, followed by the command:

'Fall out. Into the brakes with you.'

To the scream of bugles and the thud of drums the brakes filled up.

'Mind you all join the Union,' said the prefect as he bade good-bye to those who were leaving for good.

Then the band ceased playing and packed itself into the last brake. Someone in front struck up the Ashbury song. Out dashed the horses through the gateway and the old grey mansion receded in the distance.

All the way to the station and afterwards in the train Bernard sat in silent meditation.

'Old Ashbury!' he said to himself. 'What has she done for me? Given me a smattering of culture and a lot of other stuff that I'd have had to unlearn if I hadn't rejected it at the start. You're a failure, old Ashbury. You tried to make me religious and you've nearly made me an atheist; you tried to make me an English gentleman and you've made me a cosmopolitan Socialist. . . . I wonder what you're making of Eugene.'

Quite suddenly he realised that he and Eugene had been strangers to one another all these years.

'Old Alma Mater, you're a fraud!' he said to himself as the train slid out of Dillingworth Station.

Through a gap in the hills he caught a last glimpse of the towers of Ashbury over their surrounding trees.

CHAPTER V

THE STATELY HOME

I

A GREAT silent smooth-running motor-car carried three sun-burnt khaki-clad young men from Deeping Station to Willoughby Towers. Along the broad highway it sped, then wound through trim green-hedged byways to emerge on a long straight road of a different complexion, narrow and unfenced.

'The Roman road,' said Willoughby.

The Roman road. Bernard was of a mind to ask for the car to be stopped, so that he might have the emotional experience of setting foot on its surface ; but, on hearing Willoughby add : 'We're nearly there now,' refrained, promising himself a solitary visit to it later on. After another stretch of curving English road, they reached a gate, which was opened by an obsequious gate-keeper exactly like a thousand other gate-keepers. They drove up a serpentine avenue between rows of cedars, crunching the thickly laid gravel. The chauffeur tootled his horn and as they emerged on a great circular sweep of gravel before the house an old gentleman came down the steps. Willoughby waved his service cap, and the old gentleman cried out : 'Here we are again.' The car stopped, panting, and the three young men jumped out.

Willoughby introduced his friends to his father, who welcomed them in a bluff breezy manner. After a moment he said :

'You'll find your mother in the drawing-room, Jack,' whereat Willoughby sped off into the house. Then an

impassive servitor conducted Murray and Bernard through the hall, cumbrously adorned with suits of armour, stags' heads, skins of wild beasts, and portraits of departed Willoughbys; up a grand oak-balustraded stairway; and along a corridor to two bedrooms side by side. The servant wanted Bernard's keys to unpack for him, but Bernard detested the flunkeyism with which the well-to-do surround themselves and refused this service. After washing, shaving and changing into civilian attire he went down with Murray to the drawing-room, where Willoughby introduced them to his mother. She was a tall pale delicate woman who received them with a cordiality that was transparently superficial. Her husband, however, a fine type of the robust English country gentleman, did much to set them at their ease. They were engaged in the delicate process of eating thin bread-and-butter and drinking tea out of eggshell china balanced on their knees, when three other young men entered the room, who were introduced as:

'Mr. Hastings, Mr. Moore, and my eldest son Frank.'

Frank Willoughby was just an older version of Jack, somewhat more polished and somewhat less ingenuous. Hastings was a rather pompous young man, fair-haired, not over tidy in his dress, and obviously not in the best physical training. Moore was tall, of dark complexion, with a slightly bitter smile perpetually hovering over his lips. High cheek-bones, a long upper lip, and a shade of accent showing through the Oxford varnish of his speech proclaimed the Irishman. These three had just been served with tea when every one rose at the entry of two girls. One, Maud Willoughby, instantly attracted the gaze of every male stranger in the room, for she was the typical English beauty of magazine story-writers and illustrators. She knew it, and she carried herself accordingly. As for her friend, Janet Morecambe, the minx must have chosen her for a foil. She was small and shapeless, and save for a pair of piercing eyes, totally undistinguished in appearance.

A light conversation began and rambled along pleasantly, while Bernard, looking at Maud's profile, decided that destiny had been kind to him. He almost hated Willoughby for tearing him along with Murray away from the company, in order, as he said, to show them round the place. Throughout the process he was so absent-minded and distraught that Murray at any rate found little difficulty in diagnosing the cause.

They met again at dinner, when Bernard to his delight found himself placed next to her. At first the ceremonial nature of the meal rather oppressed him. The great size of the dining-room, hung with the usual manorial relics of the chase and the glories of departed days; of the table itself, and of the other appointments of the room; the formality of everything, of the well-dressed company, of the statuesque and attentive menials, of the whole ritual designed to complicate rather than to comfort this everyday process of assimilating nourishment; all this weighed upon him and made him nervous and anxious. Also he was reflecting upon the little parody of this time-honoured observance nightly performed in Merrion Square. A glass of sherry restored his confidence, and he perceived that Maud was deliberately trying to entertain and interest him.

'I've heard a great deal about you from Jack,' she said. 'He's always talking about you.'

'He must have exhausted all the good he had to say very early,' said Bernard. 'I hope he was discreet about the rest.'

'He tells me you're a terrible Socialist,' said Maud.

'Nothing terrible about me, I assure you,' said Bernard. 'But the rest is true enough.'

They listened to the general conversation for a time. Mrs. Willoughby was attacking the Budget, which she described as downright robbery, and its author, whom she called a little Welsh thief; and Hastings was defending them with remarkable good temper, to the admiration of Bernard, who knew that he himself would have been

extremely rude under the circumstances. Moore, the dark Irishman, interposed an occasional sardonic remark at the expense of both sides impartially. Presently Mr. Willoughby genially intervened, and succeeded in diverting the conversation to pleasanter channels, such as the prospects for the Twelfth.

Bernard and Maud returned to their *tête-à-tête*. Their talk was trifling enough, but with her eyes and with her smile she enmeshed him in a tangle of enchantment. After the ladies had withdrawn he moodily gnawed his cigar while the other men chatted, and that night before going to bed he walked among the cedars dreaming about her under the moon.

2

LIFE at Willoughby Towers passed very pleasantly in a round of fishing, tennis, and motoring. One day they drove to Stratford-on-Avon. Originally it had been Willoughby's intention to take only Janet and his own two friends in the runabout, as all the others had seen the place before; but Maud decided to join the party, much to the surprise of her brother, who knew that she was no enthusiast for Shakespeare, and at the last moment Fergus Moore asked if he might come too. This meant that they had to take the big car. Maud sat in the back seat, between Moore and Bernard, whose bliss was perfect in such sweet proximity. When they reached Shakespeare's house he took her hand to help her to alight, and the two of them followed in rear of the party while the guide showed them around, to the accompaniment of a florid commentary recited in the monotone of a lesson by heart.

It is to be feared that Bernard showed a little less piety on this pilgrimage than a good Shakespearean should. When he ought to have been pondering over this or that relic of the Bard, or searching among the signatures on the walls and windows of the upper room for the scrawls of famous men, he was lingering in the

background, whispering with Maud. The pair were apt to get left behind at various stages of the route, and, as they drifted along, a close observer might have noticed that their shoulders came in contact rather more frequently than was altogether warranted by the narrowness of stairs and doorways. The only things which seemed really to excite their interest were certain exhibits in glass cases, over which they pored very studiously indeed, with their heads rather close together, pointing out details to one another with fingers that almost touched. Ah, the happy days of young love, when every look is significant, and there is rapture in the tickling of a hair.

Downstairs again, the guide concluded his monologue: 'And now, ladies and gentlemen, here is the ingle-nook in which no doubt the Swan of Avon often sat. Perhaps you would like to sit there and see if any of the noble thoughts which inspired our national Bard might come to yourselves.'

Bernard was the last to try this experiment. As he rose from the nook he saw that Fergus Moore was staring at him with a look that he could not comprehend. Later, at tea in a little shop in the town, he kept even more silent than usual, and, when Maud rallied him on the subject, answered her with a smile that was painful to see.

Another day Mr. Willoughby raised a team from his visitors and the neighbours to challenge the local cricket club on the village green. The Towers eleven won; but, alas, poor Bernard, valorously determined to play the man under the eyes of his lady, was put out first ball by Noakes, the slow bowler of the village, a disgrace hardly to be wiped out by his holding a not-too-easy catch later on.

In the evenings conversation flowed with an ease and freedom to which Bernard was unaccustomed at home. Mr. Willoughby was a man who treated youth with respect, differing thus from Bernard's father, who seemed to consider age and wisdom synonymous, and treated the opinions of his juniors either with contempt if he disagreed

with them or with exasperating patronage if they coincided with his own. Mr. Willoughby, however, was inclined to the humorous view of life. Progressive opinions in young men he received with a tolerant smile and the prophecy that they would wear off in time. His contribution to a social argument that sprang up one evening was to the effect that industrialism itself was the cause of poverty, and that England would not be herself again till she returned to the good old days when the squire paternally ruled his tenants and the tenants were respectful to the squire and all was agricultural bliss and harmony.

'But your very socks and shirts are the products of industrialism,' said Bernard.

'I'd cheerfully go back to homespuns,' said the squire.

'And give up your motor?' queried Bernard.

'There are flaws in my theory, I know,' said Mr. Willoughby. 'Well, there are more in Socialism. But I can't help thinking the world was a happier place before the invention of machinery.'

'Happy, but inconvenient,' said Hastings.

'The world could be both happy and convenient', put in Mrs. Willoughby, 'if politicians wouldn't stir up the lower classes and make them discontented.'

This put an end to the discussion, for nobody cared for the futile task of arguing with Mrs. Willoughby.

But conversations among the younger members of the party uninterfered with by their elders frequently took place when, the weather being too hot for tennis, they lay basking in the sun on the lawn. All aspired to be politicians, and two of them at any rate were in close touch with existing politics; for Hastings was the son of a Radical M.P., and Murray's father was prominent in the United Irish League in Liverpool. During recent years Bernard had succeeded in getting Willoughby interested in politics, and even in mildly democratising his outlook, and shocking him out of some of his conventions. He had compromised between Ashbury and Bernard by developing into a kind of Tory Democrat, his

brother Frank being a Tory pure and simple. Murray was a democratic Imperialist and Hastings followed his father's principles. Moore appeared to have no politics. He sat apart from the discussions smoking endless cigarettes and showing no sign of interest beyond an extra twitch occasionally of that queer smile of his. As for Bernard he intervened occasionally when some peculiarly irritating argument dragged him from dreams of Maud. Maud herself was never present to stimulate him to eloquence, but her friend Janet frequently joined the conclave and was always decidedly on the progressive side.

The Liberal policy, current and prospective—social legislation, reform of the House of Lords, land taxation and Home Rule—furnished good ground for controversy. Frank was against it *in toto*. The world was a fairly comfortable place, he said, for those who were even moderately well off, and as for the poor they were an inevitable evil. There had always been poverty and there always would be, so it was no use trying to abolish it. Let them alleviate it by organised charity if they wished. As for the proposed legislation it was an attempt to filch government from the only class fitted to govern. Privileged classes were inevitable, and it was their privileges that fitted them for government. Payment of members was a violation of the excellent principle of gratuitous public service and would open Parliament to needy professional politicians. Home Rule, of course, was an absurdity. They might as well restore the Heptarchy.

To these phrases Hastings retorted with a string of others. He was for government of the people by the people, the greatest good of the greater number, and democratic progress generally. He talked of the anachronism of the House of Lords, and the anomaly of Dublin Castle Rule, and proclaimed equality of opportunity as his motto.

But Bernard was primed with Shaw.

'What's the use of equality of opportunity,' he asked, 'if you don't go on with it? It's no use leaving things

half done. Equality of opportunity is no use when there isn't equality of ability. I'm for pushing the thing to its logical conclusion, and establishing complete equality of income.'

'Now, Bernard,' said Willoughby, 'you're not going to get in a lecture on Socialism. We all know that it's an infallible remedy in theory and would work admirably if the whole world was populated by perfectly reasonable beings like you and Bernard Shaw. But it isn't.'

Bernard, his argumentative energy sapped by love-lorn dreams, subsided into contemptuous silence.

'I take it', resumed Hastings, 'that the British Empire has a mission of freedom to preach to the world. How can it fulfil that mission with an antiquated anachronism like the House of Lords standing in the way, and with the Irish question as a running sore at its very vitals?'

'Free Ireland', said Murray, 'and she'll be the loyalest spot where the British flag flies.'

'Good Lord!' suddenly ejaculated Moore, who had been silent hitherto, 'it makes me laugh to hear you fellows gassing away like a lot of unsophisticated school-girls about a world you know nothing about. Make the British Empire a civilising force! You might as well make burglars into policemen. You might as well set out to evangelise hell by converting the devil.'

'I don't think that's a fair way to describe the British Empire,' objected Willoughby.

'No wonder,' said Moore, 'after the stuff you've been doped with at school.'

'Great Scott, Fergus,' said Frank, 'you're the deuce of a Rad. I never knew you thought that sort of thing before. Why did you never come out like that at the Union?'

'Because I'm not interested in politics.'

'So I thought once. But, good Lord, you know, this speech just now——' He paused, wordless.

'Forget it,' said Moore. 'It was only an ebullition of feeling.'

'Don't tell me', said Bernard, 'that you aren't interested in politics.'

'It's quite true.'

'But why?'

'Politics are only one of the torments of this hell we call the world.'

'This hell?' asked several.

'Yes. Didn't the human race sell itself to the Devil when it crucified Christ?'

Nobody answered for a moment. Then Willoughby suggested quietly: 'Christ died to redeem us from hell.'

'If so,' said Moore, 'he failed.'

'How do you make that out?' asked Frank Willoughby.

'Do you think the world hasn't been improved by Christianity?' demanded Hastings.

'What do *you* think?' asked Moore in reply.

'Certainly it has,' declared Hastings.

'Indeed. Have you noticed any marked diminution in the number of wars in the last two thousand years? Or any increasing contempt for wealth and glory? Or any immediate prospect of the meek inheriting the earth?'

'Perhaps not,' said Hastings. 'But things *are* improving, you know. Slowly, I admit, but still improving. Even if we haven't abolished war, we no longer put our prisoners to death, or enslave their women and children.'

'No. We do it in peace time instead. Have you read the Casement Report on the Congo?'

'That was only the beastly Belgians,' said Frank Willoughby.

'Well, aren't the Belgians Christians?'

'Exceptional cases prove nothing,' said Hastings. 'I maintain that the world is progressing.'

'Maintain what you like,' said Moore. 'I'm not trying to change your views. I'm only telling you mine. You asked me why I don't take an interest in politics. The

reason is that I think they're a sham, and politicians a lot of self-seeking schemers——'

'Lloyd George,' said Frank Willoughby.

'The whole Tory bunch,' retorted Hastings.

'I agree with you both,' said Moore. 'And that puts my case in a nutshell. The government of the world is in the hands of knaves elected by fools, and between them they've created a hell of rapacity and stupidity, cruelty, dirt, disease, poverty, and degradation, smothered up with humbug, where the wrong always triumphs over the right, where the great men are the successful robbers, and the great nations the oppressors of the small, and where there isn't a dirty deed done by man or nation that won't find some sanctimonious scribbler to justify or extenuate it. And if any wise and noble man dares to denounce the cruelties or show up the cant, he's howled down by the knaves, and scorned as a crank by the fools. If all that doesn't make up a hell, I'd like to know what does.'

'Moore's a pessimist,' said Hastings.

'Pessimist!' snorted Moore. 'I wish you wouldn't use clichés you don't know the meaning of. You English radicals *think* in clichés.'

'Your cynicism is appalling, Moore,' said Willoughby.

'The world isn't one fraction as bad as you make out.'

'More cliché. What's cynicism?'

Willoughby seemed at a loss to explain. Moore went on:

'Cynicism, as I understand it, means scoffing at sacred things, or taking a flippant view of serious things. Politics are neither, and you've no more right to call me cynic for my poor opinion of them than I have to call you sentimentalist for your exalted one. Labels and phrases are ruinous to reasoning.'

'They've certainly made rather a hash of yours,' Bernard put in. 'You talk as if there was no difference between politics and the manœuvres of party politicians.'

'In practice', said Moore, 'there isn't.'

'That's only true of the Tories,' Hastings interjected before Bernard could reply.

'Rot!' cried Frank. 'Conservative policy has always been broadly national and non-party.'

Moore grinned.

'Have any of you', he asked, 'ever heard of a country called Ireland?'

'Too much,' said Frank Willoughby.

'Thank you. We've never asked for anything except that you'll clear out and leave us alone; and if you won't do it you'll go on hearing about it to the end of time. What's the Unionist case? That the United Kingdom is one country, and Ireland as much a part of it as Yorkshire. But their main argument on the platform is that if you give the Irish Home Rule they'll cut loose from the Empire and join the first enemy who attacks you. In fact, your arguments are self-contradictory. On the other hand'—he turned to Hastings—'every argument you Liberals use in favour of Home Rule is equally valid as an argument for separation.'

'My dear fellow,' said Hastings, 'we couldn't possibly allow separation.'

'Exactly,' said Moore with his hard laugh. 'That's why I say politics are a sham. Let's have a game of tennis.'

Janet drew Bernard aside as the others went down to the courts. He yielded to her, and they walked through an arch of rambler roses into the flower-garden.

'That was an interesting talk,' said Janet. 'You Irish are so full of ideas—and such idealists. You and Mr. Moore were the only people who got anywhere near to the depths of the question to-day.'

'Oh, rot,' said Bernard. 'I said nothing at all, and Moore was only finding excuses for being a mugwump.'

'Yes,' said Janet. 'But his reasons for being a mugwump were more to his credit than the reasons the others gave for their politics. You can tell that he really *is* a democrat. It's more than a political principle with him.'

It's in his bones. You can see that the people really matter to him—it's the same with you. I noticed you talking with one of the servants the other day, and you might have been talking with a brother—or at any rate with a friend. I couldn't do that, nor could Mr. Hastings with all his Radicalism. The nearest he'll ever get to it will be when he goes canvassing in an election. But it seems to come naturally to you. I suppose that's Irish.'

Bernard, not knowing how to take this, kept silence.

'It isn't a mere question of manners, you know,' went on Janet. 'Your manners are far from perfect,' she said, looking at him for a moment with a disarming smile. 'You're not a bit polite to people you think stupid, or—or otherwise deficient.'

'What do you mean?' asked Bernard uneasily, but the girl hastily changed the subject.

'Ireland must be a delightful country,' she said. 'I've been attracted to it ever since I read Synge's plays—oh, and of course the Lake Isle of Innisfree.'

Bernard's expression at once betrayed his ignorance.

'It's by Yeats,' the girl said. 'I'll lend you my copy if you like.'

Bernard watched her as she bent her graceless figure to gather some sweet-peas for her belt. He was thinking of Maud, and of their rapturous contacts in Shakespeare's house. Yet he could not help remembering that her talk was a little vapid. Janet was more interesting, and her voice was softer and pleasanter. If he could only hear her without seeing . . . There was something about her eyes too, especially when she looked at him . . .

And then came Maud along the path making the roses fairer.

3

MOORE's diatribe on politics roused intense interest and curiosity in Bernard, and on the first occasion on which he succeeded in finding him alone he began questioning him on the subject.

'You don't really believe all that tosh about this being hell, do you?' he demanded.

'Well,' said Moore, throwing away his cigarette and lighting another, 'I do and I don't.'

It was a fine summer evening and they were standing in the gravelled space before the house. Bernard drew his companion towards the avenue as he spoke.

'I find it hard to explain things to you,' said Moore. 'You see, you belong to one of the strangest communities of men that ever existed. The Cleruchs of the Athenian Empire seem to be your only parallel in history, for, like them, you live in a country for the purpose of holding it for another country, but, unlike them, you are natives of the subject country. In that country you have no part. You know little and care less for her traditions; you don't observe her customs; you don't think as she does; your heroes are not her heroes, and your flag is not her flag; and instead of that patriotism which is a natural feeling innate in every normal man you have a bastard thing you call "loyalty", which there is no defining and which is nothing more in reality than the fealty which a garrison owes to its paymasters.'

'You're all wrong,' said Bernard. 'I'm a Home Ruler.'

'Yes, I know,' said Moore impatiently. 'By some miracle you've escaped the worst traditions of the breed. But what is Home Rule to you? A mere question of methods of government: a way of relieving the Imperial Parliament of petty questions of local administration. Your real interests are in what you'd call the larger sphere of the Empire.'

'Go on,' said Bernard.

'Well, I'm one of the natives whom your crowd keeps in subjection, and to us the question of ending that subjection is the most important thing in our politics. To you England and Ireland are more or less one and the same. You have never read the history which would have told you that the one is the implacable enemy of

the other, has ruined her and is continuing to ruin her. It's a question of life and death with us ; a war between two civilisations, with our national language and customs, our very name and existence at stake ; and so long as the struggle goes on, nothing else in the world matters to us.'

'Then it does matter to you?' said Bernard.

'It did at seventeen. You know nothing about Ninety-Eight and the United Irishmen. These words bring no thrill to your spine, so you'll find it hard to appreciate my feelings when I went down to the local branch of the United Irish League expecting to be presented with a pike and a revolver, and was offered instead a resolution of confidence to vote for.

'Well, I found in that league of professed patriots nothing but cant and self-deception. Their only policy was to sit still and wait for the Liberals to fling them a Home Rule Bill, while their leaders went about telling the English that as soon as we got it we'd be only too happy to be their loyal servants ever after.

'Of course I learnt sense in time. An appreciation of relative values was enough to show me the futility of force and the necessity of diplomacy, but soon I began to realise the futility of diplomacy also. If you've followed Irish politics at all you'd see how our party is beaten and bamboozled at every turn. I've a symbol in my mind for our present state of affairs : a dwarf with a sword fighting a giant finds he can't win, so throws away his sword and appeals to the giant's reason. Somewhat futile, eh? Well, when I realised that force was useless and reasoning absurd I fell into despair, and came to the conclusion that a world where might was always predestined to triumph over right could only be a sort of hell. So you see me at twenty-three quite convinced that Ireland is a hopeless case, and while I refuse homage to England I've no intention of wasting my time in a futile struggle against her.'

'There's a fellow I know at Ashbury', said Bernard,

'who holds all the principles that you do, but he hasn't given up hope.'

'He's young,' said Moore.

'I think', said Bernard, 'if I once had the truth and the facts of the case and really felt that the cause was mine, I'd go on until I found a way out.'

'Well, that's for you to decide,' said Moore. 'I'm a failure, anyhow. Everything I touch seems to go wrong . . . both in love and war. Perhaps you'll be luckier. You've beaten me in one of them already, so why not the other?'

'What do you mean?' asked Bernard, blushing. They had reached the gate, and now turned to retrace their steps. Moore looked at Bernard with strained eyes out of a pale drawn face.

'Do you mean to say you don't know?' he said.

Bernard suspected, but dared not put the suspicion into words. Moore, looking at him closer, said: 'Of course you know. I knew when it was me, and the signs aren't more ambiguous this time.'

'You're a beastly cynic,' said Bernard, with a pang of jealousy.

Moore laughed drily. 'Go along and make the most of it while it lasts,' he said.

Up the avenue they went, the light-hearted and the heavy-hearted side by side.

'She loves me. She loves me,' Bernard kept saying to himself. But at dinner that night he sat as far from her as he could, deliberately choosing the place next Janet, whose conversation he favoured with a polite but inattentive ear. He was shy and constrained when Maud spoke to him from the distance, and dared not look her in the eyes. But afterwards in the drawing-room, when both of them had, by some miracle as it seemed, 'cut out' from the bridge-table, he ventured to suggest a stroll in the grounds. She consented. A second miracle. He

Went by her side so full of happiness that he could not speak. The few words he uttered in reply to Maud's

observations were pitched in a key unchosen and strange to him. Her sleeve brushed his occasionally as it had done in Shakespeare's house, making him long for some more intimate contact. A thousand times he resolved to put his arm around her, but always his courage failed. Then he began to wonder if he might just take her arm. That would not involve so stern a rebuff as the bolder course. But dusk was falling, and they were nearly back at the house before he ventured to make the attempt. She did not rebuff him, and heaven was his. He held her arm close—only that—but never in all his life after did he experience a moment so packed with happiness.

'She loves me. She loves me,' he kept saying to himself when they had parted, and could hardly sleep for joy.

4

BUT the lyrical exultation of the night gave place to doubt and hesitation in the cold light of day.

'Love me? What does Moore know about it? He's not infallible. And she encouraged *him* once.'

Abnormally sensitive, he feared a snub should he presume too far on insufficient evidence. She had let him hold her arm, true. But how much did that mean? In her eyes, perhaps, nothing at all.

After breakfast the first person he met was Janet, who asked him how he was getting on with Yeats. Bernard had been feeding his emotions on the poems of hopeless love in the volume she had lent him, so an interesting talk developed. The girl had ideas. She knew far more about literature than he did; had a grace of expression utterly beyond him. For the first time in his life he found himself content to listen to another person's views without interrupting. He began to feel a warmer interest in her: even a faint stirring of those sensations hitherto only associated with Maud. But he resented that, and deliberately repressed it, half fearful lest he might fall in love with this ungraceful being. Later

rate Oxford. Quite as musty and not half so magnificent. You'd only stifle there. It's a mere Rathmines University, if you know what I mean. The National's new. It may be a bit shoddy, but we might make something of it.'

'The notion rather appeals to me,' said Bernard.

'You wouldn't half shine there, Mr. Public Schoolman,' said Manders.

'After all,' said Bernard, 'there's a good deal to be said for a University that isn't a Varsity.'

When he returned to town in September he announced his intention of taking the National University Matriculation.

'Good Lord!' exclaimed Sir Eugene. 'What on earth for?'

'I don't much care for a tuppenny tin imitation of Oxford. Besides, I'd like to be with chaps of my own religion.' (This with his tongue very much in his cheek.)

'I suppose that settles it,' said Sir Eugene. 'Got religious again?'

'Partially,' said Bernard.

'And now,' said Sir Eugene, 'what have you decided to do in life?'

'Well, I want to go into politics, so I suppose the best opening is to go for the Bar.'

'Politics!' exclaimed Sir Eugene. 'What do you want to go in for politics for?'

'I have ideas . . . and plans.'

'Oh! Out to reform the world, eh? The usual disease at your age. . . . Well, why not try the Indian Civil Service?'

'Well . . . no thanks. That's not quite the sort of politics I meant. Besides, I'm not keen on living in the tropics.'

'But politics in this benighted country are no good. You'd be a struggling briefless barrister until you were middle-aged, and I couldn't afford to keep you all that time. . . . As for England, it's out of the question.'

You'd find the Irish enough, but over there
 you'd be quite unknown might starve eventually.
 When my financial affairs better I'd planned some
 such career for you, but afraid it's impossible now.
 You'd better put politics out of your head, because, in
 addition to the other difficulties, our party hasn't any
 seats outside Ulster and Trinity, in neither of which
 you'd have a ghost of a chance.'

'You quite misunderstand me,' said Bernard. 'If
 you say the Bar is out of the question, I suppose it is.
 Let me take out a course of economics in the University
 and then let me try and make a living by journalism in
 London until I can make my way into politics. . . . I
 don't mean the kind of politics you imagine, of course.
 The fact is, I'm a sort of . . . Socialist.'

'A Socialist!'

There was as much scorn as anger in Sir Eugene's tone.
 This was for him a totally unexpected development.

'Since when, may I ask?' he demanded.

'A long time,' said Bernard.

'No politics for you, my boy,' said Sir Eugene in his
 most determined manner. 'It would be a nice thing for
 me to have a Socialist M.P. for a son, wouldn't it?
 Where would my practice go to then, do you think?
 And what would become of your mother and sisters?
 You must think of other people occasionally, you know.
 . . . I never imagined you could be so selfish.'

The argument dragged on for twenty minutes or more,
 and finally Bernard was bullied into acquiescing to his
 father's point of view. As the least of numerous evils he
 chose the medical profession. Sir Eugene having got
 his way at once assumed a more conciliatory tone.

'It's a noble profession, my boy. You'll spend your
 life in the service of suffering humanity which I think is
 the highest aim a man could have.'

'The to . . . ialism,' thought
 Bernard

H' . . . ed a shattering

blow. He lay awake musty and not doing about and fretting under his disappointment. It's a mere P
 'A Merrion Square doean. Time! . . . After all my dreams. . . . I, who have it we s to give to the world, to spend my life sitting by the bedsides of hypochondriacal old ladies! . . . Good Lord! . . .'

There are those who will be inclined to smile at this boy of eighteen confidently planning to reform the world. Let them smile. It was a good conceit. Bernard could not help feeling that his passion for order and justice had been given him for some high purpose. It transcended any personal ambition. He felt injustice in any quarter of the world, or in any period of time, more acutely than the most immediate grievance of his own. Thucydides' narrative of the massacre of Melos roused as hot emotion in him as Bernard Shaw's account of the Denshawai atrocity. His thoughts and sympathies and ambitions were world-wide, the sorrows of mankind were his sorrows, and their removal was the first object of his desire. To bank down his passion, and turn from the world's work to the mere personal business of earning a living, seemed like the act of the man who buried his talent in a field.

CHAPTER VI

DUBLIN

I

AT five o'clock on an afternoon in October, Bernard and Geoffrey Manders sat sipping coffee in the crowded smoking-room of the Café Cairo, a Grafton Street tea-shop which had become the favourite resort of the students of University College. The air was full of the clatter of china, the hum of conversation, and the fumes of cigarette smoke.

'Well, it's a great College,' Bernard was saying. 'I found it a bit hard to get my bearings at first, though. An English public school is full of people you can't speak to, either because they're infinitely far above you or abysmally far beneath you. But in U.C.D. a freshman can talk to a final man without feeling he's condescended to. Then there's such a general air of friendliness: no cliques that snub you if you butt in on their conversation. Every one's free to move and talk as he likes, and there are no damned taboos and questions of Form.'

'You mean you haven't met them yet,' said Manders. 'They're there all right. They may be different from the Ashbury taboos, but there they are.'

'Perhaps,' said Bernard, not perturbed by the suggestion. 'But the place is democratic, anyway—not positively, you know, like a Liberal politician, but naturally and unconsciously—as naturally as Ashbury was the other thing. You know what I mean: like salt in a sea breeze. Hello, here's an old Ashburian coming in.'

The Ashburian in question was the egregious Molloy, who, on coming nearer, threw Bernard a greeting.

'How are you?' said Bernard. 'This is my friend Mr. Manders. How's the world treating you?'

'Rottenly,' said Molloy. 'I say, did you ever hear such luck as this? I was going to Trinity—got my entrance exam. and everything—but some beastly old bishop or other got at my pater, so now I have to go to this awful lowdown hole of a National.'

'That's rotten luck,' Bernard agreed. 'Awful types one does meet there, I'm sure.'

'Awful,' said Molloy.

'Types like Manders and me, for instance.'

'I say,' gasped Molloy, taken aback. 'You aren't there really, are you? I thought you were going to Oxford.'

'Well, I'm not.'

'We're both in the same boat then. I say, did you ever see such a place in your life? And aren't the men quite too awful? Of course I'm not referring to your friend here—with a smirk at Manders—but really——!' Words failed him.

'What course are you taking?' Bernard asked, without much interest.

'Law,' said Molloy. 'What's your tack?'

Here a tall lanky man with black hair and loose-lipped mouth came up and unceremoniously accosted Bernard.

'I say, what the blazes did you cut dissecting for this morning? I had to do those deep pectorals by myself.'

'Sorry, old chap,' replied Bernard. 'I simply couldn't help it. I was dancing till three last night, at Lady Bartley's.'

'God bless our aristocracy!' said the other, raising his hat reverently.

'Bag that chair there and sit down,' said Bernard.

'I came in with McGurk,' said the tall man. 'He's hunting for a table round the corner.'

'There's room for four here,' said Bernard.

'Well, I must be toddling, Lascelles,' said Molloy. 'See you later.'

'A choice product of Ashbury,' remarked Bernard as he disappeared.

'Hence the allusion to Debrett, I suppose,' said the tall man. 'Hello, here's McGurk.'

A burly red-haired youth, untidily dressed, approached the three with a genial smile, and plumped down on the chair still held by his friend.

'Crowley, me son,' he said, 'you've saved me life. There isn't another table in the place.'

Crowley laughed, and fetched another chair for himself.

'It's these fellows that bring their girls here that have the place crowded out,' said McGurk, looking with disfavour at some amorous couples in the neighbourhood. 'There won't be a place where a man can feel at home soon.'

'McGurk has been so long at the study of medicine', observed Crowley, 'that he remembers the days when the female of the species was too modest to enter a smoking-room. Say, Hugo, is it true that you took out your first lectures under Aesculapius?'

'Galong out o' that,' said McGurk. 'Here, Tilly,'—he stopped a passing waitress—'get me a cup of tea, and make it strong. What's yours, Crowley?'

'I'll have a beaker of your alleged coffee,' drawled Crowley.

The waitress departed with a grin.

'There's another lost lamb,' said Manders, pointing to Brian Mallow, who stood with a chair in his hand and a sheepish smile on his pugnacious face, looking from one crowded table to another.

'But you squeeze him in,' suggested Crowley. 'One can occasionally extract some amusement from the bird.'

Mallow came over in response to a signal, and jammed his chair between McGurk and Crowley. The latter put an arm around affectionately, saying: 'Where hast thou been, brother? Killing swine?'

'You're not far out,' replied Mallow. 'I've been down at the Abbey, hooting the Playboy.'

'Good Lord!' ejaculated Manders. 'I thought that sort of thing was out of date now.'

'Nothing is ever out of date in this remarkable island,' said Crowley. 'To what end was the cachinnation, dearie?'

'The play's an insult to the country,' said Mallow. 'It makes us all out to be a lot of parricides.'

'How dreadful!' said Crowley.

'And there was a fellow talking about girls in their shifts,' went on Mallow, not heeding the sarcasm.

'So long as it wasn't their pants——,' interjected McGurk.

'Tut-tut, Hugo!' said Crowley. 'A true Irishman doesn't know about such things.'

'Well, I call it disgusting,' said Mallow.

'What? To wear a shift?'

'Get away with you,' said Mallow sourly. 'What call had they to bring it into a play?'

'So you registered your protest in the popular fashion?'

'I stood up——' said Mallow.

'High upon the gallows tree——'

'Ah, shut up. I stood up and I said: "This play's a disgrace to the country", so I did. But the rotten cowards had a peeler waiting outside, and he came and threw me out.'

'Tilly,' said Crowley to the waitress, who had come up with his order, 'this gentleman has just been martyred for Faith and Fatherland. Bring him some tea at my expense.'

'Look here, Mallow,' said Manders. 'I'd like to get at what's at the back of your mind. Do you think that no one has a right to produce a play that you're objecting to?'

'The dear boy doesn't think,' said Crowley. 'He isn't made that way. He can only feel.'

'Now, look here, Crowley,' said Mallow with slow truculence, exhibiting a huge but rather flabby fist. 'Would you like a good punch in the jaw?'

'Thanks. Not at the moment,' replied Crowley suavely.

'Well, if you aren't careful, you'll get it.'

'Gently, gently,' said Crowley. 'Remember you aren't at school now. If you get violent we'll have to ask Tilly to put you out.'

'You needn't wait so long,' snapped Mallow. 'I'm going. I'm not staying here to be insulted,' and he stalked grimly away.

'That fellow's an awful gasbag,' McGurk commented.

'Why does he get so excited about the Playboy?' asked Bernard. 'I never saw anything in the play to upset anyone.'

'That's the worst of being educated in a backward place like Ashbury,' said Crowley.

'Well now,' said McGurk, 'I don't get excited about things like Mallow, but the Playboy's a bit thick all the same. Here's a fellow that thinks he's killed his Da, and goes and gets made a hero on the head of it in an Irish village—'

'In a *village*?' cut in Manders. 'Synge put the play in Ireland because he was an Irishman, just as he'd have put it in Siam if he'd been a Siamese. It's simply a comedy that might have happened anywhere.'

'But the Synge-divided Gael don't appreciate such subtleties,' said Crowley, 'and hence these ructions.'

'Gosh!' laughed McGurk. 'I remember the night of the great row a couple of years ago. I was in the pit with the Nationalist crowd, hooting away like hell, and up in the gallery were the Trinity jackeens cheering and waving Union Jacks. It was the greatest ^{as a} ^{any} ^{you} saw.'

'But these pure Irish professors 'teacher', and at school we like bears or worms according to

afraid of them or not.'

't civilise a savage,' said Crowley. But broken off without reaching any con-

c. pulling out his watch, found that he

'But why would that make them cheer it?' asked Bernard, bewildered.

Crowley looked at him, equally puzzled, but before he could speak Tilly appeared with Mallow's tea.

'The gentleman has evaporated in a cloud of wrath,' Crowley explained.

'Has he gone?' asked Tilly.

'If you chuck the stuff over the railing there', said Crowley, 'you might get him on his way out.'

'Here, give it to me,' said McGurk. 'I'm game for another pot.'

Bernard lay back in the plush-covered settee which he shared with Manders, listening idly to the conversation of the others. He did not reiterate his unanswered question, which, indeed, he had put without real curiosity. A strange inertia had come over him since leaving school. Just as during his last term he had lost interest in his studies, so now he had lost interest in the causes and ideas which had once meant everything to him. Far away in England the quarrel between the Lords and the Liberals had reached an acute phase. The Lords had thrown out the Budget, and an appeal to the country was inevitable. The Liberals would come back armed with a mandate to attack them in their own stronghold. But somehow these things no longer seemed to matter. Perhaps the thwarting of his ambition had sicken-
Perhaps it was only that his precociously overworked brain needed a rest. What he found his pleasures now not in reading, but in knocking about town with his fellow dances, music-halls and billiard saloons. Do you know what's at the back of your mind? No one has a right to produce a play that you made that way. He can only feel.'

'The dear boy doesn't think,' said Crowley.

'Now, look here, Crowley,' said Mallow with truculence, exhibiting a huge but rather flabby jaw. 'Would you like a good punch in the jaw?'

realised, based on feeling rather than on thought. When, for instance, he had discussed Socialism with Manders and Crowley, he had found that they, who disagreed with it, knew a great deal more about it than he did. In fact the conversation had painfully exposed his own ignorance of economics. Each of his three friends in his own way made him feel raw and ill-equipped. Crowley's intimate acquaintance with books whose authors were mere names to Bernard showed up the pitifully fragmentary nature of his reading. Yet there was nothing of the book-worm about Crowley; while Bernard knew nothing outside books. Manders, with his urbane familiarity with the names of men and movements in current thought and action made him appear to himself as a well-meaning ignoramus with two or three fixed ideas. Even McGurk, who made no pretence to either intellect or culture, knew life and men and women, and by the turn of a phrase or an anecdote of the country people from whom he sprang, would strike a light by which Bernard would see himself as no more than a child.

So now Bernard sat lazily listening to their talk. They had come to the subject of gowns: ought they to be introduced into the National University or not? Manders thought they should; that academic costume was essential to a University. Crowley said they shouldn't; that for a new University to adopt old-fashioned trappings that had lost their meaning was ridiculous. McGurk didn't care two hoots either way.

'But we must have something to give the place a University tone,' said Manders. 'Look at the awful mob that come up from the national schools. They're half savages. They call the professors 'teacher', and at lectures they behave like bears or worms according to whether they're afraid of them or not.'

'A gown won't civilise a savage,' said Crowley. But the argument was broken off without reaching any conclusion. Crowley, pulling out his watch, found that he

must rush to catch his train to Kingstown, and the rest thereupon decided to go home also.

Bernard, feeling hot, and with a touch of headache from the close atmosphere of the café, climbed to the top of a Dalkey tram at the corner of Nassau Street, and rode as far as Sidney Parade. There he dismounted and walked back against a rising wind that drove stray rain-drops into his face. By this means he hoped to re-whet his appetite for dinner. When he reached home that meal was just about to be served. He took his place at his father's left hand, facing his mother. Sir Eugene ladled out soup. While they ate, Lady Lascelles gossiped about a Castle function which she had attended the previous night, her husband interposing an occasional dry comment. Bernard said little, a course approved by his father, who had no very high opinion of the notions of youth. Listening to the gossip, his glance wandering from the napery and silver of the table to the Vandyke engravings on the walls, and then to the two starched maids, kept (at a hire of eighteen and sixteen pounds a year) for the sole purpose of conveying food to the mouths of their fellow animals, Bernard, who had just finished reading Mr. Wells's latest novel, the *War in the Air*, wondered how long this easeful life, with its strange anomalies that seemed so natural to other people, was going to endure.

There seemed to be no reason in those days why should not endure for ever.

2

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE at this time consisted of three dispersed buildings. Its centre was on Stephen's Green where the business of administration was carried on, and lectures delivered in the faculty of Arts. Science and Engineering were housed in the buildings of the defunct Royal University at Earlsfort Terrace; and in a dirty, narrow, ill-paved lane called Cecilia Street, in the slums between Dame Street and the river, stood the Medical

School. It was an unwholesome-looking edifice, whose façade, maroon below, and buffy yellow above, bore an inscription proclaiming it as part of the Catholic University, an enterprise which had perished of lack of funds, Government disapproval, and general hopelessness, not very long ago. The building itself would have followed the institution into disruption but for the support of a row of stout oak pillars, which almost blocked up the passage that gave access to the rooms where the 'subjects' for dissection were kept pickling in formalin, and the rabbits and guinea-pigs browsed in blissful unconsciousness of the vivisection table. Even in spite of this reinforcement, from time to time ominous cracks would appear in the walls, which the humorously inclined used to patch over with stamp-paper. The academic arrangements were what might have been expected in such a situation. The lecture rooms were draughty and uncomfortable, and there were no common rooms. There was a small sitting-room for the women students, but the men had to be content with the ten-foot-square hall and the laneway outside.

Not all the medical lectures were given in this salubrious spot. For the convenience of the students of other faculties who took that subject, biology was taught at Stephen's Green. The buildings here (another legacy from the Catholic University) were, like the College as a whole, composite and makeshift. They consisted of two houses, Numbers 85 and 86. The latter, a big stone structure with a recumbent lion over the door, was said to have been built by Buck Whaley for the express purpose of dwarfing Number 85, the house of a rival buck. Next to Number 85 was a barn-like structure of red brick with arched windows, known as the Aula Maxima, which was used as a library and a meeting hall. At the back of the houses was an unkempt garden containing some temporary buildings used as class-rooms, an elm tree with a wooden seat around it, and a pond overpopulated with frogs.

This group of buildings was, as we have said, the centre

of the College, and round it the students built up what University life they could. The societies held their meetings here in a room known as the Old Physics Theatre, which still bore traces of its former scientific associations in its tiered benches, its frieze of names such as Volta, Faraday, and Lavoisier, and a musty collection of zoological specimens distributed between the mantelpiece and a couple of grimy glass cases. What had probably been the drawing-room of Number 85 was used as a concert-room—but not very frequently. Common rooms, however, there were none, unless one counted a chilly apartment looking out on the garden, generally encumbered with stacked bicycles and furnished with a couple of broken chairs and a notice-board, where the rougher class of students passed the intervals between lectures in destructive horseplay.

All this made very unpromising material for those who like Manders, wanted to make the new institution into something like a University. In addition they had to face the hostility of the authorities, who, actively or passively, blocked every student enterprise. It was notorious that many of the professors owed their positions to nepotism and political jobbery. Nothing was to be expected from them. But few even of those not so smirched had the vision to see in the College anything but a setting for their own chairs. The making of the University was therefore left to the students themselves. This great untended herd of youth was a seething incoherence of half-expressed but vigorous thought. Round the fireplace in the halporter's lodge, on the front steps of Number 85 and of the National Library, they talked in groups. Everything in heaven and earth came up for discussion: religion, politics, philosophy, love, art, interspersed with horse-racing, cards, tobacco, athletics, and dirty stories. There was much vague disputation too about a Tradition which was somehow or other to be brought into being. Nobody was quite sure what the tradition was to be, nor how it was to be created, but its necessity was generally admitted;

and several earnest fellows had consecrated themselves its hierophants.

'We ought to be shaping towards that tradition of ours,' one of them would say. 'After all, it isn't buildings that make a college——'

'Just as well,' someone would interpose.

'It isn't buildings. It's the spirit of the place. The—the—the—you know what I mean. Everything that goes to make up a tradition.'

'Yes,' the objector would say. 'All that is quite true. But you can't sit down and make a tradition like a pair of breeches. They come along in course of time on their own account.'

'Yes. But someone must make a beginning, and the sooner the better. We can't really call ourselves a University until we have one——' and so forth, concluding with the inevitable reference to 'Newman's ideals'; the speaker being oblivious of the fact that the obstinate refusal of the College to respond to the least part of his ideals had fairly broken Newman's heart.

Presently the general desire for self-expression found vent in a magazine, a publication as different from any other University magazine as was the institution from any other University, between whose green covers was much prose about that Tradition, much gay and spirited verse, and much brave hope for Ireland in the coming days of Home Rule.

The atmosphere of the College was new and strange to Bernard. In the first place it was democratic: that he had recognised at once. The standards observed at Ashbury and in his own home were here of no account. This reconciled him to much that he disliked. In the second place it was Irish, but this he was longest in finding out. With his upbringing it seemed to him foreign. Like democracy, nationalism here was unconscious and taken for granted. All pervasive, it was imperceptible to stranger eyes. Bernard, in whose mind it was inseparably associated with Felim O'Dwyer's militant logic (poor

O'Dwyer, who was still hacking his way through the Ashburian jungle), had no more cognition of its presence than of the oxygen in the air he breathed. Finally, it was Catholic. But its Catholicism was not like that of Ashbury, the Catholicism of English squires. It was the Catholicism of European democracy. At Ashbury Bernard had learned to regard the faith as a prop to the existing order. Now he discovered that in a world where even reformers were tied hand and foot by political economy it stood almost alone for justice, freedom, and brotherhood.

This was the better side of the College mentality: the side that had moved Bernard to speak so enthusiastical^l to Manders. But, as Manders had pointed out, it h^r its other side too, its narrowness, its obscurantism, ev^{es} its smugness. There was an annual debate in the Litera^y and Historical Society on the question whether Ireland's future lay in agricultural or industrial development, and the subject was also thrashed out eternally on the steps. The agriculturists made their case by comparing the worst features of British and American industrialism with the fanciful paradise of smallholders. 'We don't want any Manchesters or Bradfords over here,' would be the plea.

Bernard would reply that such developments were r^e inseparable from industry.

'How are you going to prevent them, then? Soci^e ism? Thanks. Not for us. We're better off as d are.'

'But if we buy Manchester goods,' Bernard w^u point out, 'we share the responsibility for the condit^{he} in which they're made.'

'Not at all. That's Manchester's affair.'

'That's Pharisaism. If you think factory work tⁿ degrading for Irishmen, you've no right to ask oth people to do it instead.'

'They'd do it in any case,' the agriculturists would say, and tangle up the end of the argument in a skein of evasion.

Then there was a singular hostility to a thing called intellectualism. Intellectualism was as hard for its enemies to define as the Tradition for its friends, and they were generally driven to the resort of naming particular individuals by way of example: these individuals being the half dozen or so Irishmen whose works were making their country illustrious abroad. The protagonist of this campaign was a man called Ignatius Lynch, a clever fluent talker and writer, as cocksure as Lord Macaulay, but a pleasant fellow withal. He regarded himself as the voice of Common Sense and the ne plus ultra of progress. Such old ideas as he had outgrown were foolish and out of date; such new ones as he was not yet disposed to accept were fads. When he mentioned the Intellectuals it was in a tone which seemed to imply that superior brains were a disability which deprived their possessors' opinions of all value. Bernard once politely asked Lynch if he believed this. It was in the course of a discussion on the steps in which Lynch had been maintaining that the Intellectuals were the most insidious of the enemies of democracy in Ireland.

'No, sir,' replied Lynch smoothly. 'I wasn't talking of intellect, but of Intellectualism.'

'Well, what *is* intellectualism?' asked Bernard.

'You know very well,' replied Lynch.

'All the same, a definition would do us no harm,' suggested Manders.

'Quite right,' put in another man named Conachy, tapping a cigarette judicially on his case. 'Just as well to know where we are, you know,' he added. He was a quiet tactful person, with a long solemn face like a horse. Tho prided himself on his faculty of looking at both sides of a question.

'Well, if you ask me,' said Lynch, 'I suppose the first thing about the Intellectuals is that they're always trying to be different from other people.'

Bernard smiled at this echo of old Ashbury.

'They despise the common herd,' went on Lynch, 'and

they're out to destroy everything that the people believe in. When they talk of liberty and progress they don't mean what the people mean. They mean fads, or else abominations—like vegetarianism, and antivaccinationism, and votes for women,—with its inevitable corollary of free divorce.'

'That's it,' said a shock-headed fellow called Leeds, spitting forcibly into the gutter ten feet away. 'That's it. They go in for a lot of fine talk, but it all boils down to women in the end.'

'Well, sure they're only human,' said McGurk, with a wink around; at which Conachy, who was actually a most exemplary young man, did his best to look very knowing.

'None of this carries us very far though,' said Crowley. 'Are we to take it that an intellectual is simply a man who eats cabbages instead of cows, and doesn't believe in wedding-rings or the infallibility of Jenner?'

'He's got you there, Lynch,' put in Conachy. 'Vaccination was a fad in its day, you know.'

'I'm not going to be led off by a red herring,' said Lynch. 'I wasn't talking about particular opinions. I'm trying to describe a state of mind. I said that's the sort of thing the intellectuals mean when they talk about liberty and progress. Progress for them means pushing these fads on the people, and liberty means opportunity to push them. Look at the Abbey. It's supposed to be the National Theatre, but the intellectuals have monopolised it with plays on such pleasant subjects as parricide and adultery, and squawk about liberty when they call in the police to put down the expressed disapproval of the people.'

Here Crowley, Manders, and Bernard all began to reply at once, each to that part of the harangue which annoyed him most, while Leeds, and a dark-haired Munsterman who had been silent hitherto, joined in on behalf of Lynch. In the ensuing altercation the thread of Lynch's discourse was lost in a tangle that at last resolved itself into an argument about the Shadow of the Glen.

Lynch averred that the play was a libel on Ireland, and on Irish women in particular. Leeds declared, with an expectoration, that it was a bloody scandal. The Munsterman stoutly asserted that 'things like that' never happen in Ireland.

'Well, hardly ever,' suggested Crowley.

'I'm a great believer in statistics,' said Manders, taking out a bulging pocket-book and extracting a sheet of paper. 'I've been involved in this sort of argument before, so— Here we are. Number of illegitimate children born in Ireland in the last census year was two thousand three hundred and one. And that takes no account of the number of people who enjoyed themselves without increasing the species.'

'I'll bet ye got that out o' some English book,' said Leeds.

'The official census returns,' said Manders.

'Then it's all lies,' declared Leeds.

'Ah, dry up, Leeds' said Crowley. 'Even the English couldn't fake that sort of statistics.'

'Anyway,' said Lynch, 'it's a small figure compared with other countries, and what this play suggests is that Irish wives are always ready to run away from their husbands.'

Manders looked unutterable contempt at the speaker. 'It suggests nothing of the sort,' he said. 'It tells the story of one particular wife who did it.'

'But the effect', said Lynch, 'is to give a false impression of Irish life.'

At this Manders gave a gesture and an ejaculation expressive of common sense tried beyond its patience.

'My dear Lynch, it isn't a playwright's job to give impressions of a country—as if he was a bally lantern lecturer or Cook's guide. His business is humanity, which is the same the whole world over. When you go to see Hamlet you don't worry whether it's a true impression of Danish life. You don't think of the people in it as Danes at all, but as men and women. The story might take place anywhere. Why can't you feel the same

about an Irish play? I'll tell you why. It's because you've a provincial mind. That's what's wrong with all you Nationalists: you're hopelessly provincial.'

'I suppose that's one of these paradoxes,' Lynch scoffed uneasily.

'It's a fact. You don't think of Ireland as a nation, where anything might happen, but as a county, where nothing goes on but local colour. If you have your way, and Irish artists are to be debarred from treating any human theme, all the political institutions you can set up won't make this country a nation.'

Lynch was for a moment at a loss for an answer, but Leeds took up the cudgels instead.

'I don't care what you say,' he declared. 'The play's a bloody insult to the country.'

'That's right,' said the Munsterman. 'It's a libel on the mother of every man here.'

'But look here, Manders,' said Lynch. 'You'll admit that Ireland is exceptional in this matter.'

'I admit that the illegitimacy statistics are comparatively low.'

'Well, isn't that because our women are chaste?'

'Not at all. It might be because the priests make them marry when consequences become inevitable. Or it might be due to the climate.'

'Or the fear of hell,' suggested Bernard.

'Or the low vitality of the race,' said Crowley.

'Or mere lack of enterprise,' added Conachy.

'Rot' said Leeds. 'It's because our women are chaste.'

'Ah, chaste me neck,' said McGurk. 'I never had any difficulty with them.'

At this Lynch and his supporters walked off in disgust, and the colloquy terminated.

3

THE gas flared yellow in the dissecting-room. The air was hot and heavy with mingled odours: formalin, tobacco, and the faint but recognisable halitus of cadavera.

Bernard, perched on a high stool, was working at the superficial fascia of Scarpa's triangle under the direction of Crowley who read out the instructions from a big anatomy resting against the subject's knee.

'Let's chuck it,' said Crowley suddenly. 'We've done enough for to-day.'

Bernard ceased working and began to clean his instruments, turning round on his stool at the same time to view the crowded room. Only about half the population was working. The rest stood about, chatting and smoking or reading the evening paper. The atmosphere of this chamber of death was distinctly hilarious.

The red-haired man at the left upper limb told his dark-haired partner a dirty story. The dark-haired man capped it with another.

'Those are as old as sin,' said Crowley. 'Did you ever hear this one?'

Crowley's effort was greeted with acclamation.

'You first-years do talk unadulterated filth,' said the man at the head-and-neck. 'You'll be tired of it by the time you get your second.'

A man from a neighbouring table strolled over.

'Crowley got some new ones?' he inquired.

Crowley obliged with another. His hearers roared with laughter, thereby attracting others. The man at the head-and-neck threw down his scalpel in disgust and went away for a smoke. Bernard felt a little ashamed of himself for not following; but then Crowley was his friend.

The dark-haired man at the upper limb recited a limerick. Bernard felt impelled to recite another, and then Crowley dispersed the company with a perfectly outrageous one.

'Come and have a game of billiards,' he said to Bernard after that.

They washed their hands in a good lather of carbolic soap and went out from the school into the darkling streets.

'I feel like a drink after that atmosphere,' said Crowley as they passed a public-house.

Bernard was no teetotaller, but he had never yet entered a public-house. It felt like taking a new step in life to do so now.

'Nothing like experience,' he told himself as they sat at the counter drinking whiskey and soda.

'Telegraph, Herrdled or Mayul!' shrieked a newsboy through the spring door.

'Mail,' said Crowley producing a penny. He plunged straight into the racing column. 'Hurray!' he cried, 'Salted Almond wins.'

'Got something on him?'

'Drew him in a sweep at the Arcade last night. . . . Four quid at least. . . . Come along and collect the dibs. We'll make a night of it.'

They went out into the street, Bernard feeling distinctly exhilarated by his drink. There was a crowd of students and others, McGurk amongst them, in the billiard saloon. Crowley was greeted with a howl of 'Lucky dog!' and the stake-holder, a sporting-looking man smoking a cheroot, handed him over his winnings.

'Come on, boys, drinks all round,' said Crowley, and half a score of them tumbled out to the nearest public-house.

'What about a good dinner?' said Crowley, drawing Bernard and McGurk aside from the throng.

'I'm on,' said Bernard, draining his glass.

'Where'll we go?'

'Jammets,' suggested Bernard.

'None o' your bloody swank,' said McGurk. 'Becky's for me.'

'It's a *dinner* I'm inviting you to,' said Crowley. 'I suggest the Green Bank.'

'Right you are, old man,' said McGurk, whiskily genial.

The drinkers returned in a noisy crowd to the billiard saloon; and Bernard, Crowley and McGurk, after a stroll up and down Grafton Street 'to get an appetite', went

to the Green Bank and ordered dinner. They had lentil soup, turbot, roast mutton, and sweet omelette, with a bottle of sparkling Moselle, and they wound up with coffee, Benedictine, and cigars. Crowley and McGurk were fairly seasoned drinkers, but Bernard in a couple of hours had taken three times as much alcohol as he had ever taken in a day before, so that by the end of the meal his head was swimming and his speech loud and incoherent. Crowley now proposed that they should adjourn to the Hippodrome, but McGurk objected that he had seen the show there already, and suggested the Empire instead. Crowley, however, had been to the Empire the previous night. The programme was rotten, anyway, he said. Why not try the Picture House for a change?

The Picture House was a new enterprise recently started in Sackville Street for the exhibition of moving pictures. It gave a continuous programme of seven or eight films, so that one could drop in at any time. Crowley's suggestion having been agreed to, the three young men set off down D'Olier Street. Bernard by this time was in that state of detachment from the world, that condition of feeling as if one were looking out at life from a concrete chamber through a thick glass window, which marks the beginnings of alcoholic intoxication. He seemed to walk by no volition of his own, and Crowley almost supported him to the crimson plush seat in the picture house, into which he sank with a sigh of relief. Two pictures had flickered through their course before he was able to collect his wits sufficiently to understand what they were about. The next was an instructive film which showed how sardines are canned. It was followed by an uproarious comedy in which people chased each other in and out of houses, over fields and hedges, and through village streets, knocked each other down, tumbled over buckets and down stairs, upset apple-carts and smashed china stalls. Finally the heroine had her skirt torn off in the rumpus, and was left dancing in dismay and her knickers when the reel ran out. At this McGurk

howled with laughter, and Crowley grinned appreciatively, but Bernard was still modest enough to be rather shocked. A society drama of love and jealousy followed, and the programme ended for the evening.

'I say, boys,' said Crowley, as they emerged into the cool air of the street, 'the night's still young. Let's go down town.'

'Right you are,' said McGurk, and Bernard, not guessing his meaning, and thinking that a walk would sober him, also agreed.

They strolled down Earl Street and passed by Amiens Street into the disreputable labyrinth of ways beyond. Bernard wondered at his friends' choice, but said nothing. A brazen slatternly female hailed them from a doorway, but they took no notice and passed on. Gaunt dark houses with grimy broken windows towered cliff-like over the narrow street. Here and there were occasional rifts in the line where a house had collapsed into a heap of rubbish. Through the upper windows of a crumbling roofless framework the inscrutable face of the moon could be seen. This street was silent and deserted, but in an upper story a child was wailing, and from the distance drunken shouts could be heard. Their feet stumbling against broken bricks and tin cans, the three young men strode on. Turning a corner they came upon a small crowd gathered round a brightly lit window and door.

'Here we are again!' said McGurk cheerfully.

'You're not going in there?' remonstrated Bernard nervously.

'What do you think?' said McGurk.

'Non cuivis est adire Corinthum,' said Crowley.

'So this . . . ?' said Bernard, and paused inquiringly.

' . . . Is, if not a temple, at least a shrine of the Cyprian goddess,' said Crowley with perfect suavity.

A boldly handsome but untidy young woman approached the young men.

'Well, duckies' she said.

'The pass-word,' said Crowley. 'The mystic symbol

of the Corybantic priestesses of the Western World. . . . It's a warm night,' he added, turning to the girl.

'Good night, boys, I'm off,' said Bernard to his friends.

'Hold on, ye bloody fool,' said McGurk, starting after him. He was restrained by Crowley.

'Let him alone,' said the latter. 'He's still *virgo intactus*.'

Bernard sped away on the wings of disgust.

'Hould that fella!' shrieked a voice from the doorway.

Hot with shame he broke into a trot, heedless of his direction. After a few minutes he suddenly realised that he was losing his way. Tired and angry he prowled about the ghostly monotonous streets searching for a landmark. All inadvertently in the end he struck upon Earl Street, and within half an hour he was resting his throbbing head on the cool softness of his pillow at home.

4

'ARE you anyway friendly with Jack Harvey?' Lady Lascelles asked of her son one day.

'No. I just know him to nod to.'

'That's a pity. His mother and I are very old friends, and he's such a nice boy.'

'That's exactly why he doesn't appeal to me.'

'Such a thing to say!'

'I mean it. Nice people always bore me.'

'Now, Bernard, if you're going with boys who are *not* nice it's my duty as your mother to warn you that bad companions are the ruin of many a young man.'

'I didn't mean what you think at all. "Nice" is a confusing word. It might mean anything. I'll make friends with him if you like.'

'Do. I'm sure you'll like him.'

Bernard thought otherwise, but said nothing. Having lost his father while still a child, Jack Harvey had been entirely brought up by his mother, who had shaped him on the same system and to the same pattern as her daughters. This training showed itself in his every word

and action. He was the most ladylike young man that ever was seen. He spoke with a simper. His walk was mincing. His way of smoking a cigarette made one think that his mother must have taught him that accomplishment also. The curious thing was that, with all this, neither his character nor his appearance was feminine. He was six feet tall and broad in proportion, and had sound manly qualities at bottom. He received Bernard's friendly advances with a lambent smile, and said he hoped they would soon be great chums (a word that made Bernard shudder).

'Our mothers have always been great old cronies, you know,' he added.

'Drop in to see us some Tuesday evening,' he said at a later stage of their acquaintance. 'We're always at home then and we generally have a few friends in. Music and that sort of thing, you know. Hymn books supplied.' (This last was his idea of a joke.)

The following Tuesday, having nothing else to do, Bernard decided to 'drop in' as invited, and brought his mother with him.

Mrs. Harvey had fallen on evil days since we last saw her disseminating scandal in Merrion Square. Her husband, the fashionable oculist, had died within a year of that incident, leaving her, with her son and three daughters, almost penniless. Many women would have succumbed to such a strain, but Mrs. Harvey was cast in heroic mould. She moved as much of her furniture and silver as she was not compelled to sell into a little house on the North Circular Road and kept hens and lodgers. By careful management and nobody knows what shifts and manœuvres she contrived to get her children the best education known to her, while she herself kept up as much of her pristine state as her straitened fortunes would allow. She kept her Tuesday at home just as in former days, and with jest and scandal entertained those of her old friends who remained true to her. She had but one servant, but her she trained to the duties of cook, parlour-

maid, poultry keeper and lady's maid, and though she mercilessly overworked and underpaid her yet managed to convey to the girl the conviction that she was her benefactress and to win and keep her respect and affection. Through trouble and poverty she smiled and flounced her way. There was something almost of nobility in this tenacious narrow-minded old snob.

Bernard and his mother were admitted by the maid-of-all-work, starched and self-conscious for the occasion. Bernard hung up his hat and coat in the miniature hall, and then the maid opened the drawing-room door, ceremoniously announcing :

'Lady Lascelles. Mr. Bernard Lascelles.'

The two guests stood for a moment, not knowing how to proceed, for the tiny room, already crowded with furniture designed for the house on Merrion Square, seemed to be packed with people. But almost immediately their hostess came sailing towards them through the press, her face beaming, and her arms extended in welcome. She kissed Lady Lascelles rapturously for the benefit of the humbler local guests, and shook hands heartily with Bernard. Jack then came forward, and, after introducing Bernard formally to one or two people, brought him over to renew his acquaintance with his sisters, whom Bernard had not seen since their childhood. The eldest girl, Susan, was very tall, very plain, and very pimply, and had little to say ; but Molly, the second girl, who was plump and fairly pretty, plunged into conversation at once, so that Bernard's introduction to the youngest sister, Mabel, a shy fair-haired girl of sixteen, was of a perfunctory nature. Molly was a jolly girl whose conversation consisted almost entirely of a string of funny stories. Bernard found them amusing at first, but was beginning to feel boredom approaching when Mrs. Harvey commanded Molly to sing. Molly, nothing loath, obeyed at once and sang in the conventional humorous way 'Are you right there, Michael?' and on being encored, an English music-hall comic ditty. While the songs were

in progress Mabel slipped into the chair beside Bernard vacated by her sister, and as the applause died away turned to talk to him. She was a pretty child, with deep brown eyes and golden hair tied back by a big blue bow at her neck. At the first word she uttered she suddenly became shy and faltered, while her cheeks became flooded with pink blushes. Bernard tactfully took up a commonplace topic.

'Your sister sings very well,' he said.

'Do you think so?' said Mabel, still a little timid. Then abruptly her shyness seemed to slip away from her. 'No, you don't,' she went on. 'You only said that to be polite.'

'Well, perhaps I did,' Bernard admitted.

'We've none of us got any talents really,' said Mabel, 'but mother makes us perform whether we like it or not. She'll probably call on me in a minute, and I daren't refuse. Susan's the bravest of us. She used to have to play the piano, but last year she struck, and that's finished, thank goodness.'

'Mabel, won't you sing something now?' came Mrs. Harvey's voice across the room.

Mabel made a little face at Bernard and went to the piano. She sang 'Robin Adair' with deep expression and a thin voice, and gave 'Beautiful Garden of Roses' as an encore. After that a visitor played Dvorak's 'Humoreske' jerkily on the violin, and then Jack Harvey, in a fine bass voice that contrasted strangely with his general manner, sang 'My Old Shako,' and 'Just before the Battle, Mother,' which last brought tears to Mrs. Harvey's eyes and necessitated the calling in of Mary Ann and her despatch to the upper regions for a fresh pocket-handkerchief.

Then tea was served, and Lady Lascelles came over to Molly and said:

'Many happy returns. I've just heard it's your birthday,' and a golden present found its way into Molly's hand.

Meanwhile Bernard was buttonholed by Mrs. Harvey

and compelled to sit beside her and listen to a genteel account of herself and her family. He learned that his mother and Mrs. Harvey had been oh such friends at school and that both ladies hoped their sons would be the same. Jack was such a good boy. So kind to his mother and sisters.

'Be kind to your mother always, Bernard,' Mrs. Harvey admonished him. 'If you knew what your mother had to suffer to bring you into the world you'd think no sacrifice too great to please her.'

Bernard, as a medical student, thought he knew as much on this subject as Mrs. Harvey, but made no comment.

'The girls are so good to me too,' said Mrs. Harvey. 'They're all in good positions—except Mabel, of course—and they give me every penny they earn.'

So they did—under protest. Presently, after a few kindly inquiries about his studies and hobbies, Mrs. Harvey moved over to chat with a mild little woman near by, and her chair was promptly captured by Molly, who began another string of comic stories. Bernard, listening with one ear, could hear Mrs. Harvey, with the other, busily impressing her guest.

'They've all secured splendid positions. Susan has just been engaged as lady companion to Lady Lifford, and Molly has a Government appointment. Do you know Lady Lifford, by the way? She's some sort of connection of ours.'

Thus the good lady rambled on, serenely and magnificently lying: for Susan was simply going as governess to Lady Lifford's children, and Molly was a typist in the Custom House.

Bernard breathed a sigh of relief as he and his mother stepped into the open air, very refreshing after the close little sitting-room of the Harveys.

'It's awfully funny,' said Lady Lascelles as they drove home. 'But whenever I call on Mrs. Harvey it's the birthday of one or another of the family. It's a curious coincidence, isn't it?'

'Very curious,' said Bernard.

5

BERNARD remained in love with Maud, with intervals of forgetfulness, for nearly four months. Then he met Muriel.

It was at a meeting of the Literary and Historical Society that he saw her first, as a clear and vivid profile amid the dowdy mass of girls crowded on the bank of benches at the distant end of the Old Physics Theatre. She was smiling at some witticism by the speaker—a sparkling vivacious smile that showed a flash of white teeth. Bernard's heart missed a beat. Who was she? Why had he never noticed her before? Surely no lovelier vision had ever been vouchsafed to mortal eye.

While he was in this tumult of emotion the speaker sat down, and the chairman called his own name. Bernard rose and for a moment stood mute. His mind was a perfect blank. He had not the remotest idea what the debate was about. He cleared his throat nervously, conscious that a hundred pairs of eyes were upon him. Hers too. He mustn't make a fool of himself. Again he cleared his throat.

'Mr. Chairman, ladies, and gentlemen——'

It was no use. His memory obstinately refused to work. Fortunately Crowley was sitting just in front of him. He leaned over and whispered: 'I say, what the dickens are we supposed to be discussing?'

Crowley stared at him. 'Classics *v.* Science, you ass.'

This left Bernard little better off. He had had something to say, but he had forgotten it, and after a blundering speech he sat down very hot and red in the face. When the meeting was over, the cause of his disaster left under the escort of a man in his final law year, while poor Bernard went home devoured with jealousy. He passed a miserable week-end, picturing her, of course, perpetually in the company of his rival, and wondering how he could get to know her. On Monday, after biology, he cut the subsequent lecture at Cecilia Street to linger on at Stephen's

Green in the hope of seeing her, but without success. Not till Thursday were his ardours gratified, when he caught a fleeting glimpse of her on the way to one of the garden class-rooms. She was walking with one of the MacInerney girls, whom he had known since childhood, and from whom he was able later on to inquire her name with a fair assumption of casualness.

'I suppose you want an introduction?' Miss MacInerney diagnosed.

Bernard blushed.

'All right,' said Miss MacInerney; and soon afterwards, at a chance meeting in the hall, the thing was accomplished.

Bernard thrilled in his every fibre at the touch of the neatly gloved hand of his lady. Meeting her again in Grafton Street on the following day, he was nearly overcome with emotion. His knees shook beneath him, and the veins pulsed at his temples. Not a word had he to say, so that he had to let her go by after a few conventional remarks, while his whole being hungered to keep her. The same thing happened over and over again for quite a long time. He worshipped Muriel like a goddess. He lay awake half the night thinking of her, and neglected his work and his meals. But in her presence he became too helpless to take a step towards wooing her.

At last, at a College dance just before Christmas, he ventured so far as to ask her for six dances, and, to his astonishment, she granted them. During the last of them, which they sat out, he took the still more daring step of inviting her to tea and pictures on a future date. Again his suit prospered, and for quite a month, living on such titbits as these, he was the happiest young man in the world.

Then came the day of their first walk into the country. It was a bright crisp Sunday in February, but things went wrong from the start. Somehow or other Muriel did not seem so pretty as usual when he met her. Perhaps her complexion was better suited by the atmosphere of

picture houses and ballrooms than by mountain air. Their conversation hung fire a little at the beginning, and when at last it got under way it seemed strained and artificial. Presently it languished, and died, a lingering painful death. By the time they had reached the little hillside tea-room which was their destination silence had descended on them. The chatter incidental to lunch saved their faces temporarily, but the walk home afterwards was a dreadful ordeal. They parted at last, both of them bored to the utmost limit of endurance, and the affair was at an end.

This was the first of a series of similar experiences, all equally ardent, equally short-lived, and equally innocent. Romance and passion were scarcely, if at all, associated in Bernard's mind. He had learnt of the facts of life in what is probably the second-best way. The best way, father of sons, if you can do it, is the straight answer to the straight question. Ledbury's way is not a nice way, but it is preferable to the nauseous romantic way, the sham poetic way advocated by some reformers. At least it prevents the subject from looming too large in the young imagination, and thus cramping and distorting the growth of the mind. The result in Bernard's case was that his loves were all glamour and poetry, unalloyed with passion. Of course he experienced passion too, and suffered damnably; but it was unconnected with any particular woman, and it sullied no thought which he directed towards the many damsels who inspired his devotion. His instincts, quite apart from the Church's teaching, were monogamic. He took it for granted that some day he would marry a beautiful and accomplished girl and have six or seven children. She would be a virgin, and so, in honour and reason, must he. Each time his heart was smitten, here he told himself, was the predestined she: and wooed, and sometimes partly won, with full matrimonial intent.

Unfortunately he had an unhappy knack of falling in love with the wrong sort of girl. He would fall in love

with a pretty face, or an attractive arrangement of back hair. He would worship for weeks at the shrine of some divinity who had no more claim on his attention than ringlets or a tiptilted nose. So that, if he had had the means, he might have contracted a dozen unhappy marriages before he was twenty. Not having them, he had time to realise that the possessors of curls and pretty features had their flaws and shortcomings, and so made his escape.

Presently he discovered that women had other physical beauties besides their faces. In August he went with the family to Newcastle, Co. Down. Staying at the same hotel was a distant acquaintance of Lady Lascelles, a Mrs. Heuston Harrington, with her daughter Dora. The latter was so plain that Bernard, hovering between two ravishing young ladies he had met on the beach, at first scarcely noticed her existence. Then one day, sitting at tea on the lawn before the hotel, he saw her start out for a drive on an outside car with her mother. It was the time of the hobble skirt, a garment in which it was difficult to mount such an equipage with any modesty. Bernard had a brief vision of calf and ankle that set him thrilling with all sorts of new emotions and desires. Next day he saw her going down to bathe, and at once lost his heart to the beauty of her figure. He had never noticed a girl's figure before. Now, as he watched Dora picking her way over the shingle, his other loves rose to memory, looking dowdy and mean. Dora was beauty's self.

That afternoon he demanded of Alice that she should ask Miss Heuston Harrington to join with her, Eugene, and himself in a game of golf.

'Why this sudden interest?' asked Alice, who was now a pert miss, just sixteen.

Bernard blushed.

'You idiot!' said Alice. 'She isn't even pretty. Never mind. I'll get her for you.'

And she did.

The introduction provoked a recrudescence of the

symptoms which Muriel had evoked in former days. Next morning they met by appointment on the golf links. A foursome was arranged with Alice and Eugene; and Bernard noticed with joy that she showed signs of satisfaction when it was decided that she should be his partner. His manœuvres to secure her in subsequent matches were pathetically ingenious and transparently fraudulent, for Bernard was so much better a player than Eugene, and Dora was so much better than Alice, that the partnership between Bernard and his heart's desire was manifestly unfair. When his diplomacy failed poor Alice had to put up with a silent furious partner jealously glaring across the links to where Eugene seemed to be having extraordinarily intimate talks with the fair one. His golf too seemed to go to pieces on these occasions, so that Alice and he were usually beaten ten up and eight to play, when he went through feverish manœuvres to prevent the playing of the bye.

He never succeeded in making love to Dora. She seldom permitted him to be alone with her, but sometimes they conversed together in the garden in full view of the residents of the hotel. They talked about art and books and theatres and intellectual things generally, coldly and impersonally, and all the time Bernard was wishing he was rambling the country with her and helping her over streams and stiles.

6

WHEN the College reopened in October, the first person whom Bernard encountered in the grimy hall at Cecilia Street was Felim O'Dwyer.

'Hello,' he said. 'You taking up medicine?'

'Looks like it, doesn't it?' said O'Dwyer. 'I've just been signing on for dissection. What way are you going?'

Finding that their ways lay together as far as Grafton Street, they set off up Crow Street.

'What an awful hole that is,' said O'Dwyer. 'I was

never very keen on becoming a doctor. But that place puts me off more than ever.'

'Why have you taken the thing up then?' asked Bernard.

'I've a Roman father. I wanted to be a barrister, but he wouldn't have it. Said I'd only be a briefless dependant on him when I ought to be a staff to his old age.'

'But why should you be briefless?' Bernard asked.

'Oh, he was probably right there,' replied O'Dwyer. 'There are too many barristers in the country already, and he'll be able to do more for me in his own profession.'

'It's overcrowded too,' said Bernard. 'And have you seen the herd that are starting this year?'

'I have. You know, this stunt of making every available man a doctor is going to be the ruin of this unfortunate country,' went on O'Dwyer. 'It's rotten economics. We can't live by curing one another's diseases. In Ireland every farmer and business man puts one son into the Church, another into medicine, and hands the farm or the business over to the third—usually the fool of the family. Then the people who are already doctors won't let their sons sink any lower and make doctors or lawyers of them all. Result—an Irish doctor on every ship that sails the seas and in every town in England, while Ireland goes steadily downhill for lack of brains and business ability.'

'I thought', said Bernard with a smile, 'that it was British government that was Ireland's ruin.'

'So it is. It's British government that creates the conditions that lead to this.'

'You're a monomaniac, O'Dwyer,' said Bernard.

'Maybe so. But even a monomaniac may speak the truth.'

They had now reached the corner of Grafton Street, and Bernard asked O'Dwyer, if he had no particular reason for going home, to take tea with him at the Cairo. O'Dwyer accepted the invitation. When they reached the smoking-room Bernard, looking around to find if any

of his friends were present, was surprised to see the saturnine face of Fergus Moore in a far corner. Moore recognised him at once, and by a gesture invited him to his table.

'What are you doing in Dublin?' asked Bernard, after he had introduced O'Dwyer.

'I'm fed up with Oxford,' said Moore. 'I'm going to take my higher degree over here.'

'Trinity?'

'No. The National.'

'Good. We're Nationals too. But what's wrong with Oxford?'

'Oh, it's not Oxford in particular. It's England in general I can't stand. The English are a God-damned people.'

'Hear, hear!' said O'Dwyer.

'What's wrong with them?' asked Bernard.

'What isn't?' responded Moore. 'Everything's wrong with them. They're a race of greedy, grabbing, self-satisfied, canting pharisees.'

'That's right,' said O'Dwyer. 'Look at their history. They've built up the biggest Empire the world has ever seen by enslaving weaker races, grabbing their land, and extirpating the people. Yet they're never done talking about their love of freedom and fair play.'

'Other nations conquer and grab,' said Moore, 'but they do it in a proper blackguardly way. The English conquer and plunder you for your own good, and expect gratitude and loyalty in return.'

'That's it,' said O'Dwyer. 'The Russians don't expect loyalty from the Poles, but the English expect it from us.'

'They never can see any point of view but their own,' said Moore.

'They're so self-satisfied that satire doesn't hurt them,' said O'Dwyer.

'Have you been following this House of Lords controversy?' asked Moore of Bernard.

‘Not very closely,’ Bernard confessed.

‘That’s what has finally sickened me of the island,’ Moore answered. ‘If the Tories would only put up a good rascally defence of the Lords as an institution that safeguards their lands and money and privileges and keeps the democracy in its place, I could have some respect for them. But instead of that they talk as if it was the defender of the liberties of the people against the tyranny of their own elected representatives.’

‘But that’s only the Tories,’ Bernard objected.

‘I know. But think of a great political party talking cant like that—and getting away with it. Fancy ordinary working-class and middle-class electors in this twentieth century voting for a hereditary second chamber with an absolute power of veto, and still thinking of themselves as a sturdy liberty-loving people with a special gift of common sense. Then these fellows who talk of dying in the last ditch, knowing perfectly well that they haven’t the remotest intention of dying anywhere but in their beds, full of years and birthday honours—wouldn’t the whole thing make you sick?’

‘It’s not much good feeling sick at things,’ said Bernard, ‘if you aren’t prepared to try and set them right. Is your philosophy of life still the same as it used to be?’

‘Much the same. In theory I’m a revolutionary, but in practice I’m a hedonist. After all, what’s the use of kicking up a dust about remote political rights and liberties when we sit down under infinitely more real tyrannies in our own homes?’

‘What tyrannies?’ asked O’Dwyer.

‘Marriage, parentage, and all the rest of it.’

‘Do you want to abolish marriage?’

‘Not at all. I want to make it free and decent.’

The two younger men looked at Moore uneasily.

‘Look at the mess we’ve made of it,’ he went on. ‘Nature gives us an appetite that never lets us alone until we gratify it; and law and religion forbid us to gratify it except on the condition that we swear eternal fidelity

to one woman, whom we must support for the rest of her life no matter how objectionable she may turn out to be. The whole thing is unnatural, unreasonable, and impossible. Every prostitute in our streets shows it up for a sham.'

'Well, if you abolish marriage, or relax it appreciably,' said Bernard, 'what's to become of the children?'

'That difficulty', replied Moore, 'isn't a question of sex, but of economics. It wouldn't arise under a decent economic system.'

'Neither would most of the others,' said Bernard. 'If economics didn't prevent us marrying until ten years after nature meant us to, there wouldn't be much of a sex problem.'

'Wouldn't there?' said Moore. 'What about all the young people who'd marry in haste and repent at leisure? You might get rid of prostitution, but there'd be a good deal of infidelity instead.'

'Perhaps. But, after all, the majority of healthy-minded people will always be content with monogamy. You can't legislate for exceptions. Besides, even an increase in conjugal infidelity is better than prostitution. I've really only one fixed belief in this matter, and that is that the purpose of sex is to produce children; therefore man's personal comfort must come secondary to the welfare of the children. Children require family life. Therefore, to hell with Free Love.'

'Family life', said Moore, 'is all very well for creature comforts, but it's ruinous to the mind.'

'The mind will get over that,' said Bernard. 'But the body won't get over neglect. Look at me. I was brought up to be a Tory Imperialist and Capitalist, and you see before you a Cosmopolitan Socialist.'

'Here's to family life,' said O'Dwyer, finishing his tea.

'There was a young fellow called Lascel
Deserted the fold of the Castle,
While Fergus O'Moore
Succumbed to the lure
Of Omar, wine, women, and wassail.

'Why don't you clap?' he asked. 'That was extempore.'

'I hate the way you twist my name to suit your beastly verses,' said Bernard.

'Poetic licence,' said O'Dwyer.

'Licence verging on obsession,' retorted Bernard.

'Talking of poetry,' said Moore, 'do you see that gentleman with the rapt expression in the middle distance.'

Bernard and O'Dwyer, turning, noticed a cadaverous-looking person sitting by himself at a table not far away, and reading a book while he sipped coffee.

'That's Austin Mallow,' said Moore. 'One of the poets of this alleged Renaissance of ours. I'm told he has mystic powers in an extraordinary degree.'

'What are they?' asked O'Dwyer.

'Better ask the critics that,' said Moore.

'I wonder,' said Bernard, 'if he's any relation to a fellow I knew at Ashbury.'

'Yes. His brother Brian was there, I believe.'

At this moment the poet became conscious of their attention, and looked up. Recognising Moore, he smiled. Then, finishing off his coffee, he came over.

'I must thank you for that review,' he said to Moore. 'I didn't know you liked my stuff.'

'Well, to tell you the truth, I don't even understand it,' replied Moore. 'But as a fellow-Irishman I thought I ought to boost you in foreign parts.'

Austin Mallow smiled tolerantly. He was a striking contrast to his burly brother, being very lean, with stooping shoulders, hollow cheeks, and unnaturally bright eyes. Moore introduced his two friends.

'Mr. Mallow and Mr. O'Dwyer,' said Moore, 'you are each meeting a fellow-poet.'

The poets bowed to each other.

'If you can call O'Dwyer a poet at all,' interjected Bernard.

O'Dwyer cast a look of scorn at Bernard.

'Pooh! You've no sense of humour,' he said, 'or criticism either. You always resent the impertinence of my verses, while you ought to be admiring the mind of the person who made them.'

'How old are you, O'Dwyer?' said Bernard.

'Eighteen.'

'If you're not careful you'll develop the artistic temperament.'

'Not I. I can express all I think.'

'A grave deficiency,' said Austin.

'Not if you think the things I think.'

'Personally,' said Austin, 'I think a lot more than I can express.'

'That doesn't prove that your thoughts are anything wonderful. It merely means that your powers of expression are deficient.'

'Nothing of the sort,' said Austin dogmatically.

'There are thoughts that cannot possibly be put into words. Words are finite and thoughts infinite.'

'If I ever thought anything I couldn't express I'd be afraid,' said O'Dwyer.

'Of what?'

'Lunacy.'

'To the common mind inspiration is often mistaken for lunacy.'

'Yes. And I've heard of lunacy being mistaken for inspiration.'

'I don't see the point of that remark,' said Austin, calm but furious.

'Well, have a cigarette,' said Moore, and so diverted the conversation to safer courses.

When Austin presently departed, O'Dwyer asked:

'Has that fellow a slate loose?'

'I often think so,' said Moore. 'He's one of these mystics. And in politics he's a martyromaniac.'

'What's that?'

'Thinks that the only way to redeem Ireland from her present slough of respectability is to get a half-dozen

heroes to attack the Castle with their naked fists and get hanged. Robert Emmet stunt, you know. "One man must die for the people."

'What infernal rubbish,' said Bernard.

'Not so hasty,' said O'Dwyer. 'It's not my line, but there's something to be said for it all the same.'

'Well,' said Moore, 'I must say I see very little sense in dying for this tuppenny-hapenny country. Her case is hopeless. She's never made an effort that didn't fail, mainly owing to her own stupidity. Her finest men have wasted themselves in useless endeavour, and to-day, after seven centuries of bondage, she's as far from freedom as ever. The fact is, the country's in a vicious circle of hopelessness. She can't be free till she's educated, and she can't be educated till she's free.'

'I've eliminated the word "can't" from my vocabulary,' said O'Dwyer. 'All things are possible.'

'There's no need for these heroics now,' said Bernard, 'Home Rule is coming.'

'Is it?' said O'Dwyer contemptuously.

'The Liberals are pledged to introduce a Bill as soon as the Lords' veto is out of the way.'

'That doesn't mean much,' said O'Dwyer. 'Isn't the history of Ireland littered with broken English pledges?'

Being ignorant of Irish history, Bernard had no reply to this.

'Those days are past,' he suggested.

'Yes. But not done with.'

'The modern Liberal spirit has changed everything.'

'Only the phrases. Not the realities. I dare say they'll bring in their Bill. If they do, they won't pass it. If they pass it, they won't put it into operation. If they put it into operation, they'll find some way of scuppering it. Never trust the English is the only safe rule for Irishmen.'

'Well, we'll see,' said Bernard.

'Meanwhile, I must be off,' said Moore.

'Queer bird that,' said O'Dwyer when he had gone.

'Fancy worrying about a thing like marriage just when life is beginning to be interesting.'

7

O'DWYER's forecast proved incorrect, at any rate in its first assumption. A Home Rule Bill was introduced in due course, accepted by Ireland's representatives at Westminster as a final settlement, and welcomed, though without that commitment, by the people. These did not put quite the same interpretation on the phrase 'Home Rule' as did the British Government; and, as they did not take the trouble to read the Bill—that sort of job being left to the politicians—were not in a position to know exactly how much, or how little, was in it. They accepted the assurance of their leaders that here was freedom on its way, demanding from them no toil nor sacrifice such as other generations had given, but only trust and patience, and forbore to question the exact measure of the gift in consideration of its coming in so accommodating a fashion.

Some people interpreted the Bill very widely indeed. One evening, as he was setting out for home from Cecilia Street, Bernard found that his bicycle lamp wanted oil.

'Dash it,' he said to old Noonan, the hall porter, 'I'll have to walk now.'

'Never mind,' said Noonan. 'You won't have to bother about lamps at all soon.'

'What do you mean?' asked Bernard.

'When Home Rule comes,' said Noonan. 'We'll be a free country then.'

The College in general took the same view as the country, though Bernard's particular friends were exceptions. On the day after the publication of the Bill, Bernard, arriving at Stephen's Green, found Crowley holding forth in his half-serious, half-flippant way, to the usual crowd assembled on the steps of Number 85.

'The Union', said Crowley, 'made Ireland John Bull's unwilling and downtrodden wife. Home Rule will merely

make her his fractious concubine. Sanity and decency require that Cathleen should seek a divorce.'

'Metaphors don't mean anything,' said Lynch. 'Home Rule, whatever you say, is common sense and practical politics.'

'Not this Bill, anyway,' said O'Dwyer. 'What on earth made the Party accept such trash?'

'I think it's a jolly good bill,' said Lynch.

'Have you read it?'

'Well—in a summary.'

'A summary!' cried O'Dwyer. 'Are you ready to throw away the whole national case on the strength of a summary?'

'What the hell', demanded McGurk, 'is the use of a Parliament that hasn't control of the cash?'

'I don't understand the financial provisions, I admit——' began Lynch.

'Not even in a summary,' jeered O'Dwyer.

'Shut up,' said Lynch. 'What John Redmond takes is good enough for me.'

'Not for me,' said O'Dwyer. 'The Bill doesn't even give us our own Post Office.'

'That will come,' put in the soothing voice of Conachy.

'All these reserved powers will come in time.'

'Freedom on the instalment system,' scoffed O'Dwyer.

'Well, you can't expect everything at once,' said Lynch. 'You separatists are such unpractical dreamers.'

'Oh, what a cliché!' cried O'Dwyer. 'Surely it's more practical to trust to our own right arm, however weak it may be, than to the pledges of English politicians? The kind of dreamer who does that gets let down every time.'

'That sounds very fine,' interposed Manders. 'But what does it amount to in practice? An odd fizzle of rebellion, and then an era of strong government. Constitutionalism has got us some very tangible advantages.'

'Perhaps. But nationally it leaves us at a standstill,' said O'Dwyer.

'Oh, Nationality! Nationality!' said Manders im-

patiently. 'I hate the very sound of the word. What does it mean, anyway?'

'Now, look here,' said Crowley suddenly, 'I know you're relying on our making some sort of sentimental reply to that. But we'll disappoint you. Independence means that we won't have to spill our blood or spend our money in England's wars. Isn't that a practical enough argument for anyone—especially for a pacifist like you?'

'My dear Crowley,' said Manders suavely, 'small nations are things of the past. European history is a history of consolidation. Little states were found to be a nuisance and got swallowed up, and the time is approaching when the whole world will be federated and this nonsensical idea of patriotism which has created all the wars that have devastated the world will disappear. Well, in the British Empire we have a great world federation already in being, which will be the model for the federation of the rest of the world. We're given the opportunity to be a free part of it, and yet you'd separate us from it and add one more to the muddle of flags and frontiers that keep the world quarrelling.'

'Yes,' interjected O'Dwyer hastily. 'If we're ever to join that confederation we must leave it first and then, if we like, join it by negotiation as with an equal. We've always denied England's right to legislate for us, so what right can she have to settle our place and rights in the confederation? You're a logical man, Manders. Can't you see that if we once grant England's right to give us self-government we also grant her right to take it away? Our whole case logically rests on our *natural* right to independence.'

'Yes. But politics aren't logical.'

'When your case is logical it's dangerous to use illogical methods. They recoil on you in the end.'

'Well, what's your practical policy?' demanded Lynch. 'Are you going to attack the Castle with walking-sticks and potatoes?'

'Don't be an ass,' replied O'Dwyer. 'We don't pro-

pose to do anything at the moment. When the people find that the Home Rule policy won't work, they'll begin to think of guns again, and then we'll see what we shall see.'

'That's a nice bit of goods,' said McGurk suddenly as a girl undergraduate passed by, leaning forward against the wind, hat flapping and skirts fluttering.

'Calves aren't up to much,' said Crowley judicially.

'Nice lingerie, though,' observed Conachy, looking very roguish.

'Naughty wind!' said McGurk, poking a playful finger into imaginary ribs.

'Nice lot of idiots the girl would think you', said O'Dwyer, 'if she knew that the frill of her petticoat was more interesting to you than the future of the country.'

'The country would have no future', said Crowley, 'if we lost interest in such things. For myself, I'm ready to serve her in both capacities.'

O'Dwyer laughed, and, smitten by a sudden inspiration, said: 'Steady a moment.

'There was a young fellow called Crowley,
Whose desires were not wholly unholy——'

Thereat politics were by general consent dropped, and they set themselves to the serious task of completing the limerick.

Those two years seemed to be punctuated by talks such as these: crude wrangling arguments about generalities, degenerating as often as not into ribaldry. Meanwhile events outside pursued their course. The Home Rule Bill, after passing through the House of Commons, was promptly rejected by the Lords, as had, of course, been expected. The Parliament Act, after all the democratic fury expended to obtain it, was a distinctly disappointing measure, which left to the House of Lords powers of delay which were little less mischievous than its previous power of veto. It permitted this handful of privileged beings to compel the elected representatives of the two nations to pass the same Bill through all its tedious stages three

times before it became law, and they did their worst with the opportunity.

'It can't be helped,' said Lynch and the Home Rulers. 'And after all, two years isn't such a very long time.'

'A lot can happen in two years,' replied Crowley and O'Dwyer.

And it did. As the Bill entered upon its second stage, the Unionists of the North-east began to arm for resistance. The Ulster Volunteer Force was established, and a Provisional Government was formed in readiness to take over the control of the province as soon as an Irish administration should be set up. Lynch and Manders could not conceal their dismay at this 'violation of constitutional principles', though the latter for a time professed to regard the Volunteers as a bluff. O'Dwyer, Crowley, and McGurk, however, looked upon the situation with unmixed joy.

'Who said Ulster was loyal to England?' asked O'Dwyer. 'That's the way to treat a British Government. Bully it.'

'What price physical force now?' said Crowley. 'Let the U.I.L. chaunt a quanta patimur.'

'All I can say', said McGurk, 'is that Carson must be the hell of a fine leader. Wish to God he was on our side.'

Presently the Unionist Party in England gave its blessing to the revolt, and Privy Councillors and leading politicians began to talk of making war on their own constitution, and to pledge themselves yet again to die in the last ditch. The people of Ireland, who knew from sad experience what would have followed from such behaviour on their part, looked on and wondered.

8

BERNARD'S coming of age was celebrated with a dinner at Jammet's the like of which had never been served before even in that gourmets' paradise; for Sir Eugene Lascelles knew all that was to be known of the science

of good living. Sir Eugene shone his brightest in the character of host, and Lady Lascelles, magnificently attired, beamed at the foot of the table. All the Harveys were present, and the Gunby Rourkes, and the Heuston Harringtons, and Bernard to his joy had Dora by his side. Of his College friends he had invited only Crowley and O'Dwyer, whose conversation was really the life of the party. Crowley's urbane wit, with its quaint spicing of classical quotations and long-winded periphrasis, was no less delightful for being expurgated; and O'Dwyer talked alternate nonsense and philosophy until his hearers found distinction difficult. Fergus Moore, who was also present, made little contribution to the conversation beyond an occasional bitter interjection into O'Dwyer's philosophising. Teddy Conroy, a Trinity man and a friend of Eugene's, was another guest. Near to him sat Eugene himself, jealously eyeing Bernard's obvious happiness, and comparing his innumerable successful light love affairs with his own hopeless devotion, now nearly two years old, to Conroy's sister. Eugene's younger brother Sandy, just home from school, seemed completely monopolised by Mabel, the youngest of the Harveys. It was a brilliant and successful party.

Two days later Sir Eugene came to Bernard's room with an opened letter in his hand.

'I'm sorry, Bernard,' he said. 'I opened this without noticing the envelope.'

'Don't mention it,' said Bernard. His father's correspondence was so large that the mistake was of common occurrence.

In the envelope Bernard found a letter and an enclosure. The letter was from a solicitor, a cousin of his mother's named Augustine Reilly, asking for an interview in connection with the contents of the enclosure, to which Bernard now turned his attention. It was an envelope addressed simply :

Bernard Lascelles, Esq.

and in one corner was written : *to be opened on his twenty-first birthday.* The writing was strange to Bernard and it had evidently been written a long time ago, for the ink was bleached and the envelope itself showed unmistakable signs of age. Bernard opened it and took out the following letter :

3rd October, 1899.

My dear Bernard,—

If ever you read this letter you will be reading the words of a dead man, for I am starting out on an enterprise which may cost me my life. I find it difficult to realise that my words are addressed not to the little boy I parted from yesterday, but to a young man of twenty-one. However, I shall begin at once.

Most of my fortune is embarked upon this present enterprise, but the remainder I am leaving to you by will. It is not enough for you to live on, which is just as well, as I don't want you to become one of the idle rich. But it is at least enough to make you your own master. Call on Mr. Augustine Reilly, my cousin and solicitor, who will give you full particulars.

And now, Bernard, I'll say good-bye. This letter may never have to be delivered. I sincerely hope so myself. But in case things go wrong, good-bye, and God bless you.

I remain,

*Your affectionate Uncle,
Christopher Reilly.*

Bernard read the letter over twice, with memories of his kind, clever, handsome uncle passing before his mind's eye to distract his attention. Even when he had succeeded in grasping its purport he could not quite understand it. What was this enterprise his uncle spoke of? It was surely an unusual way to describe the taking of a commission. And why had he sunk his fortune in it?

Sir Eugene explained the matter. 'You may as well know it soon as late,' he said. 'Your uncle was one of

those fanatical Nationalists. He went out to fight for the Boers, and was killed. Don't talk about it to your mother, though. She doesn't like to think about it.'

Bernard, stricken suddenly by a black sense of loss, had nothing to say.

The next day he sought Mr. Augustine Reilly in his office in Kildare Street. Though a relative, the solicitor was unknown to him, for, as a particularly pious Catholic, he had disapproved of the mixed marriage of which Bernard was the offspring. After a tedious wait in the outer office Bernard was at last shown in to the presence of a mild-looking gentleman with watery blue eyes and a shiny bald crown bordered with snow-white hair.

'So you're Mr. Bernard Lascelles?' said this personage, turning in his swivelled chair from the paper-littered desk, and looking at our hero over his joined finger-tips. It was clear from his expression that he visited his dislike of that mixed marriage unto the first generation at least. Bernard, taking the client's chair, admitted his identity.

'And how', asked Augustine Reilly, 'is your dear mother?—and your father?'

Bernard assured him of their continued health.

'You are at the Catholic University, I believe,' said Augustine. He spoke very slowly, with weighted words well spaced out.

'The *National* University,' Bernard corrected him.

'That, I know, is the official title,' said the solicitor. 'But to me it will always be the Catholic University. It was a Catholic University that we demanded, and a Catholic University we must make it, in spite of the godless regulations of the Act. Our youth must be trained in what Newman called the Catholic atmosphere, in contradistinction to the paganism prevalent in such institutions across the water. Tell me, my dear boy, is such an atmosphere yet beginning to develop?'

'Not oppressively,' said Bernard.

Augustine was disposed to treat this answer playfully.

'Ah, you bad young man! You've been reading some

of these modern writers and imperilling your Faith. Better be careful,' he added more solemnly, 'or one fine morning you'll wake up and find that you've lost it, and gained—what? Cynicism and disillusionment. You know, my dear boy, these Shaws and Wellses and the rest of them, they may be very clever—I should be the last to deny that they *are* clever—but they lack *solidity*. They're merely destructive. They destroy people's faith and illusions, and they have nothing constructive to offer them instead.'

'Well, it's something to clear away the illusions, anyway,' said Bernard.

'There speaks the cynic,' said Augustine. 'I prefer to *keep* mine, so I don't read these gentlemen, and I'm proud to say that of all the illusions of my youth I haven't lost a single one.'

'What about this money that's coming to me?' asked Bernard, bored by the discussion.

Augustine shook his head slowly and sadly. 'Modern youth,' he sighed. 'Always hard and practical. What about the money? Well, well, well.' Thus muttering, he went over to a filing cabinet and took out some papers. Then, seating himself, he proceeded to initiate Bernard into the mysteries of securities and dividends.

'And now', he said presently, 'I suppose you'll want to open an account at a bank? Good.' He glanced at the clock. 'What about a little lunch at my club? Then we'll run round to a manager I know and I'll introduce you.'

Bernard having accepted the invitation, Augustine wrote him out a cheque, which he pocketed, and they went out to his club on Stephen's Green. In the course of lunch Bernard asked:

'Did my uncle leave any other message for me?'

'If he had', replied Augustine, 'I should certainly have forgotten it in the lapse of years. I thought he said everything he wanted in his letter.'

'No. The letter was quite short.'

'Dear me. That's very strange. He certainly spent a long time over it—it was in my office that he wrote it—and I remember he used up an unconscionable amount of paper. But now that I think of it, most of it went into the waste-paper basket. Poor Christopher! I can picture him still, biting his pen, and crumpling up sheet after sheet. A splendid fellow in many ways. A man with ideals—no end of them. But an extremist—a hopeless extremist. I hope, my dear boy, you'll never be extreme. Whatever your principles, always observe moderation. Moderation in all things, as the philosopher said. For myself, I claim to be a patriotic Irishman in the truest sense, but extremes are abhorrent to me—abhorrent. Yes,' he said ponderously, feeling round for a conclusion to his homily, but without success—'Yes, quite abhorrent.'

Having delivered himself of these sentiments, Mr. Augustine Reilly turned to the enjoyment of the fillet steak which had been set before him. And fellows like this, Bernard meditated, survive to carry on the race, while the Christophers of the world perish childless.

9

THE possession of money gave a fresh impetus to Bernard's ideas and ambitions. He could now, if he chose, follow his original intention of making his way by the path of political journalism into politics. He decided, however, not to allow his nearly completed medical training to go to waste, but to follow the course to the end and take out his degree. Meanwhile his money enlarged the immediate amenities of life. His first important purchase was a yacht. He had been introduced to the sport of sailing by Fergus Moore, who was the owner of a five-ton yawl, and had made him one of his crew for the races and regattas of the previous two years. To possess a craft of his own had soon become the dearest wish of his heart, and now his uncle's munificence gave him the opportunity to gratify it. He expended the whole of his first quarter's

income on a little half-decked yacht, and in it he explored by himself the whole of Dublin Bay, and sometimes sailed down the coast to Wicklow and up to Malahide. Sailing is a pastime that satisfies every mood. He rejoiced in the exhilaration of a battle with stiff breezes that lashed him with spray while the hard green water crunched under his lee timbers: and again when the breeze was light and the sun shining he would heave to and lie for hours in tranquil enjoyment. Fergus Moore often accompanied him, as it was less trouble to take out the *Foam* for an afternoon sail than his own larger vessel.

'The sea is our last refuge from the vulgarity of man,' he said one day, as they glided lazily towards Sorrento Point, after disengaging themselves from the crowd of shrieking trippers messing about in the harbour, and passing beyond the range of the ragtime band on the east pier. 'It's the one thing he hasn't the power to destroy. Some day, I suppose, he'll harness it, or dry it up, or put it to some damn fool use or other like the forests and rivers, but fortunately he hasn't the brains to master it yet—though I suppose some donkey in a laboratory is scheming it all out even now.'

'Well, enjoy it while you have it,' said Bernard with a laugh. 'It's bad enough to be a pessimist about the present, without worrying about the days of your great-great-grandchildren. Rather nice view that, isn't it?' he remarked, indicating the clustering spires of Kingstown and the villas straggling over the slopes of Killiney Hill.

Moore chuckled. 'That's the view that inspired Mitchell's famous farewell as the convict ship took him to Australia. Do you remember? "Farewell, Dublin. City of bellowing slaves! Villas of genteel dastards!"'

'Who was Mitchell?' asked Bernard.

Moore grinned. 'I say, what a seónín you are! John Mitchell was the greatest of the Forty-Eight men. You should read the *Jail Journal*, or the *Last Conquest*. As an exposure of England's cold-blooded tyranny and inexhaustible capacity for cant there's nothing like them.'

'Crowley says that the genius of the English is an infinite capacity for talking cant.'

Moore laughed. 'Good for Crowley,' he said. 'On second thoughts, though, don't read Mitchell. He's enough to drive you mad if you love justice, and what's the use of fretting yourself over what's past and done and can't be helped? That's a queer bunch of fellows you go about with. Have they succeeded in converting you yet?'

'Not at all,' said Bernard. 'I dare say a Home Rule Parliament will be good for the country, but I can't get excited about it, and I certainly shan't want to sit in it when it comes, because it seems to be a mere gas-and-water affair. As for this rebel talk that Crowley and the rest go in for, it seems to me mere foolishness.'

'So it is,' said Moore. 'Better go about here, or we'll lose the wind.'

Sailing on the other tack, he said: 'I wish you weren't such a blooming Galahad, Lascelles. I'm taking a little party in the *Kittiwake* to the Mediterranean in August, and I'd like to have you along, but——' He paused, tentatively.

'No good, old chap,' said Bernard. 'I know what you mean, but I don't go in for that sort of thing.'

'If you don't mind my asking,' said Moore, 'is it religion that prevents you?'

'No,' said Bernard. 'I haven't much religion, you know. There's something or other stronger than myself that seems to forbid me. What's your religion, by the way?'

'I don't bother about religion,' said Moore. 'How can I tell whether there's an after life or not? Anyway, I'm not going to waste this life in self-denial and boredom on the chance of it. Of course if there is one, and if old Mother Church is right, I'll have the devil of a reckoning to pay; but meanwhile I'll have had my fun. What's your view?'

'I don't know,' replied Bernard. 'Somehow I can't believe in Catholicism, and yet I can't quite disbelieve

in it either. I know that greater intellects than mine—people like Dante, and Pascal, and Newman—have accepted it; and yet I can't listen to a sermon or read a Catholic book without a feeling of intellectual contempt. As for Catholic practices, like wearing medals, keeping relics, and so on, they simply move me to ridicule. On the other hand, if I talk to an atheist or agnostic I find myself falling back on Catholicism. Do you know the Heuston-Harrington crowd? They're all atheists with claims to infallibility that make the Pope's look microscopic in comparison. Mrs. Heuston-Harrington's daughter said to me the other day that she couldn't understand how an intelligent person could believe in the Virgin Birth. "Why?" I asked. "Because it's impossible," said she. I tried to explain that Catholics were just as well aware as she was that it was impossible in the ordinary way, but believed that it was a miracle worked by the direct act of God; and if you believe in an omnipotent God, I said, which is at least an arguable proposition, his power to work miracles follows as a matter of course. But the little ass couldn't see it, and still pities me as a superstitious believer in parthenogenesis.'

'Well, all atheists aren't as stupid as that,' said Moore.

'All that I've met are,' replied Bernard. 'By Jove, I'd rather believe in holy water than be one of these clever fools.'

'You might just as well be either', said Moore, 'for all the fun you'll get out of life. Put up your helm, you lubber. Your jib's flapping like a window-blind in a draught.'

10

To tell the truth, Bernard had been some time in sounding the shallows of Miss Heuston-Harrington's intellectuality. There had been a gap of some months in their acquaintanceship after the episode at Newcastle; but they had met again as a result of her brother Fred making friends

with Bernard's brother Eugene in Trinity, where they were both studying. It was not long before Bernard and Eugene were invited to one of his mother's at-homes. Bernard had already heard something of these functions from detractors who were jealous at not being invited. Mrs. Heuston-Harrington, who was the widow of a well-known literary and art critic, cultivated brains and ideas as some people cultivate wealth and rank. Openly contemning the professional classes, who composed the society of the capital, she filled her drawing-rooms with poets, revolutionaries, and queer characters of all sorts—'long-haired louts' and 'greasy cranks' as Sir Eugene would have described them—among whom she moved with dignity and grace, feeling like a modern Aspasia or Madame de Staël. Bernard watched the moderately distinguished company unobtrusively from the doorway. Under the central light stood a Professor of Philology enjoying a game of banter with someone who looked like a tramp, but was really a writer of Gaelic stories; not far away was a man who looked like a prosperous banker, but who was really a very dull, though distinguished, critic, solemnly boring a pretty young English actress; in a corner a famous American journalist, over to write up the Ulster crisis, was trying to extract views on the subject from an Armenian palmist. Bernard managed after a while to find Dora in the throng; but before he had uttered more than a greeting she said: 'Oh, here's someone who'll interest you,' and almost pushed him into the arms of a young man whom she introduced as Mr. Edwin D'Arcy, afterwards slipping away and disappearing in the crowd. D'Arcy, it appeared, was a poet, who had published one very slender volume and neglected his hair and cultivated his tie on the strength of it. He talked feelingly of art and his own temperament most of the evening and promised to send Bernard a copy of his book *Earth Songs* next day. Bernard managed to get away from him after a time, and, seeing that introductions were not *de rigueur*, nor even expected, broached conver-

sations with anyone he pleased, and enjoyed the evening thoroughly. At the end his hostess invited him very graciously to come again whenever he liked.

Bernard did so. At first he was entirely charmed by Mrs. Heuston-Harrington, whose conversation contrasted agreeably with the orthodox philistinism to which he was accustomed at home. It was also pleasant to converse at one's ease with politicians, actors and poets (however minor) instead of deferring to pompous nonentities chattering commonplaces, as he would have had to do at an entertainment given by any of his parents' friends. Dora, too, began presently to show a more friendly manner to him. Then, with disconcerting suddenness, he began to see through her, and subsequently through the whole of her mother's entourage. The labour troubles just then beginning made the first exposure. He had expected sympathy for the workers from an admirer of Shelley and Shaw and a professed intellectual revolutionary, and he could scarcely believe his ears when he found that her view of the struggle was not very different from that of the average business man: 'That awful Larkin person! He ought to be shot,' and so forth.

'What do you get out of Shaw and Shelley if you think like that?' Bernard demanded, only to find that Dora was unaware that Shelley was a republican and Shaw a socialist, and that her mother was interested in them solely as artists.

'Exactly,' put in Edwin D'Arcy. 'A true artist doesn't concern himself with ideas.'

'Wasn't Shelley an artist, then?' Bernard demanded.

'Yes,' said D'Arcy. 'A great artist ruined by dabbling in ideas. Now, take Keats. There was the perfect artist if you like: the poet pure and simple.'

'Hear, hear!' Dora applauded.

For answer Bernard quoted the stanza on capitalism in *Isabella* beginning:

'For them the Ceylon diver held his breath
And went all naked to the hungry shark.'

D'Arcy, however, was not disconcerted, but said that the lines were a flaw in the poem, while Dora objected that 'noisy factories' was not a very poetic phrase.

Bernard's next discovery was that Dora was as obstinately hostile to Home Rule as the most bigotted Orangeman in Belfast, and that the only reason she could find was that her countrymen were incapable of self-government.

'How do you make that out?' he asked.

'Why, it's obvious.'

'In what way?'

'I can't tell you much about it, because I'm no politician. I just know it. Every one with any sense knows it.'

'I thought you didn't like dogmas,' said Bernard. 'And here you take for granted the opinions of politicians and journalists who have far less claim to knowledge and disinterestedness than priests have in religion. I can see it didn't take any Index to prevent you reading the opposite side in the controversy.' (Dora had been killingly satirical about the Catholic Index of forbidden books.)

'I don't take any interest in politics, anyway,' she replied huffily.

'Then why dogmatise about them?'

'Oh, don't let's talk politics,' said Mrs. Heuston-Harrington. 'In my opinion they're the real curse of this country. How I wish we could get away from them! but people drag them in everywhere. . . . Now, what do you think of this? I'm trying to run some concerts in the winter and we've got a mixed committee together to manage them. . . . Well, the whole business is held up at present because some of the Nationalists on it object to having "God save the King" played at the end.'

'Well, isn't it a political act on your side to insist on having it?'

'Oh, nonsense. The King is above politics.'

'But the Nationalist point of view is that they won't

recognise the King until what they consider their rights are restored to them.'

'But that's disloyalty.'

'Not from their point of view.'

'They've no right to have such a point of view,' said the apostle of freedom of thought.

Finally he began to see through their agnosticism, which arose, he realised, not from hard thinking, but either from intellectual laziness or sheer inability to think. While Dora, in her muddled way, believed in nothing, her mother believed in nearly everything. She believed in fakirs; she believed in divination; she believed in spiritualism; but Bernard's disillusionment was not complete until he found that she believed in palmistry. Going home with Eugene that night, he said: 'My boy, you're no good of a missionary. You've been trying to convert me to the faith for the last two years, and failed. Mrs. Heuston-Harrington has done it in a few weeks.'

'You talk as if belief or unbelief were only a joke,' said Eugene disapprovingly.

The brothers were a queer contrast. Bernard was his father's son, Eugene his mother's. Eugene was pious, gentle, and unobtrusive; Bernard quite the reverse. Eugene's manner was courteous and dignified; while Bernard's good breeding barely concealed his natural rudeness and impatience. Eugene's polished conversation contrasted strongly with Bernard's jerky argumentative manner, and his voice, calm and well-modulated, was more pleasing to the ear than Bernard's, which in moments of excitement became high-pitched and raucous. Eugene's dress was inexpensive yet neat; Bernard's extravagant yet untidy. Everybody liked Eugene. Even at Ashbury he had been almost popular, though his piety was deprecated. He also, in a vague sort of way, liked nearly everybody. Bernard, on the other hand, was liked only by a few not very close friends, and he never knew whether he really liked anybody. He laughed now at Eugene's reproof.

'It is a joke,' he said. 'Do you think God worries whether we believe in him or not? If you do, you deserve hell for your sublime conceit.'

II

IN spite of his principles, Bernard consented to go to the Castle.

Dublin Castle is at once the most sinister and the most ridiculous feature of Irish life. It is the centre and stronghold of foreign domination, and the playhouse of native snobbery. In its council chambers have been hatched the subtlest and wickedest laws ever devised for the degradation of a people; in its dungeons Ireland's noblest sons have languished; in its drawing-rooms her meanest and pettiest have simpered. Here, in 'the Season' is held a meaningless sham court, a wretched imitation of the ceremonies carried on at the same time at Buckingham Palace, a piece of tawdry pomp which only grown-up children could view without derision. Bernard, of course, regarded it with unmitigated contempt, but he went all the same, partly because his father and mother desired it, partly because it was fun to dress up and wear a sword, and partly because he was always glad to get new experiences. Moreover Alice was to make her debut that season and she prettily implored him to be a spectator of her glory.

On the night of the Drawing-Room the Lascelles' motor took its place in the queue of vehicles leading to the Upper Castle Yard. It was a strange motley queue. The more prosperous courtiers came in private motors, from well-groomed landaulettes to battered two-seaters, while the less fortunate ones came in hired cabs, looking, as they sat in their finery in these dingy equipages, like diamonds set in tarnished pewter. The queue moved at a snail's pace, and for the best part of an hour these seekers after place and pleasure had to endure cramp and tedium, mitigated a little by consciousness of the wondering gaze of the poor women and urchins of Cork Hill

and the neighbourhood, and by the salutes of the white-gloved constables on duty.

At long last the party found itself in St. Patrick's Hall, and Bernard could contemplate at his leisure the curious spectacle of members of honoured professions dressed up like idle parasites and doing their best to look as if they had been born so.

There were knights in scores and would-be knights in hundreds, with here and there an odd baronet. Among the throng he could distinguish Sir Marmaduke Perry, who had preserved a Viceroy's useless cousin to cumber the earth, and Mr. Bonegraft who hoped for an opportunity to do the same. Not far off was Sir Tomkins Tidbit who had got knighted by mistake owing to a relative having charge of the honours list. He was engaged in conversation with Sir Michael Dooley, better known as the Lord Mayor of Rathgar, who had had the good fortune to be chairman of the council of that municipality during a royal visit. Looking rather bashful and out of place was the uncouth form of Sir Cornelius O'Tractor skulking behind a pillar. He had been knighted as a reward for bringing a 'loyalist' motion before the Corporation, and he found present company just a little oppressive. In another corner was Mr. Whitelead who hoped to get the contract for repainting St. Patrick's Hall and was taking even now a mental estimate of the cost. Then there were the knights who had got their titles no one knew how, and those whose gallant deeds were lost in the mist of legend. And among this bevy of Sirs strolled an occasional lord, carelessly and enviably at home.

But we are forgetting the ladies. In plumes and lappets and seven-foot trains, blazing with real or sham jewellery, they were a glorious sight. There was Lady Perry, crudely patronising Mrs. Bonegraft, and Lady Mallaby Morchoe who would hardly deign to notice Lady Lascelles whose husband had been knighted a year later than her own. There was aggressive Lady Liverlung, but three

months titled and still angry over her long wait for the distinction. There was Lady Backwood, stately and silent, who was of aristocratic blood and whose recently obtained title was but an accessory. She looked around the gathering with an expression that plainly said: '*Everyone* seems to come to the Drawing-Room now.' There was Lady This and Lady That and Lady the Rest of It, and Lady Lascelles pointed them all out to her son.

Then there were the commoners. There was Mrs. Gunby Rourke plainly enjoying herself, and Mrs. Heuston-Harrington doing the bored intellectual pose, and Mrs. O'Driscoll pushing forward her bashful husband to a place within the ambit of the viceregal eye; and Mrs. O'Dwyer, and Mrs. O'Sullivan, and a hundred more, jealously observant of one another, and tremulously aware of the proximity of the peerage. If they had only known it, better blood ran in their own veins than in those of the objects of their admiration; for the Irish peerage is for the most part descended from plebeian planters' stock, while these O'Neills and O'Briens bore names with a thousand years of history behind them. But these things, with the rest of their country's glory, were unknown to them; so Noakes and Jenkins, cloaked in the titles of plundered lands, received homage from the degenerate strain of Nial and Eoghan Mór.

An eye more trained in such matters than Bernard's would have discovered that the gathering was cleft into two factions. On the one hand were the Unionists, the regular Castle-goers, very angry and disdainful of the crowd of Nationalists whom the Aberdeens had introduced into the stronghold. On the other were the Nationalists, some aggressive, some rather overwhelmed, many quite obviously conscience-stricken over the sacrifice of principle involved in their attendance. It may well be doubted whether in all the world or in all time there could be found any other assembly the like of this.

A hush fell upon the gathering, and the ceremony of presenting the debutantes to their Excellencies began.

For them this was the threshold of life and much the finest part of it. One by one, glittering with jewels and swamped in silks and satins, they swept up the room and sank to the floor before the viceregal throne. In her turn came Alice, proudly shy.

One by one they passed from the presence and mingled in the crowd. In a short space they would be married and would commence to urge their children along the road their fathers had trod before them.

'How did I look, Bernard?' inquired Alice.

'Splendid,' said Bernard.

When the ceremony was over the bejewelled throng packed itself into its motors and its cabs and drove homeward through the murky streets.

12

WHILE respectability played in this fashion, out of the slums of the city came a cry of agony: of agony long endured and no longer tolerable. The great Transport Strike had begun, and before the eyes of men stalked Reality, crude and grim and menacing.

CHAPTER VII

THE HILLSIDE

I

WHILST all the resources of parental and scholastic education were being employed to cramp and distort the mental growth of young Bernard Lascelles, away in Glencole Stephen Ward's mind was developing in freedom with the companionship of Nature and great books. He lived mainly in the open air, doing his share of work on the little farm, and reading at his pleasure without the interference of teachers. His father made suggestions, or lent a helping hand when asked, but that was all. Stephen's main interest, as Michael Ward observed, was at first history, and afterwards philosophy. Fiction did not attract him, nor yet poetry, except for Shakespeare's plays. Without any prompting either from his father or the priest he set the Gospel of St. Matthew above all other books. At the age when Bernard had arrived, by the way we have described, at a discontented atheism, Stephen was possessed of a comprehensive and, to him, satisfying religious philosophy. His mind, though questioning, was not speculative. It demanded certitude, but, unlike Bernard's, once assured it could rest content. It demanded an orderly universe ruled by an omnipotent God, and it found as much evidence as it required in favour of that scheme of things in everything it read or heard, from Plato to the local curate. Bernard had been inducted into Catholicism by methods suited to people with half his intelligence, which had simply moved him to contempt; Stephen received his

instruction from St. Thomas and St. Anselm, whose arguments commanded conviction when he could understand them and respect when he could not.

God walks among mountains and asks for worship in the unfolding of leaves in spring. It was easy, indeed it was a joy, to respond to a demand made so beautifully. It was difficult to understand why mankind beyond the mountains should refuse it. For refuse it they certainly did. History, reeking with their crimes and follies, proclaimed it on every page. The modern newspaper shrieked with paganism : and not the old paganism whose beauty a Christian could love, but a new abomination at whose ugliness Horace would have giped and Virgil groaned. Christianity, nominally, ruled the world. It was an integral part of the law. Kings and presidents swore on its testament. Blasphemy was an offence punishable by imprisonment. Yet down there in the city, and in all the cities of the world, men toiled in the service of Mammon, and allowed their fellow-men to rot in slums ; governments plotted and schemed against one another ; judges judged and jailed and hanged. They had been told to love one another, to bear one another's burdens, to take no thought for the morrow, not to be solicitous what they should eat or wear, to judge not that they might not be judged, to seek only the kingdom of God and his glory : but they obeyed none of these commands, yet still called themselves Christians.

Stephen's essentially simple mind, not over strong in imaginative quality, could not understand such a position. He was equally puzzled by the current controversies of the day. Truth and justice could be found only by patient search ; but nowhere was there any search—only conflict, the clash of uninformed opinion, or prejudice against prejudice, in which facts were smothered in a smoke of verbiage. Truth meanwhile remained unsought, while on every hand injustices stood firm by the prescriptive right of long endurance. To take a gross outstanding instance. Every strong nation in Europe

ruled by force over one or more weaker nations—Russia over Poland, Austria over Bohemia, England over Ireland—and this was generally accepted as part of the standing order of things in a continent which accepted the principles of liberty and democracy. Was mankind, Stephen wondered, to be convicted of an immense collective hypocrisy?

And if so, what was to be done about it? Stephen had been borne into a time and place where such questions must needs be answered with action. His gaze, searching infinity for abstract justice, focused upon the moment of the eternal drama being enacted in one insignificant corner of the universe. Ireland, arising from the stupor following the death of Parnell, was again affirming her nationhood. Here was a vital issue ready to hand: right demanding redress of might, justice challenging injustice, thought wrestling with the strangling grip of the material; the light of truth stabbing with its beams the surrounding darkness of deceit. His country was in bondage, and must be freed. But how? While he pondered over that question the Home Rule Bill was accepted by the representatives of the people.

2

THROUGH all these years Michael Ward had not left his mountain retreat, and Stephen seldom went far afield. Sometimes the boy would climb to the top of the glen to look down on the city, slumbering, as it seemed, on the edge of the bay. But even when he reached manhood he had never gone there. Something told him that if he went he would stay, and there was much to learn first. The nearest he ever approached to the city was Rathfarnham, where he sometimes went to buy things that were not to be obtained in the glen.

One day, on such a journey, an adventure befell him. A runaway pony and trap came clattering towards him, with a desperate girl pulling madly at the reins. In an instant he had sprung to the rescue, and presently, with

the pony halted and soothed, he was assisting the girl to the grass by the roadside.

'Thank you so much,' she said, recovering her nerve. 'The pony was frightened by a char-à-banc. I don't know what would have happened if you hadn't been there.'

Stephen stood shyly waiting for his dismissal; but the girl said: 'Would you mind very much if I asked you to drive me home? I'm still rather shaken. It's only half a mile away.'

Stephen complied. Under her direction he drove citywards until they reached a gateway marked 'The Beeches', then up a short gravelled avenue to a gabled house with a veranda, where a boy of about sixteen was lounging. The latter jumped up, exclaiming: 'Hello, Madge, you're back early,' and then stopped at the sight of Stephen.

'My brother Teddy,' said Madge to Stephen. 'Bella took fright and ran away with me,' she went on. 'Only for this gentleman I'd have had a spill.'

'Oh—er—hm—that was very good of you,' said Teddy, wondering whether he ought to tip the rescuer.

'I'm glad to have been of service,' said Stephen.

Teddy's hand came out of his pocket again. This person was evidently not as rustic as his clothes, but it was difficult to 'place' him exactly; which was an embarrassment to Teddy, who in the meantime was left uncertain what manner to adopt towards him. Stephen solved that problem by starting to go, which surprised Teddy into saying: 'Here, I say! Half a mo'. Won't you have a drink?'

'Thanks,' said Stephen. 'I'll have a glass of water.'

'Oh, come! You'll have something stronger than that,' protested Teddy. But Stephen declined, and, having swallowed the water fetched by Madge, he took himself off.

'Mysterious sort of blighter,' commented Teddy.

'He's very nice,' said Madge.

One afternoon a week later, Stephen set out again for

Rathfarnham. He passed the scene of the previous week's adventure, and came at last to the low wall that separated 'The Beeches' from the road.

'Hello, Mr. Ward!' said a voice.

Stephen looked up and saw Madge swinging in a hammock slung between two cherry trees. He was hot and dusty, and she was a picture of cool freshness in a frock of summery white. He came over to the wall and looked up at her, leaning his elbows on it.

'How are you to-day?' he said.

'Quite recovered, thanks,' she replied.

Stephen, having no more to say, fidgeted nervously with the moss on the top of the wall.

'Won't you come inside and talk to me,' suggested Madge. 'There's another hammock over there,' indicating one hanging loose by one end from the bough near at hand.

'I'm afraid I haven't time,' said Stephen.

'Oh!' she said, looking very disappointed.

'I live up in Glencole, you know,' he explained, 'and I'm going down to Rathfarnham to buy some things.'

'That's a long way to walk.'

'Eight miles. Nothing at all.'

'And eight back.'

'I'm accustomed to it.'

'But wouldn't you like a rest?'

'I haven't time for that.'

She swallowed her disappointment and asked:

'When are you coming to see us? Mother and father were out last week. They're longing to thank you for saving me.'

'It was nothing. But I'll come any time you like.'

'Let's see. . . Oh, yes. We're having a little garden-party on Thursday afternoon. Could you come?'

'Yes. Thanks very much.'

'Don't forget now. Four o'clock.'

'I'll remember . . . Well, good-bye. I must go on.'

Thursday came, and Stephen was welcomed at the gate by Madge. She led him over to the lawn, where, under the shade of a couple of hawthorns, Mrs. Conroy was dispensing tea to her guests. Her husband lolled in a deck-chair chatting with three young ladies who laughed industriously at regular intervals. Teddy and another young man in flannels were handing round tea and cake. A third, little more than a boy, stood apart fidgeting and distraught, gazing at Stephen and his conductress as they drew near. A game of tennis was in progress on the court just beyond.

'Mother, this is Mr. Ward.'

Madge's parents greeted Stephen effusively. Then he was introduced all round and set in a deck-chair with a cup of tea and a slice of cake precariously balanced in his hand. He felt like a dark spot on the prevailing whiteness, for, though he had spent some time in making himself spruce for the occasion, he was the only male present who was not in white flannels, and all the ladies were in the daintiest summer frocks.

'Madge told me all about the rescue,' said the girl sitting nearest to him. 'How on earth were you so quick? I can't understand it. I'm sure *I'd* have been out of my wits.'

'Romantic, wasn't it?' observed another girl in a harsh and rather scornful voice.

Madge brought over a chair and planted it down beside Stephen's. The youth who had been standing apart thereupon moved round unobtrusively and sat on the grass close at hand. He kept looking anxiously at Stephen and Madge. There was general conversation mingled with the musical clink of tea-cups. Stephen sat in the middle of it all, feeling very unhappy, embarrassed by his cup and saucer, and unable to make head or tail of the conversation; which was not surprising, seeing that it was all about nothing. Presently, when some girl was telling a story which seemed utterly pointless to him, though it was punctuated by frequent peals of

laughter from the rest of the company, he fell into a brown study.

He was roused by Madge putting a hand to his pocket and asking: 'What's the book?'

'Shakespeare,' said Stephen, taking out a slim volume and giving it to her. 'He's the only poet I care about.'

'I don't like poetry either,' said Madge.

'Most poets,' went on Stephen, 'seem to be so pre-occupied with their own moods and emotions. Shakespeare's different . . . so objective. Don't you think so?' he inquired, turning to Teddy.

'Well, personally I think Shakespeare's an awful ass,' replied Teddy.

'O Teddy,' remonstrated Madge, 'I think Shakespeare's *frightfully* nice,' she put in for Stephen's benefit.

'I never knew you were a book-worm, Madge,' said her brother.

'O Teddy! How could you!' cried the deceiver reproachfully.

'This conversation's getting frightfully highbrow,' said one of the other girls, and proceeded to remedy the disaster. Stephen again lapsed into dreams.

'Penny for your thoughts,' said Madge.

'I beg your pardon?'

'What are you thinking about?'

'This Home Rule Bill,' said Stephen. 'You know, it's all wrong.'

'Of course it is,' interrupted Mrs. Conroy. 'But what can you expect from this Government? That man Lloyd George, with his budgets and his insurance stamps! Why can't he lick his stamps himself, I'd like to know?'

'Home Rule,' said Mr. Conroy sagely, 'is all rot. Just a game to catch the Nationalist vote. It'll never pass.'

'Oh, don't start father on politics,' cried Madge, laying a friendly hand on Stephen's knee. 'Do you play tennis, Mr. Ward?'

'No,' said Stephen. 'I've never even seen it played.'

Teddy, who was lounging on the grass, sat up suddenly as if he had been stung by a wasp.

'Great Scott, where were you born?' he cried.

Half a dozen different expressions of incredulity followed, as every one stared at this strange phenomenon.

'Mr. Ward lives the simple life out in the mountains,' Madge interposed to shield her cavalier.

'Bit of a bore, that, isn't it?' suggested Teddy.

'But really this is *too* killing,' gurgled one of the girls. 'Have you *really* never seen a game? What *do* you do with yourself all day?'

'One manages to find occupation somehow,' said Stephen.

'That's right,' said Madge. 'Never mind them, Mr. Ward. Come down to the court now and watch them playing.'

Stephen rose and followed her. The melancholy young man on the grass watched them go with jealous eyes.

Stephen asked Madge who he was.

'Isn't he an idiot?' said Madge. 'He's always tagging round after me with that sloppy look on his face.'

'Love is a queer thing,' said Stephen meditatively.

Madge looked at him sideways, seeking to divine a particular meaning, but Stephen's eyes were quite impersonal.

'I wonder why you should dislike him for loving you,' said he. 'But I don't know much about these things. I've lived practically alone all my life.'

'You wouldn't dislike someone for loving *you* then?'

'I don't think so. But then I don't know. No one does, anyhow.'

'Somebody might, some day.'

'I'll think about it then. Who did you say that boy was?'

'A friend of Teddy's,' she answered. 'Eugene Lascelles he's called. Rather a mouthful, isn't it? Like the hero of a novel. He's an awful nuisance.'

'He's the only decent person here,' said Stephen.

'What detestable friends you have. They were all trying to hurt me because I don't know this game.'

'I'm sorry if they hurt your feelings,' said Madge.

'Oh, my feelings don't matter. But I hate people to be like that.'

'They're all right *really*,' said Madge.

'No, they aren't. People who won't take the trouble to think are a public danger.'

The girl laughed.

'How absurd! You really ought to cultivate a sense of humour, Mr. Ward. You take life much too seriously.'

'You'd be wiser to tell your friends that they take this game too seriously,' said Stephen. 'Life ought to be taken seriously.'

'Well, I prefer to look on the bright side of things.—Oh, good shot!'

They had reached the side of the court, and this congratulation was elicited by a neat backhander by one of the players, which finished the game and the set.

'I must go now,' said Stephen, as the party headed towards tea.

'What! So early?' said Madge.

'Yes. I have work to do.'

'Well, I hope we'll see you again soon.'

'You'll never see me again,' said Stephen.

The girl looked puzzled; then hazarded: 'Oh, so you *are* offended?'

'Not at all,' said Stephen. 'But I shall be too much occupied with the dark side of life to have time for this sort of thing.'

3

'A FAIR sample of Mitchell's genteel dastards,' commented Michael Ward when Stephen described the afternoon.

'What about the girl, though?'

'What about her? Do you know, father, this Home Rule Bill worries me.'

'What does it matter?' said Michael Ward carelessly.

'Matter!' exclaimed Stephen. 'It's wrong! It's dishonest! It's illogical! How can we logically or honestly accept a Home Rule Bill framed by England? Isn't our whole case based on the fact that England has no right to legislate for us at all?'

'There's no logic in politics, Stephen. Logically we shouldn't send members to London at all, but what do people care about logic? I gave up all interest in politics years ago, and I'd advise you to do the same.'

'And assist British rule by my acquiescence. No thanks.'

'To try and overthrow British rule in this country is to attempt the impossible.'

'I don't admit such an impossibility.'

'I'm talking from experience. In my time I tried and failed.'

'You tried?'

'Yes. I never told you anything about it because I hoped you'd never interest yourself in this unfortunate country's affairs. Well, I'll tell you the whole story now, and let it be a warning to you.'

Michael Ward re-told the tale with which the reader is already acquainted. When he had finished Stephen said:

'Very well. You tried and failed. I must find a better way, that's all. There must be another way, and I'll find it if I have to spend my life in the search.'

This prospect of a long wait reassured the father that his son would do nothing rash. Indeed, so convinced was he of the impossibility of solving the problem that he felt satisfied that 'nothing rash' really meant 'nothing'.

'My dear boy,' he said, filling his pipe as he spoke, 'to the truly philosophical mind the ephemeral affairs of men are not worthy of prolonged consideration. Do you see that apple on the plate there? Science tells us that it is divided into an enormous number of infinitesimal molecules all in perpetual motion, and that the very molecules are divided into still tinier atoms. Yet we see nothing

but a quiet rotund solidity. Now consider the universe in which we live. Our earth is but an atom of the molecule called the solar system, and that molecule is but one of the millions that compose the universe. Look at that apple again. Wonderful happenings may be in progress in one of its atoms, but of what ultimate import are they? Similarly I can imagine a gigantic being contemplating our universe, which he sees as small and as solid as we see the apple, and amusing himself by wondering whether things could really happen in one of its atoms. How small it all is really.'

'That's a very pretty thesis,' replied Stephen. 'I'd often thought of it myself. But, my dear father, you mustn't let yourself be carried away by relativity of size. To regard size and importance as synonymous is the most revolting kind of snobbery. I've come to look at everything from the absolute point of view in regard to size and the intrinsic point of view in regard to value. That match you're going to light your pipe with is a small thing compared with . . . say Jupiter; but it has a definite size. And if you compare both with the vastness of infinite space the difference between them is very slight. Then the match has an intrinsic value of its own. It's complete in itself and perfect to its own end. . . . You couldn't light your pipe with Jupiter. . . . If then the match is absolutely important, how very much more so is man, who, small as he is, has an immortal soul and carries the Kingdom of Heaven within him.'

'That's right, Stephen. Stick to philosophy and leave politics alone.'

'They're all one to me,' said Stephen. 'The battle between right and wrong, truth and falsehood, is going on everywhere: here in Ireland, billions of miles away in some planet revolving round Alpha Centauri, and away in some corner of space invisible from the most distant star we can see. And I want to be on the right side.'

'How are the potatoes doing?' asked Michael Ward.

4

LIFE pursued its even course at Glencool for more than a year. Then one morning at breakfast Stephen read out from the newspaper the account of the formation of the Ulster Volunteers.

'That settles it,' he said. 'There'll be no Home Rule now, thank Heaven. It's just the excuse England was looking for.'

He read silently for a few moments, then dropped the paper and sat wrapped in thought for a while.

'I have an idea,' he cried suddenly.

'What is it?' asked his father.

'I must think it out,' replied Stephen, and became silent.

5

'THIS strike', said Stephen some months later, 'brings us to realities at last.'

Michael Ward grunted. Even in his youthful days he had been a reactionary on social questions, not so much from conviction as from the old Fenian desire to demonstrate a purely spiritual Nationalism uncontaminated by material aspirations.

'And oh!' said Stephen, 'the mess they're making of it! The hopeless muddle and mess! No controversy even, much less any attempt to get at the truth. Mere vituperation and mud slinging. Why amn't I there?'

'You're better where you are,' said his father, and there was an anxious note in his voice.

'Shall I sit quiet while my fellow-men fall? I know what should be done. I have things to say that are worth saying. . . . The question is, is society to be a chaos of fighting animals, each getting what he can for himself, or is it to be a commonwealth of civilised beings where all co-operate to make the world as fine a place as possible?'

'You'll find that these labour people are just out for themselves.'

'No wonder, under existing conditions. In that they're the same as every other class. But for all that the foundations of the better system are in them. . . . I'm going to Dublin, father.'

'My boy . . .' exclaimed Ward. There was anguish in his tone.

'I must,' said Stephen. 'I've things to say and do . . . in this question and others. They're all one, remember.'

'Stephen, if you really must go I suppose you must. You're a man now, and I've no right to stop you. But think first what you're going to do. . . . You're my only son. . . . All I have to care for, and I've had a hard life, laddie . . . a lonely life. If anything happened to you . . .'

'Nothing can happen, father. I'm not a hot-headed young fool. I've never done anything I didn't think out first, and I never will.'

'And how are you going to live, Stephen? I can allow you a little money, but it won't go far in a big city.'

'We're told not to be over anxious as to what we shall eat and wherewith we shall be clothed, aren't we? . . . Trust me to find enough to live on, anyway.'

The next couple of days were spent in preparation for Stephen's departure. His more bulky luggage—and even that was but some clothing in a parcel—was sent by post to a small hotel on the north side of Dublin owned by one Doran, a friend of Ward's of days gone by; and at last with a satchel on his back and fifty pounds in his pocket Stephen said good-bye to his father at the end of the glen. Michael Ward looked older and more haggard than ever.

'I can hardly bring myself to let you go, Stephen,' he said. 'You're going off full of hope and vigour . . . to waste yourself and break yourself in a useless struggle for an ungrateful people. . . . My boy, when you're tired and worn out, won't you come back to your old father and rest?'

Stephen laughed lightly.

'I'll come back often,' he said. 'And pretty soon too. There's no need to be tragic.'

'Well, good-bye, my boy. Write soon.'

'Of course. This very night.'

They shook hands, and Stephen went down the road towards the city. It was the afternoon of Saturday the 30th of August, 1913.

An hour's walk brought him to 'The Beeches', where, over the low wall, he could see Madge and a young man swinging in hammocks close together.

'How are you, Miss Conroy?' he called.

'Hello, Mr. Ward' she replied. 'I haven't seen you for ages. Where are you off to?'

'Dublin,' said Stephen. 'Good-bye.'

'Good-bye . . . and good luck.'

'Who's that, dear?' inquired the young man, after Stephen's departure.

'Oh, a terrible bore who lives up the mountains. . . . I only know him slightly.'

'He looks rather a rustic idiot,' said the young man.

'He is,' said Madge.

Stephen walked on to Rathfarnham, where he took the tram to the city.

CHAPTER VIII

A DEAD HAND

I

THROUGH sordid lanes and decayed old streets Bernard and Crowley followed their weary little guide. It was night, and Crowley carried the bag that is more potent in some places than a royal passport.

'What purpose is there behind this profuse breeding?' Crowley ruminated. 'Young hopeful in front there is the eldest of six, besides the one that's coming to-night. What's the sense of it? Think of all the elaborate processes that go to the synthesis of one human body, to say nothing of the rational soul, and what little use can be found for it in the end. Isn't it extraordinary that Nature never gets discouraged, but goes on pouring us out by the million, with nothing in store for most of us but thirty bob a week and these kennels to live in.'

'What I wonder', said Bernard, 'is what these people mate for at all. How can they want to set up these squalid homes? And what do these grimy men and smelly women see in one another? Do they really fall in love and court each other?'

'Love? I don't know,' said Crowley. 'What is love, after all? And when both parties are adenoidal, smells don't matter. It's the uselessness of it all that bothers me. Young lives crowding on us by the thousand, doomed never to have a chance. And, mind you, one baby's as good as another. Barring odd cases, they're all born healthy, but the world's against the

slum kid from the start. Out he comes, with his skin as satiny and his little hands as neatly made as a prince's—obviously intended by his Maker to be something fine and good—and at once his environment sets to work to spoil him. God, I've seen the fleas swarming on to a little chap like flies on meat while the nurse was washing him.'

They turned down a narrow and filthy court through an archway under one of the tumbledown mansions of the main street. It was a hot summer night and the air here was stifling and fetid. They trudged on past many open doors, each of which gave forth a new and viler stench. The roadway was pitted and rutted, and littered with rubbish. Foul heaps of sweepings occurred haphazard. Buckets of horror stood on the pathway outside some of the doors; dirt was piled on the steps of others.

'I was at a dance the other night,' said Bernard, 'and one of my partners said she was quite satisfied with the world as it is and wouldn't change a bit of it.'

'Here y'are, docther,' said the little boy, stopping before a crazy door held together with packing-case battens. A dirty towelled little girl with nothing on but a tattered pinafore of unknown hue answered his knock.

'This way, docther,' she whispered, preceding them up a stairway, her bare feet pat-patting on the boards. This was not a decayed mansion, but a modern jerry-built house, and the stairs, as far as one could see in the darkness and through their own grime, were of plain deal, warped and rickety. So were the banisters, which had been cut away in places, probably for firewood. They passed a landing and went up another flight of stairs even dirtier than the first. On the next landing the little girl opened a door and beckoned to the two students to enter.

The room was twilit by the flicker of half an inch of candle stuck in a porter-bottle on the window-ledge.

The first thing that caught Bernard's eye on entering was the figure of a man lying on the floor dead drunk and snoring in the corner opposite the door. The walls of the room were covered with a dirty wallpaper of indeterminate pattern which was peeling off everywhere in large patches. The ceiling was black save where more recent flaking off of the plaster had left white splotches. The bare floor was black with dirt and littered with rubbish. Some half-washed tattered garments hung across the room on a string, intercepting what little air came through the window, one of whose broken panes was stuffed with rags and another with a piece of cardboard. About half the floor space was occupied by the bed, where amid a heap of torn and filthy bedclothes lay the prospective mother. Leaning over her and comforting her were four women of the neighbourhood. A little boy and girl aged two and three sat up among the blankets at the foot of the bed, wide-eyed and expectant.

The entry of the two students was the signal for instant commotion. The four women came bustling forward with offers of assistance, but Crowley quickly sent them packing.

'One's enough,' he said. Then to the cleanest, a fat matron of about fifty: 'You stay, ma'am. The rest of you can clear out, every one of you.'

He drove them expostulating to the door as one would a flock of hens.

'Some hot water, please,' he said to the remaining woman, who went away and presently fetched some in a dirty chipped enamel basin. A petticoat was torn down from the clothes-line for him to wipe his hands on.

A ramshackle chair and two packing-cases were the sole furniture of the room. The little girl came forward to offer the chair to the doctor, dusting the broken seat of it with the hem of her pinafore. Cats could be heard squalling on the roofs. Somewhere a clock chimed the quarter. The woman and the two young men sat down to await the birth of one of the heirs of the ages.

2

ANOTHER academic year was drawing to a close. Those of Bernard's friends who were taking courses shorter than medicine qualified and passed out. Jack Harvey, having obtained his B.A., secured, somehow or other, a post as tutor to the son of the Russian consul at Havre, affording his mother the glory of talking ever after of 'my son in the Russian Diplomatic Service'. Manders was called to the Bar, and Molloy set up as a solicitor. Fergus Moore had temporarily disappeared in search of the enjoyments afforded by the possession of 'independent means'. McGurk was going to have another cheerfully unhopeful shot at his final.

One sunny afternoon Bernard, tiring of his books, was on his way out to play tennis when he found Eugene alone in the drawing-room sunk in dejection.

'Look here, Eugene,' he said, 'you've been moping too much lately. It's bad for you. What's it all about?'

Eugene smiled wanly.

'Nothing,' he said.

'You don't mean to say you're still sighing for Madge? . . . You are . . . I say, you know, this is absurd. "If of herself she will not love, Nothing can make her. The Devil take her." There are other fish in the sea.'

'That's no consolation when you only want the one.'

'Oh, this is insanity. What's a girl? A human female. None of them is very much better than any other. They eat, drink, talk, and think very much like ourselves—not quite so well as a matter of fact. . . . Shut your eyes, take a deep breath, and forget her. I've often cured myself that way.'

'That's because you were never really in love.'

'Thank you,' said Bernard. 'Mr. Shallow stands rightly rebuked by Mr. Faithful. Teach me how to love, dear.'

'Oh, shut up. You vulgarise everything. Some day you'll fall in love yourself, and I jolly well hope the girl

won't look at you. That's what always does happen to flirts.'

'No, my boy. It only happens to sentimental galoots like you, who kneel to a girl as if you were begging a favour instead of giving one.'

'What do you mean?'

'When we ask a woman to marry us, aren't we offering to support her for the rest of her life? Of course if you make the offer as if it was a prayer for mercy, she'll keep you dangling until a better one turns up. But if you make it as if she was only one of a dozen you might ask, she'll grab you like an octopus.'

'Is that your experience?' asked Eugene coldly.

'Well, not quite. I've always managed to get disillusioned just before they've made up their minds to spring.'

'Madge isn't like that,' said Eugene.

'Of course not,' said Bernard. 'But if you'd only offer her a seat in the theatre or a rope of pearls instead of that mushy heart of yours, you'd get along much faster.'

'Do you think she'd go to the theatre with me?' asked Eugene, brightening a little.

'If you book the most expensive seats in the house and let her know that you'll provide a large box of chocolates. . . . Come along now. Get your togs and we'll buzz over to the tennis club.'

Arriving at the courts, they found the fair Madge tentatively flirting with two young men. Bernard's own beloved of the moment was also there, amusing herself at the expense of the calfish heart of his younger brother Sandy. Lounging in a deck-chair was the elegant Molly. Bernard's beloved—Phyllis was her name—came running over to him at once with the information that she had bagged the next turn at the centre court, and led him away to a vacant seat; while Eugene, after hovering miserably for a time in the vicinity of Madge and her swains, was drifting away again when he was

captured and conscripted as partner by the plain girl of the club.

'I really must have an ice,' said Bernard's partner after a strenuous set, drawing him towards the pavilion with a touch of her hand. The possessiveness of the action irritated while it thrilled him. 'Strawberry or vanilla?' he asked as they seated themselves at a table in the coolness of the lounge.

'Both,' said Phyllis.

'I'm sorry, sir,' said the maid when Bernard gave the order. 'No ices left, sir. We're short of cream, sir, on account of the strike. Will you have lemonade, sir, or claret cup?'

'Those awful strikers!' said the girl presently, sipping claret cup. 'Why can't they be sensible?'

'That's what they are,' said Bernard.

'Indeed they aren't. They must know they'll have to give in sooner or later, so why not sooner? What's the good of starving themselves and putting us to inconvenience all for nothing?'

'Then you're in favour of starving them out?' suggested Bernard.

'Oh, no. I don't mean that exactly,' said the girl, conscious of his disapproval. 'But they ought to be sensible, you know.'

Here they were interrupted by the entry of Molloy, Sandy, and two girls, also demanding ices. A chorus of execration against the despoilers of their pleasure followed.

'Really,' said one of the girls, 'that fellow Larkin ought to be shot.'

'Well, *you're* not uncertain, coy, or hard to please, anyway,' said Bernard.

The girl made a face which was intended to be roguish, and ordered lemonade.

'Shooting's too good for him,' said the other girl. 'I say, this is too thick altogether. How can one possibly *exist* in this weather without ices?'

'The people in the slums manage it somehow,' said Bernard drily.

'Oh well, they're used to it.'

'Well, you'll get used to it in time. This strike is going to go on, you know.'

'So much the worse for your slum friends,' said the girl. 'Dad says that the employers won't budge an inch, no matter how long they stay out.'

'We'll see,' said Bernard quietly. The Dad in question was one of the worst employers in Dublin, and he could not trust himself to discuss him in the presence of his daughter.

'He says that if we give in to them now they'll only ask twice as much next year. They're always discontented no matter what they have.'

'Would you be content with their wages?' Bernard asked.

'Oh, don't be absurd. That's different.'

'How is it different?'

The girl flushed angrily, at a loss for a reply; whereupon Phyllis interposed with a side glance of affectionate tolerance at Bernard.

'Don't mind him,' she said. 'He loves an argument, but he doesn't mean any of it really.'

'Yes, I do mean it,' said Bernard.

'Well, don't get so heated about it, old chap,' said Molloy. 'Personally I'm doing rather well out of the situation. You see, these fellows who have been arrested aren't well off and can't afford to go to the big men in the profession. That gives us beginners a chance. . . . Of course they're rather a low type of client, but so long as they pay I don't mind.'

'By Jove,' said Bernard, 'that's damn decent of you.'

'Well, it's more than you've ever done for the blighters, anyway, with all your talk.'

'Quite right,' said his partner. Then, turning on Bernard. 'Why don't you give your own money away if you're really a socialist?'

'That would be futile,' said Bernard. 'Can't you see—'

'Well, then, you shouldn't expect my father to give his away.'

Men are at a disadvantage in arguing with women. At this point, if the speaker had been a man, Bernard would have called him a damned fool, and, thus relieved, have proceeded to explain his point with some degree of lucidity. With a girl, since the expletive was barred, the explanation was not forthcoming either, and he could only glower in silent exasperation while his antagonist smiled delightedly over the triumph of her reasoning.

'There now. That settles it,' said Phyllis, with the best of intentions. 'Now for Heaven's sake stop arguing and let's have another game.'

Drinks being finished, there was a general move towards the door at this suggestion, but Bernard remained at the table, fuming. Phyllis came back.

'Are you vexed with me?' she asked.

'Oh, not at all,' replied Bernard, bitterly polite.

'Is it because I was against you in the argument just now?'

'I've told you I'm not vexed.'

'Yes, you are. Do you think I've no right to my own opinions?'

'Opinions?' said Bernard. 'I'm not worrying about your opinions. You don't know enough about the subject for your opinions to matter twopence. It's your instincts that matter. You're always for the rich and against the poor.'

'Oh,' said the girl impatiently, 'I'm sick of hearing you talk about the poor as if they were wronged angels. Most people are poor through their own fault.'

'Quite so,' said Bernard. 'And you and I are rich through our heroic virtues. Come on and play tennis.'

Phyllis gave voice to a long-standing grievance.

'You've got such *queer* ideas. Why can't you be *ordinary* like *other* people?'

Bernard looked at her, raging inexpressibly. The girl looked back at him, wondering why such a nice amusing young man should be so silly about some things and so much concerned about common people.

'Come and play tennis,' said Bernard again.

3

'D'YE know what it is, O'Dwyer?' said McGurk one day near the end of the summer term. 'Lascelles will never be any good unless we take him to the Gaelteacht.'

'The very thing,' said O'Dwyer. 'Will you come, Bernard?'

'You took me to one last week', said Bernard, 'and I was bored stiff.'

McGurk lifted his eyes to heaven in despair.

'God, isn't he an awful West Briton!' he exclaimed.

'These fellows who got in before compulsory Irish are a disgrace to the College,' said O'Dwyer.

'I didn't say a céilidhe, ye gam,' said McGurk. 'I said the Gaelteacht.'

'All right. What's that?'

McGurk cocked a laughing eye at O'Dwyer, but O'Dwyer was merciful.

'He means', he explained, 'that instead of spending your holidays at Ventnor or Trouville or whatever damned hole you usually go to, you should come with us to an Irish-speaking district. See what your country was like before the English civilised it.'

'All right,' said Bernard. 'I'll come'; and O'Dwyer promised to make all the necessary arrangements.

The particular portion of the Gaelteacht to which they were bound was Cloughaneely, in far-away Donegal. Bernard had often spent more conventional holidays at Bundoran, only a few miles from the place geographically, but otherwise nearly as remote from it as Bray or Portrush. The Great Northern Railway scorned to serve this last rearguard of the Gael. It would deposit them

at Strabane, whence a narrow-gauge line would carry them the rest of the journey.

A few days later the three young men, with the addition of Crowley, left Amiens Street by the nine o'clock train. They rattled above mean streets and sped out on to the great grassy viaduct that spans the inlet of the sea at Fairview. Over the flat hedge-bounded fields of north County Dublin they rushed, along the sandy coast of grassy Meath, through the once formidable Gap of the North, and into Portadown, where they changed trains for Strabane. Here they had an hour's wait and took a belated lunch. Then, on the light railway they leaped the Foyle, and plunged into the wildness of the Western World. The green pastures of Leinster and south-east Ulster were far behind them and they rattled through a land of bog and rocks. On and on they clattered and jolted, winding along in a serpentine track, now shrieking through rocky cuttings, now puffing peacefully over the open bog. Station after station fled past them, mere platforms of wood standing out of the heathery waste. To their left Errigal, grim and menacing, towered over his brother mountains. To their right stretched the flat surface of the bog, weird and lifeless in the gloaming.

'Now, look here, Bernard,' said O'Dwyer. 'Remember that you're entering a democratic country. You'd better shake off some of your Ashbury airs while you're in it. In the Gaelteacht, you know, one man's as good as another. You'll have to learn to shake hands with the people naturally, not like you would with your gardener in a moment of condescension.'

'And if you go into a shop to buy a packet of cigarettes,' said McGurk, 'they'll expect you to shake hands first and chat a bit about the weather or the times, and if they offer you some chocolate, remember it's a present, and don't try to pay for it.'

'And don't be surprised', said Crowley, 'if they tell you that you haven't much sense to come so far to learn

the Irish. They regard us Leaguers as more or less harmless lunatics.'

'So you are,' said Bernard, snatching the opportunity to get on the offensive, for their instructions hurt his self-esteem.

A few minutes later they alighted on the wind-swept platform of Cashelnagore, and were assisting the solitary porter, or stationmaster, or whatever he might be, to get their luggage out of the van. Outside the station the oldest cart in the world, drawn by the shaggiest donkey in harness, was waiting to receive it. In charge of this equipage was an ancient man with a face as rugged as the landscape and a pair of humorous eyes deep sunken between craggy cheek-bones and bushy brows. At the first greeting between this man and his friends Bernard saw at once that they had not been humbugging him. On being introduced, therefore, he did his best to make the handshake one of fellowship, with fairly creditable success. 'Just a shade overdone perhaps,' O'Dwyer commented afterwards. 'But you'll pass all right.'

The luggage was tied in place on the cart with the remains of forty ropes knotted together, while the wind romped and roared around. It was not a cold wind, but it was brutally strong, with all the momentum of an unimpeded rush over the ocean behind it. It buffeted the ears with a sound like rending sail-cloth, blew rope-ends out of reach, rumbled the matted coat of the donkey, and struck a wailing note from the single telegraph wire. When the party mounted their bicycles it blew them along in front of it like leaves. The road, undulating between uncemented stone walls, looked as if it had not been repaired since before the Flight of the Earls. The surface was deeply rutted and so covered with loose stones that a puncture sooner or later seemed inevitable. They rode warily, in single file, through a country where nothing smiled but man (who indeed had little enough to smile for): a country that God seemed to have forgotten, though his name was on every tongue there. The homing

peasants, rattling along in carts, or plodding on foot, never failed to change a cheery greeting with the travellers.

‘Tráthnóna breagh.’

‘Tráthnóna breagh, buidheachas le Dia.’

Tráthnóna : lovely dark caressing word. Tráthnóna—Vesper—*ἄσπερα*.

A young woman passed, hopping along on one bare foot, unaided by crutch or stick. ‘Tráthnóna breagh,’ she called like the rest.

‘That girl hops five miles to Mass every Sunday,’ said O’Dwyer, dropping back beside Bernard. ‘Good example to us blighters, eh?’

Soon afterwards they reached the little hamlet of Bedlam. ‘How the dickens did the place get a name like that?’ Bernard asked. But none of his friends could tell him. They went into the only shop for a drink of lemonade and a colloque with the proprietor and his wife. Bernard, introduced as having no Irish, received a warm welcome in terms of handshakes, and then had to stand rather unhappily aloof while jest and story flew unintelligibly round him. At last, however, they found themselves in the open air again, Bernard with a stranger’s extra large gift of chocolate. At the door the party sundered, Crowley and McGurk turning aside to Gortahork, while O’Dwyer and Bernard continued the uphill way towards Ardsmore.

In the gathering dusk the land seemed to grow more and more inhospitable as they proceeded. Presently, at a fork of the road, O’Dwyer chose the worse and steeper branch, an unfenced weed-grown track, worn by cart wheels into two deep permanent ruts, on which cycling was quite impossible. They toiled onwards for half a mile or more till they came to a boisterous mountain stream, which they crossed on stepping-stones, carrying their bicycles. Then on again, into the teeth of the wind, which roared dismally over the darkling bog.

The spirit suddenly went out of Bernard. Why on earth, he asked himself, had he come to this God-forsaken

spot? 'Are you sure you know your way?' he asked anxiously of O'Dwyer.

'Of course,' said O'Dwyer. 'Only another quarter of a mile to go.'

Bernard groaned, but braced himself together for a further effort. Blacker grew the night and steeper the path as they proceeded. It seemed incredible that it should lead to any human habitation. But at last, just as Bernard was about to utter his third sarcasm about O'Dwyer's idea of a quarter-mile, out of the distance came the barking of a dog; then the sound of racing feet; and a big black collie came bounding towards them.

'Good old Shep!' said O'Dwyer.

With the dog cavorting and yelping around them they reached a whitewashed cottage by the side of the track. A stout motherly woman standing at the door welcomed them in to the cheerful blaze of a huge turf fire. A tall thin sombre man rose from a chair by the hearth to greet them, while a tousle-headed girl of fifteen or so smiled sheepishly from a corner. Bernard was relieved to find that his host and hostess knew a little English, having spent some years in America. He was still more relieved—for the situation of the cottage had filled him with misgivings on this score—to find that the room into which the woman of the house now showed her guests was clean, fairly comfortable, and spacious. It was, in fact, an annexe, recently built on to the cottage for the accommodation of students taking courses in the language at the College at Gortahork. There were two beds in it, with a washstand and dressing-table, a round table covered with a red cloth, with a lighted lamp upon it, a couple of chairs, and a horsehair sofa. When the young men had had a wash and brush-up, Mrs. MacDonnell—so the woman of the house was called—came in and laid an excellent supper of home-made bread and butter, toast, and eggs, with an immense brown pot of potent tea, of all of which they made a very clean sweep. Then, after a couple of pipes, they undressed and climbed

wearily into their high old-fashioned beds, to compose themselves for sleep as best they might between the roughest of sheets on rustling straw-filled mattresses.

Half an hour later, still awake in the darkness, Bernard heard a curious chirping sound somewhere overhead.

'What's that?' he asked of his friend.

'Crickets,' said Felim O'Dwyer.

4

IN the morning, woken from slumber by the dreamy murmur of foraging hens, they found the wind fallen and the sun shining brilliantly over the rushy bog, that rolled away for miles to where the blue Atlantic lay calm beneath a cloudless sky. After breakfast they set out with their bicycles for the College. Seen in the daylight the landscape appeared rather less forbidding than before. The brown wastes were alive with snipe and rabbits. There were men toiling at their little patches of land, painfully reclaimed from the bog, or hacked out of the stony hillsides. There were tiny thatched cottages dotted here and there, with fragrant blue turf-smoke aspiring from their chimneys.

'God bless the work,' O'Dwyer would call to the nearer labourers: Bernard already understood that phrase. 'May your way lie straight before you,' would come the answer, interpreted for him by his friend.

At Bedlam the first jarring note was struck. The village was full of students, a noisy crowd of rather loutish young men and giggling girls from the anglicised parts of the country. Some were talking Irish of varying quality (mostly bad, one guessed), but the generality spoke English in the debased accents of the towns of Leinster and Ulster. Bernard and O'Dwyer pushed their way through and made towards the College, a grey stone structure, somewhat resembling a modern country church in exterior appearance, while inside it proved to contain one large hall with a couple of small rooms off it. Our friends tendered their names and their

guineas to a sturdy young man in leather gaiters named Seosamh MacShiubhlaigh, who, after some moments' thought, put down what he conceived to be the Gaelic version of Bernard's Huguenot cognomen, afterwards shaking his hand with a totally unnecessary warmth as he gave him details of hours and classes.

'That's a damned familiar blighter,' observed Bernard to O'Dwyer as they left. 'Why the dickens did he keep calling me by my Christian name?'

'Custom of the country,' replied O'Dwyer with a laugh. 'You'll get used to it. There's no Irish for Mister, you know, and if he called you Lascelles—or whatever Gaelic he's evolved for it—it would mean The Lascelles, chief of the clan.'

Thus was Bernard enrolled as a student, but his guinea was largely wasted. He was placed, of course, in the beginners' class with two very provincial girls of the most serene plainness and stupidity, a ponderous middle-aged doctor from Dundalk, and three unintelligent schoolboys. With the best intentions in the world he could have learnt nothing to such boring accompaniment; and he had no intentions. After a very few lessons, to the disgust of his friends, he ceased attendance and took to wandering about the country by himself. Thenceforward he only visited the College for an occasional céilidhe in the evening, or to hear the blind German musician, Carl Hardebeck, lecturing on the melodies he was engaged in collecting from the peasants. Sometimes he would stay at home sitting by the turf fire that burned on the open hearth under the great black pot and kettle hanging by their hooks from the chimney, and chat with Mrs. MacDonnell as she went about her housework. She was vastly more interesting to talk to than any of his family or friends in Dublin. She had observed life in America, and thought it a fine place, but, sure, what was the good of it all? She had read some of the books Bernard had left about—a couple of the latest novels, and Vanity Fair. The former she scorned ('with all that nonsense

about love'), but she thought *Vanity Fair* a good story if you had the time for it. (Thackeray's name and fame were of course unknown to her.) She could also tell a good story herself, and she would discuss abstract ideas with shrewd common sense. A young turkey which had taken a fancy to Bernard used to perch on his knee during these colloques, looking up into his face with its head a little on one side as if turning over his opinions in its mind. Hens wandered in and out of the doorway, contentedly clucking. Presently the man of the house would come in for his dinner, and Mrs. MacDonnell would take the pot off its hook, strain the potatoes and dump them out in a mighty heap on the table, pour him a bowl of tea, and cut him up a fragrant loaf, fresh from the pot oven, which had been cooling on its edge on the dresser. A little later O'Dwyer would arrive from the College, and their meal would be served in their room: a bowl of broth each, then a chicken, with potatoes and cabbage, and tea and bread and jam to wind up with. The only variant to this diet was eggs, which appeared on Friday.

'This is beginning to get a bit monotonous,' Bernard observed as he carved the sixth chicken of the week. 'Does our hostess imagine that we're a couple of valetudinarian millionaires?'

'Butcher's meat can't be got in these parts,' replied O'Dwyer. 'And as for your bill, that'll be fifteen bob a week, all found.'

'Fifteen bob!' gasped Bernard. 'How can she make any sort of profit out of that?'

'She's not out for profits,' replied O'Dwyer. 'When you're tired of chickens, say so, and she might produce some American bacon, but you'll get tired of that sooner.'

In the afternoons they would meet Crowley and McGurk, and go for a tramp to Dunlewy Lake, or a climb among the mountains. In the evenings they would go down to the céilidhe at the College, where Bernard learned how to dance the Rince Fada and the Walls of Limerick,

and was inducted into the blatant form of flirtation practised at Gaelic Colleges by no less than three moderately pretty girls. If there was no céilidhe, he and O'Dwyer would go down to the seashore, a long melancholy stretch of shingle strewn with dead brown weed and bleached driftwood, with here and there a heap of burning kelp emitting slowly-curling violet fumes. In the distance the Bloody Foreland stretched out through the gloom towards the Arctic. Close at hand the ocean beat with heavy languorous insistence.

'A thonn so thíos is áirde céim go h-árd,' O'Dwyer quoted.

'What does that mean?' Bernard asked, his interest quickened by the rolling music of the line.

'βῆ δ'αχέων παρὰ θίνα πολυφλοισβοῖο θαλάσσης,'

said O'Dwyer. 'More or less. It sounds nothing in English. Aodhagán O'Rahilly wrote it when he walked darkling above the sea on the cliffs of Kerry.'

'And who was he?' Bernard asked.

O'Dwyer uttered an exclamation of impatience.

'Who was Keats? Who was Burns? You make me sick sometimes. You don't know a damn thing about your own country, and you haven't even the grace to be ashamed of it.'

'Oh, dry up,' said Bernard. 'Who was the fellow, anyway?'

'He was Aodhagán O'Rahilly. Floruit circa 1700. The Penal days, you know. The Gaelic people of Ireland—Lecky's "degraded Catholic multitude"—could produce poets even then, when your ancestors were stamping them into the mud. . . . Come on, let's turn back. If I start thinking of those times on this God-forsaken beach, I'll go melancholy mad.'

That night it rained. It rained a great deal during their stay. Then the stepping-stones over the stream would be drowned in a turbid flood so that they had to make a detour of a mile or more to cross by the bridge,

and the peasants trudging through the downpour would philosophically murmur 'tráthnóna bog'.

On the last day of their holiday, standing on an eminence behind the cottage, they took a farewell view of the landscape spread out beneath them : of the vast brown bog with the little green fields set in it like islets in a threatening sea ; the tiny houses, with their uncomfortable realities hidden by distance ; the grey winding roads with moving specks upon them ; and beyond, as if guarding it all from the encroachment of the outer world, the barrier mountains.

'Well,' said O'Dwyer after a silence, 'do you see much connection between all this and the British Empire ? Or Modern Progress ?'

'Not much, I admit,' said Bernard.

'This is the remains of the civilisation the English destroyed and then buried under a mass of lies. Barbarians they called us, because we didn't hang murderers when they were hanging pickpockets, or treat the poor as rogues and vagabonds, and because we preferred poetry to piracy and democracy to feudalism——'

'Democracy ?' Bernard queried.

'Oh, I don't mean parliamentary institutions,' said O'Dwyer impatiently. 'I mean—oh—ways of thought and feeling—an outlook on life, that held a promise of a kinder civilisation than the damned commercial scramble we're accustomed to. The roots of it are still here, but it never had a chance to flower, because the English trampled it into the earth. To their minds a civilisation without a well-used gallows, an efficient poor-law, and a proper system of land monopoly by the rich wasn't a civilisation at all, so they proceeded to murder it—in the approved English fashion, with fire and sword, treachery, and cant.'

Bernard looked at his friend. O'Dwyer seemed so young to be so very implacable.

'All this is very ancient history, isn't it ?' Bernard suggested.

'No,' said O'Dwyer. 'That's just where you fool yourself. The war against Irish civilisation is still going on. Why, it's only six or seven years since Irish ceased to be forbidden in the schools, and they're still largely ruled by the dead hand of Whately.'

'Who was Whately?' Bernard asked.

'Shall I ever plumb the depths of your ignorance?' said O'Dwyer. 'Whately was the Protestant Archbishop who dominated the beautiful educational system of this Catholic country a generation ago. His job was to knock the national spirit out of the children, and if he failed it wa y't his fault. First he attacked the language. Irish was forbidden in the schools even in the Irish-speaking districts, and children who knew nothing else were punished for using it. Then he took hold of the reading-books and expurgated them. He knocked out every reference not only to Irish patriotism, mind you, but to patriotism of any kind. One of the poems he cut out was Scott's "Breathes there the man with soul so dead?" Instead of it he inserted this touching verse:

"I thank the goodness and the grace
That on my birth have smiled,
And made me in these Christian days
A happy English child."

Can you imagine the little barefooted Connacht children reciting that drivel? Well, that's the spirit that's still at work in our schools. It's not so blatant as it was, of course, but that's only because we live in a more squeamish age. The whole of our educational system is purposely designed to anglicise the people.'

Bernard had nothing to say.

'So you see', O'Dwyer resumed, 'I'm not merely worrying over past history—"nursing ancient grievances" I believe is the cant phrase. The present is quite worrying enough. But what really maddens me is the thought of the might-have-beens. I know what was in us, what we could have given to the world. It's as

real to my mind as if I'd created it myself. It's in yours too, if you only knew it, only you choose to call it Socialism. And, as I say, its roots are still here, and please God, when we've got rid of the English, we'll make them shoot afresh.'

5

WHEN Bernard and his friends returned to town they found the industrial war raging with undiminished intensity. It was a sadly unequal fight. The resources of the trade unions were not equal to their spirit, and they were approaching their term. The men and their families were on the shortest of rations, many of them on the verge of starvation. Infant mortality, which is high in Dublin at the best of times, was rapidly increasing. The employers, on the other hand, had only to wait. Time would inevitably give them the victory. For their own part all that was needed was hardness of heart, and of that they proved to have a sufficiency.

A side incident of the struggle had for the moment diverted attention from the main issue. Some charitable persons in England had offered to adopt temporarily the children of strikers whose needs were greatest; the priests had at once taken alarm lest the faith and morals of their charges should suffer by their transference from the slums in which boys and girls slept in the same room, and often in the same bed, with their parents, to the pagan atmosphere of England; and a furious controversy had sprung up which was still raging. The proposal was being denounced as a malignant attack on the Faith of the Irish people, a subtle Freemason plot to undermine the authority of the Church, and so forth; the gutter Press was pouring out filth on its promoters; poets and philosophers who defended the scheme were being held up to opprobrium by slum landlords and close-fisted employers: in short, the capital was enjoying an orgy of its favourite mess of hate and humbug seasoned with religion.

Meanwhile the serious business of breaking the strike went on. Starvation was increasing; babies were dying. Tempers were giving way under the strain. There were frequent collisions between police and strikers; heads were being broken; prison cells were filling up. And every day the inevitable surrender loomed nearer.

Then suddenly came a helping hand. English labour had awakened to the importance of the battle in Dublin, and begun to see it as their own. Over the sea came ships laden with food for the fighters, and the grim struggle, on the verge of collapse, went on.

One afternoon Bernard set out with O'Dwyer on a tour of inspection. They met McGurk in Westmoreland Street and stopped for a moment to talk, but two burly policemen interrupted them.

'Move on now,' said one. 'No gatherin's are allowed.'

The 'gathering' broke up, McGurk continuing his way towards Grafton Street, the other two making for the river. A patrol of mounted police clattered by.

'Stimulating, isn't it?' said O'Dwyer. 'I do love a bit of coercion.'

On the quay they came upon the end of a queue of women and children waiting their turn to be served with rations from one of the distributing stations. They carried sacks and boxes and all kinds of queer battered domestic utensils. In their eyes was a uniform look of patient misery. Bernard and O'Dwyer passed the whole length of the queue, which was nearly two hundred yards long: two hundred yards of human dirt, disease, and wretchedness.

'My God!' said Bernard, 'how can men allow this kind of thing to go on?'

At the same moment a smartly-dressed figure came bustling out of the distributing office. It was Molloy. He recognised them at once and came forward, lighting a cigarette.

'Hallo, are you on strike too?' asked O'Dwyer.

Molloy grinned. 'I've just been looking into the

affairs of some of my clients,' he explained. 'Awful-looking crew, aren't they? You fellows coming my way? Well, tol-lol!' and he was gone.

One of the food-ships had been sighted just before this and was now making her way to the quay-side. Bernard experienced a queer kind of thrill when he saw her.

'See!' he said to O'Dwyer. 'She's from England, the country you hate. How do you reconcile that with your national quarrel theory? This is a class war, and the working class is solid whatever flag flies over it.'

'Rot!' said O'Dwyer. 'The English labour crowd want their battle fought out here. It saves them the trouble and expense. What are a few tons of food to them?'

Bernard shrugged his shoulders, feeling that O'Dwyer was entrenched impregably in prejudice. They turned now into the wilderness of slums behind the quays. It was an area utterly abandoned to dirt and ugliness, without a solitary sign to show that any hand had ever attempted to give it one touch of order or decency. Many of the houses were beginning to fall, not from age, but from their own original worthlessness aided by continual misuse. Nearly every window seemed to be broken, and the holes stuffed with rags or paper. Some had been completely boarded up. Doors, pillars, railings, the lamp-posts in the streets, all were uniformly battered and befouled. And the people, lounging in the doorways, or hanging out of the windows, matched their dwellings: dirty unkempt men; pasty-faced slatternly girls, with decayed teeth or none at all; children running wild like animals, all in rags, many of them diseased, none of them quite healthy; infants crushingly wrapped in the foul shawls of their sisters, or sprawling amid the germ-laden dust of the roadway; old women, the most horrible of all: vermin-haunted bundles of rags with grime-enseamed faces tottering to the grave. 'Citizens of a mighty Empire!' said Bernard to himself.

All this neighbourhood had been built intentionally to

be a slum. But our friends emerged presently upon a street of a different complexion, a broad thoroughfare, lined with fine old houses, which had been a fashionable quarter in the brief period of prosperity which had followed the winning of legislative independence in 1782. Dublin is a city of blighted beginnings, the legacy of that period of swiftly-strangled hopes. The Bank of Ireland was built to house the Parliament which within a few years of its opening had ceased to exist. The Custom House no longer has any customs to collect. The centre of the city, designed as part of a great town-planning scheme, remains unfinished as the Irish Parliament left it, hemmed in all round by meanly-planned provincialised commercial streets. The mansions of the rich have sunk into tenements for the poor. They stand with a sort of mournful dignity amid the surrounding squalor, stoically enduring of the outrages inflicted on them by their plebeian inhabitants. Their mellow brickwork still defies the forces of decay; but everything else has succumbed. One hears of marble mantelpieces wantonly smashed, of carved panels and balustrades used for fuel.

'Glories of private enterprise,' commented Bernard, surveying the wreckage, human and material.

'Glories of British Government' was O'Dwyer's retort.

'Pooh! England has her own slums, and so has every country. It's simply the legacy of last century's unfettered individualism——'

'An English characteristic,' interrupted O'Dwyer.

'There it is, anyway. The disease has been diagnosed. It's the cure that puzzles us. Our housing reformers at present seem to have got hold of the wrong end of the stick altogether. Look at that new model tenement house over there. Already half the windows are smashed, the usual dirty linen is hanging on that ridiculous balcony, and the inside is as dirty as ever. What's the good of building new houses without altering the people? In a few more years that new model thing will be just as bad as the old mansion that it replaced, and not half

as picturesque. We ought to smash the whole thing up. Strip the people of their rags and camp them all by the side of a lake somewhere in the country. Then have a big conflagration and burn up the houses, dirt, bacilli, and everything. Then build a new city on my plan,—or, better still, start building first on a new site altogether. Of course, we'd have to nationalise the land first; but I'd give very little compensation. After all, people who've been drawing unearned income out of land have no right to complain if society decides that it can't afford to let them go on doing so. I'd compensate in full up to a thousand pounds—that would prevent hardship to poorish people who've invested their savings in the business—and confiscate every square inch beyond that. Then I'd build . . .'

'How would you get the British Parliament to agree to all this?' interrupted O'Dwyer again.

'Oh, bother the British Parliament for the moment——'

'There you are! You're thinking like an Irishman at last. An Irish Parliament would do what you want. We've never had an undue respect for property rights, and we've always regarded the land as belonging to the people. That's why the English called us uncivilised.'

'Well, under Home Rule . . .'

'A Home Rule Parliament will have no power to do that sort of thing . . .'

'Let me go on, anyway. As I was saying, I'd build the whole city on new lines, with broad streets, wide open spaces, plenty of parks, trees everywhere, and fountains; and I'd limit the size of the houses to ordinary human needs—so that there'd be no mansions and no kennels. The houses would surround a square, so that there'd be a big common area in the centre, into which the back garden of each house would lead. There'd be trees and grass there. This would give every house plenty of free space and a fair amount of private space as well. Oh, and above all I'd abolish the possibility of slums, aristocratic quarters, snobbery and class hatred by appro-

priating all house-property to the state and having a low and universal rental, so that scholars, commercial men, shopkeepers, labourers, and marquises (unless I succeed in abolishing them) shall live side by side and their children play in the common square. . . . I have it all so clear in my mind. It's absolutely real to me, you know, this imaginary city. But when I try to get other people to see it they only smile indulgently. . . . Tell me, why is it that the ordinary man and woman—especially the ordinary woman—regards dirt, disorder, poverty, and injustice as “practical”, and decency a fantastic dream?’

‘Because the ordinary man and woman are damned fools,’ replied O’Dwyer promptly. ‘But they aren’t the real obstacle—I mean the effective obstacle. If they were, civilisation would never have progressed anywhere. The ordinary man would still believe the earth is flat if he wasn’t told otherwise by people who know better. The obstacle we’ve got to overcome is British Government.’

‘Always the same old answer,’ said Bernard.

‘To me it’s such an obvious truism,’ said O’Dwyer. ‘You take a country and you rob it of its government and exchequer, transferring them to another country across the sea. What must happen? The best brains and ability in the plundered country either waste themselves in a futile effort to regain their rights, or else go over to the foreign capital to employ their capacities where there’s an outlet and a market for them. Their own country is thus left to the mediocrities and the incapables. Keep that process up long enough and you eventually get the state of things now existing in Ireland. . . . My dear chap, England won’t let us improve our position. If we were to prosper we’d soon cease to be her kitchen-garden and the dumping-ground for her cheap manufactures.’

They had almost shaken off the slums by now, and had reached a more respectable locality. Bernard turned back for a last look, and said :

The dirt and disease and discomfort of all this are bad enough, but I think the worst part of it all is its ugliness. What sort of souls can you breed down there ?

'Dublin fusiliers,' said O'Dwyer.

They walked on in silence for a while and then O'Dwyer spoke again.

'What we've seen to-day is bad enough,' he said, 'but it's only one of a thousand results of British rule. Why are we cityless, harbourless, without industries, rottenly educated, and declining in population ? There's a rather delightful article on Ireland in the old Encyclopædia Britannica written by someone quite obviously prejudiced against us. In the year before the Union he says there were forty silk mercers in Dublin ; fifteen years after the Union, as well as I remember, only about half a dozen were left ; ten years after that there was only one, and what became of him isn't recorded. Doesn't that speak for itself ? Then, apart from France, which is committing race suicide, we're the only country in Europe with a declining population : also we're the only country in Europe under British rule. Isn't that, to say the least of it, significant ? The position of the Unionists is to me incomprehensible. I've longed to set Ireland free ever since I first heard she'd been conquered . . . longer than I can remember, in fact. I dreamed of wars of liberation before I went to school ; and later on I dreamed of great projects of reconstruction. In my imagination I've built great cities and harbours, roads, bridges, fleets, and forts. I've made laws and raised armies and founded industries. I've even built a cathedral more splendid than Solomon's Temple. These are the things that matter to me. It's torture to me to see pictures of Parliament houses in Venezuela, or harbours in Canada, or cathedrals in Italy. They only remind me of the might-have-beens of Ireland. Sometimes when hope for Ireland seems dead I go back deliberately to my imaginings and try to satisfy myself with them. But it's no use. Actuality is only too obvious. Here is Ireland,

a land of tumble-down villages, wrecked cities, empty harbours, and tubercular people; the back garden from which John Bull gets his bacon and butter and the roast beef of old England. To say I hate England is to express a very small part of my feeling for her. I loathe her, I detest her, and I curse her.'

O'Dwyer stopped abruptly and seemed a little ashamed of his emotional explosion. But Bernard had lent only half an ear to the last part of his harangue. An earlier portion had caught and held his attention.

'I dreamed of cities and things like you,' he said. It was the first time he had ever thought of making such a confession. 'But it wasn't for Ireland,' he added. 'The world was my country then . . . but it's a big place.'

'Why, we're kindred spirits,' said O'Dwyer; and they started comparing notes.

6

THAT night Bernard had a letter to write. After addressing it, discovering that he had no stamps, he went the round of the house to borrow one, but found that nobody else had any either. It was too late for a post office to be open, so he decided, as the early delivery of his letter was important, to search the sacred and inviolate bureau in his father's consulting-room: Sir Eugene was out, at his Club. In none of the drawers could he find what he wanted, and finally he opened a rather obvious secret drawer, which proved to contain nothing but a few sheets of manuscript. At sight of them he gave a start, for the handwriting was that of his dead uncle Christopher. He knew it well, having frequently re-read that last letter of his, puzzling over its abrupt termination. Now, without thinking, he began to read the top sheet in the drawer.

'When I was a boy I dreamt like you of states and cities, and my games were very similar to yours. My ambition was to make the world a fine well-ordered place . . .'

A queer suspicion gripped Bernard. He took the sheets out of the drawer. There were three of them. The sentence he had just read began abruptly at the top of the paper. With a quick movement he took out his pocket-book and extracted Uncle Christopher's letter. In a moment it was clear what had been done. The three sheets from the drawer were the main part of the letter, of which he had only received the beginning and end. Something said by Augustine Reilly at their meeting eighteen months ago recurred to his memory: something about a lot of paper being used. He, too, had been surprised by the small result.

Piecing the letter together, Bernard read as follows :

3rd October, 1899.

My dear Bernard,—

If ever you read this letter you will be reading the words of a dead man, for if I survive the enterprise on which I am about to set out I hope to be spared long enough to say to you what I am now going to write. I find it difficult to realise that my words are addressed, not to the little boy I parted from yesterday, but to a young man of twenty-one. However, I shall begin at once.

When I was a boy I dreamt like you of states and cities, and my games were very similar to yours. My ambition was to make the world a fine well-ordered place with good laws and good roads and beautiful well-built cities and a strong healthy population to inhabit it. Yours, I should think, would be the same. But I differed from you in one thing. My parents taught me to know and love my own country, Ireland. They taught me her history, her glorious beginnings, her splendid struggle, her miserable tragedy, so that the desire of my life has always been to drive out her oppressor and make her once more peaceful and prosperous like the land of my boyish dreams. As a young man I took part in an ill-conceived attempt to achieve this end. We failed. My companions all lost their liberty and I myself had a narrow escape. For years I have

waited for another opportunity to strike a blow at the enemy, and now at last it has come. The British Empire is about to deprive yet another little nation of its liberty, and in a few days I sail from here to go to the help of the Boers.

So much for myself. I should be the last person ever to try and influence the principles of another. These I think should be the spontaneous outcome of the individual mind and will. But you, Bernard, are going to be brought up in ignorance of your country's history, in ignorance of her needs, in ignorance almost of her name. That I do wish to combat, and I earnestly implore you to break through that ignorance by reading now, if, as I suppose, you have not done so, the history of Ireland. What decision you may take after you have done so I shall not presume to say, but if you are the boy I take you for I am certain what it will be.

And what history should you read? Of course I should suggest an impartial one. But is there such a thing? Is there such a thing for any country? Human nature is such that the history one writes of one's own country is sure to be prejudiced one way, and what one writes of another country will be prejudiced the other way. The truth is not in us. And the histories that profess to be impartial (for most of them realise the futility of the pretence) are really more misleading than any. They seem to think that impartiality consists in telling half the truth or in throwing sops to both sides. Therefore I can only advise you to read as many histories as you can and form your own judgment as to where the truth lies.

Most of my fortune is embarked upon this present enterprise, but the remainder I am leaving to you by will. It is not enough for you to live on, which is just as well, as I don't want you to become one of the idle rich. But it is at least enough to make you your own master. Call on Mr. Augustine Reilly, my cousin and solicitor, who will give you full particulars.

And now, Bernard, I'll say good-bye. This letter may

never have to be delivered. I sincerely hope so myself. But in case things go wrong, good-bye, and God bless you.

*I remain,
Your affectionate uncle,
Christopher Reilly.*

The letter finished, Bernard sat back in his father's chair, angry and puzzled. It was impossible to doubt what had happened. He remembered his father's apology for the opened envelope. He felt outraged. Not only had his private correspondence been read and his property stolen, but he had been treated like a child, for whom certain knowledge was deemed unfit. Of course his father had done it 'for the best'. That only made it the more galling. It was an insult to his intelligence and his judgment that stung his pride maddeningly. The damnable obscurantism of such an action! When would the father recognise that his son was a man, able to think for himself?—not afraid, like his protector, of thinking for himself.

Thus, for quarter of an hour or so, he fumed and fretted, composing bitter speeches with which to confront his father on his return. But gradually, as the heat went out of his blood, a change came over his mood. What need, he asked himself, to make a fuss? The deception, after all, had failed in its purpose. Why raise unnecessary unpleasantness? Better put the letter back and say nothing about it. But then he wanted to keep the letter, that living hero-call to the young generation—to himself—from the warrior going forth to die in a hopeless cause. Probably his father never looked into that secret drawer. Perhaps he had forgotten where he had put the papers. Bernard wavered. Even as he did so he heard his father's latchkey turn in the hall door, and in another moment Sir Eugene entered the consulting-room.

'Hello! What are you doing here?' he said.

'I was looking for a stamp, father.'

'Well, you've no business to go to my desk. Don't you know that that's dishonourable?'

The blood rushed to Bernard's cheeks, and his heart jumped violently. Before he could control himself he blurted out:

'And don't you think it's dishonourable to steal letters?'

Sir Eugene's face became black with rage.

'You insolent cur!' he shouted. 'How dare you speak to me like that!'

Bernard was his father's son. His own anger boiled over simultaneously.

'What did you mean by stealing my uncle's letter?' he demanded.

'Stealing?' said Sir Eugene. 'Do you know what you're saying?'

'Yes. I said stealing. My uncle Christopher's letter. You stole it. Here it is.' Between each sentence Bernard gulped. He was almost incoherent with wrath.

His father's anger, on the other hand, had given place to a disagreeable consciousness of wrongdoing. He stood rather helplessly looking at his strangely transfigured son. Then he began—unheard-of action on his part—to justify himself.

'It wasn't stealing, you know. As your father, it was my duty to—to shield you from bad influences. Your uncle was a traitor. He was trying to make you the same.' He paused, and added petulantly: 'I wish to Heaven I'd burnt the thing. I only kept it so as to show it to you when you were old enough to think for yourself.'

'Ninety-nine?' suggested Bernard.

'Bernard, for God's sake tear the thing up now and don't read it.'

'I've read it already.'

'Well, burn it and think no more about it.'

'Look here, father. You must think very highly of a cause if you're afraid that a few words in its favour will make me take it up.'

'Young men are easily led into romantic absurdity, Bernard.'

'Still, it would surely have been better to let me see the letter and put your case against it instead of deceiving me.'

'I acted for the best, my boy. I was hasty, I admit, but I was so afraid for your future.'

'Well,' said Bernard, 'I'll say no more. What's done can't be undone, and things have come out all right in the end. . . . Good night, father.'

'Don't do anything rash, my boy,' Sir Eugene pleaded. 'Some day, perhaps, when you have a son that you're proud of and have hopes for, perhaps you'll understand my position.'

'That's all very well,' said Bernard, a little mollified. 'But I can't be kept in leading-strings all my life, can I? Good night now. I'm not making a grievance out of this. But the time does come when the business of being father and son must end. You must realise that I'm grown up——'

'You've no experience, my boy——'

'Well, I must get some. That's the whole point. Now let's forget about it.'

He folded his uncle's letter carefully and put it in his pocket-book, and went out with a rather awkward 'Good night.' Sir Eugene, left alone, dropped into his chair with a sigh. This clash of wills, this severance of individuality, is the inevitable lot of parenthood—as inevitable as the falling of ripe fruit from the tree. The incidents of his breach with his own father came back vividly to his memory. For a moment he had a sense of the tragedy of the universe. But it was only for a moment. On the whole, life had always seemed very pleasant to Sir Eugene Lascelles.

7

DURING the following week Bernard ransacked the booksellers of Grafton Street and the Quays and bought every book about Ireland that he could find. They made a miscellaneous collection. There was Joyce's Concise History, Lecky's five volumes, Jonah Barrington, John Mitchell, Fintan Lalor, Standish O'Grady, O'Connor-Morris, A. M. Sullivan, Mrs. Stopford Green, Joyce, Barry O'Brien; the Autobiography of Wolfe Tone; The Jail Journal; The Spirit of the Nation; recently published Nationalist and Unionist brochures.

Surveying the collection he realised that he could never tackle them in town in that sunny weather, so he resolved to take a few days extra holiday for the purpose. He therefore took a tent down to Malahide and camped in a favourite situation near the sea. Then he settled down to his task.

He read the History of Ireland. He read of her half-legendary beginnings, of her semi-historical heroic period, of her early arts and sciences. He read of her astounding conversion to Christianity and of the glorious days when she seemed to be entirely devoted, as no other country before or since has been devoted, to religion and learning: of the days when she was a university to a dark and savage Europe. Then he read of the desperate long-drawn-out struggle with the Norsemen when she seemed doomed to destruction but won through by the valour of her sons and the genius of Brian Borumha. Evil days followed on her triumph, and he read with dismay of the sickening dissensions that broke up the nearly completed unity of the nation and left it at the mercy of the organised invader from England. Then he read of the seven hundred years' struggle against the strangling grip of the conqueror: of Godfrey O'Donnell and Edward Bruce and Art MacMurrough; of the Geraldines and Shane the Proud and Hugh O'Neill;—heroic efforts, tragic failures that served only to rivet the chains more firmly.

He read on as generation after generation in turn took up the sword only to fall beaten and exhausted : Owen Roe O'Neill and the men of 1641 ; Sarsfield and the men of the Williamite wars ; passed in a splendid and mournful pageant before his eyes. Then came the crowning disaster of Limerick, and the dreadful century of martyrdom and degradation that followed ; when the Irish people were landless outlaws in their own land, their religion proscribed, their ancient culture destroyed, all human rights denied to them. Then came the gleam of temporary hope and fugitive success in 1782, followed by the lurid catastrophe of 1798, and finally the sordid transaction of the Union with Great Britain came as a pitiful anti-climax. Yet for this indomitable nation the struggle was not yet over. Came the tithe war and then the battle for religious emancipation, won eventually from the fear of the conqueror for this disarmed and weary people. Then the Repeal agitation, the trumpet call of Young Ireland, the hideous tragedy of the great famine, and the miserable collapse of the '48 insurrection. With quarter of the population dead and another quarter flying over the seas for life was Ireland conquered yet ? No. At the call of the Fenians he saw her draw the sword again, and again fall beaten to the ground. Finally he came to Parnell and modern history, and saw the survivors of that wonderful nation peaceably, reasonably, yet firmly for all that, asking for a tithe of their rights, and clinging to their demand in face of perpetual rebuffs. The history of a wasted island.

Writers of Irish history may be divided into three classes. First there are those who regard the subjugation of smaller peoples as a natural right of larger peoples, and of England in particular, and treat the resistance of the conquered as a crime which should be punished by massacre, spoliation, and oppression. This school includes plain liars like Froude, and smug casuists like Macaulay. Their offences against truth and against reason cannot be described in brief. The second class accepts the

dominance of England as part of the order of creation, but admits that much of her treatment of Ireland is worthy of censure. Lecky, who belongs to this class, goes farther. While enthusiastically defending the British connection, he indicts England's misdeeds with a thoroughness which leaves nothing to be desired. The minor fry, however, mainly compilers of school textbooks, affect an air of impartiality by glossing over English atrocities and stressing the horror of Irish retaliations. They generally fall between the two stools into hypocrisy or absurdity. Both of these schools have this in common. The moral to be drawn from their histories is that the Irish people, alone among the nations of the world, owe their first loyalty to another country; and that the proper course for Irishmen during the past seven hundred years was to give unswerving devotion to England, no matter what she might choose to inflict on them, in the humble hope that in some future enlightened age she might, at her own sweet will, remove their grievances.

Bernard's was not the sort of mind to be deceived by the sophistries of historians such as these. It very rapidly became plain to him that the truth was with the third school, the Nationalists. Good, bad, and indifferent, their tale was a plain one. They might exaggerate, they might be inaccurate in their knowledge, they might be bombastic, but they bore the stamp of essential truth, and voiced the authentic instinct of the people. Indeed, if the Froudes and Macaulays are right, if Irish history is not the story of a people rightly struggling to be free, if it is a mere account of a mutinous province engaged for century after century in treason against its lawful government, then it is utterly meaningless, and the Irish people are the most extraordinary community on the face of the earth. Bernard could not read it in that light. In fact Unionist special pleading showed him its falsity even more clearly than Nationalist tirades. What he saw, long before he had finished his reading, was that a civilisation, a culture, a philosophy, a language, had been

deliberately and brutally murdered. He could perceive, dimly as yet, the rich potentialities, that had been brought to nothing, of that ancient world. Cloughaneely took on a new meaning for him. He could sympathise with O'Dwyer's lamentations. He groaned in spirit: 'What we might have done for the world had this heavy hand been lifted off us! The wasted, wasted effort!'

He thought of the mighty men who had worn themselves out in the futile struggle: of Hugh O'Neill, soldier and statesman, beaten and broken to a miserable surrender; of Owen Roe, as great a general as Cromwell, who threw up a brilliant career on the Continent to serve his country and die in the attempt; of Wolfe Tone, a statesman of the noblest type, who attempted a greater task than Hannibal, and perished by his own hand in a dungeon cell; of the brilliant constructive intellects of the Young Irelanders wasted and smashed by the conqueror's unrelenting hand; of Parnell sacrificed to the hypocrisy of pretended liberators. What might not the world have gained from these had not duty called them to take up their motherland's eternal cause? Burning anger entered into his soul at the thought: anger such as he had never felt before—save once. The same feelings surged up in him, only more intensely, as on that distant day at Ashbury when he had seen Sherringham smash Reppington's steam engine. 'You've destroyed something you can't replace,' he had said on that occasion, and the same phrase recurred to him now. Ashbury. The recollection brought up other associations in his mind. The whole spirit of England's treatment of Ireland resembled the spirit he had so hated at Ashbury.

Deep in thought he walked down to the shore, where the sea lapped quietly against the flat shelving rocks. What was to be done? After the long tragedy which he had read Home Rule seemed an anti-climax. No doubt it would be a valuable instrument of democracy, but the powers it gave were inadequate for any really drastic reform or reconstruction. Young parvenu coun-

tries like Canada and Australia—mere colonies of England—had received more freedom for the asking than would be granted to this ancient nation that had fought so bravely for it. But then, the people expected no more. Their elected representatives had accepted the Bill. The hopes of a generation were centred upon it. In a year from now it would be actually in operation.

‘It’ll never be in operation.’ O’Dwyer’s constantly repeated assertion re-echoed in his memory. ‘On some pretext or another they’ll trick us in the end. We’ll get nothing out of England except by force.’

Not so very long ago Bernard had treated this view with scorn. But now he was less confident. There were signs of ill omen abroad which stood out vividly in the light shed by history. The opposition to Home Rule in the North-east was daily becoming more vociferous, more explicit in its declarations. It was backed by the whole influence of a powerful English party; and that party was already talking frankly of opposing the peaceful policy of the Irish people with violence. Supposing the Liberal Government gave way before its growing difficulties. Supposing there was a General Election and a Unionist victory. What then? Was Ireland tamely to submit? to forgo her hopes of regeneration until England should again see reason? His blood heated at the thought. Yet what hope was there in an appeal to force? The country was completely weaponless; its people entirely untrained. When the Territorial Army had been started a few years before in England, no branch of it had been permitted in Ireland—a wise provision on the conqueror’s part. With a horrible clarity Bernard realised the utter helplessness of his nation.

He walked back moodily to his tent. Had his uncle brought about his enlightenment only to lacerate his heart with the same fruitless anger that tormented Felim O’Dwyer? What hope, what purpose had these friends of his? Did they really look to any future, or were they satisfied with a morbid contemplation of the past?

A phrase of Fergus Moore's suddenly stood out in his memory: 'A dwarf fighting a giant throws away his sword and appeals to the giant's reason.' And again: 'We can't be free till we're educated, and we can't be educated till we're free.' But even the educated did not want freedom. On the contrary they cared the least about it. 'Genteel dastards' Mitchell had called them—Mitchell with his high courage and purpose, deserted by his people, carried away into captivity beyond the ocean. 'How long, O Lord, how long?'

In such turbulence of mind he tossed sleeplessly on his narrow camp bed until the sun crept up out of the eastern sea.

CHAPTER IX

A MEETING

I

A YOUNG man in the middle twenties, not tall but powerfully built, with a leathern satchel on his back and a tough ash-plant in his hand, alighted from the Rathfarnham tram at Nelson Pillar and stood looking about him with mingled interest and astonishment. To a dweller in the country, as everything about this young man from his bronzed complexion to his rough-cut clothing proclaimed him to be, his first impression of a city, even if he be prepared for it by photographs and descriptions, is bound to be one of stupefaction, for no description can adequately convey an appreciation of the eternal roar and rattle of traffic, and no photograph can impart the sensation of being alone in a crowd of hurrying and unnoticed humanity. And on that day Dublin must have been particularly stupefying. For the streets were more than ordinarily thronged with people, many of whom stood about in little muttering groups until the police came and moved them on. The police were very much in evidence, the glittering metal-work of their helmets showing here and there above the heads of the crowd, while others patrolled the street on horseback. There was mental tension in the atmosphere, perceptible even to the stranger.

He turned and addressed a dirty ill-clad figure lounging against the railings round the Pillar.

'There seems to be some sort of expectation in the air,' he said. 'What's going to happen?'

The lounge took from his mouth the short black clay pipe he was smoking, spat voluminously into the street, and replied contemptuously.

'D'ye mean to say ye don't know that?'

'Obviously,' returned Stephen, for it was he, 'or I shouldn't ask.'

'Yer English maybe?' said the lounge.

'Maybe I'm not,' said Stephen.

'Then yer accent deceived me.'

'Well, what's going to happen, anyway?'

'Is it the counthry yev come from now?'

'Yes. But . . .'

'Ah, it's fine to be livin' in the country at this time o' year. I do be mindin' the time I was livin' in the county Wexford an' me a boy. Them was the gran' times entirely. But musha 'twas another thing for the young men. Up workin' before the sun an' maybe not gettin' to bed till a long time aafter. Sure the city's good enough for me.'

He gave a sigh and began to pare chips off a plug of greasy tobacco he took from his pocket.

'But will you tell me what's all the excitement about?' said Stephen as patiently as he could.

'Yerra, what would it be about but Jim Laarkin? He has the whole town turned upsydown this twelve months maybe. . . . Him an' his "To hell wid conthtracts." Why can't he let well alone? That's what I say.'

'But what has he done now?'

'It's going to hold a meetin' he is, as if we hadn't enough and to spare this three months. . . . I'd meetin' him begob if I got me hands on um, so I would.'

'And when is the meeting to be?'

'It's not goin' to be at all. . . . It's . . . what d'ye call it? . . . Proclaimed. Laarkin swears he'll hold it all the same though. An' maybe he will, an' maybe he won't.'

'And where and when is it to be?'

'Sure there won't be anny meetin' at all, I'm tellin' ye. Leastways, there mightn't be.'

'But supposing it's held, where will it be?'

'It'll be here, o' course, afther twelve o'clock Mass.'

'I see. Thank you.'

'Have y' e'er a match?'

'No. I'm sorry.'

'Arra, what good are ye? Why, I mind the time . . .'

But Stephen did not wait for any more reminiscences. He went over to the sweet-shop at the corner and asked the way to the street where his hotel was. Dusk was falling as he climbed up the slope of Cavendish Row. Five minutes' walk took him to his destination, a shabby-looking house grandiosely labelled in large soot-grimed gilded letters:

HO EL NEPTU E

He waited in the tarnished hall wondering what could have induced anyone to buy the vases, mirrors, stands, statues and pictures with which it was encumbered, while the slovenly steepling maid went to fetch the proprietor. The latter emerged eventually from dim regions at the back of the house, a fat, genially-smiling man clad in shiny grease-spotted clothes. He held out a fat moist hand to Stephen, saying:

'An' are you the son of oul' Mick Ward? I'm right glad to see you. Yer bag's here safe an' sound. An' how's yer father? Come along up an' I'll show ye yer room. Mind ye don't thrip there. I've been goin' to have that carpet tacked down this three year, but I always forget, an' sure what does it matter? Ye mus' be tired afther yer thramp. I've toul' them to bring y'up some tay to the coffee-room, an' maybe ye'll thry a bit o' cold mate.'

At this point they reached the room assigned to Stephen.

'When yer done washin' ye can come down,' said his host, leaving him alone.

Stephen surveyed the room. Its seedy appearance and musty atmosphere were very oppressive to eyes and lungs accustomed to greenery and mountain air. But the room was large and had a generous window, for the Hotel Neptune was an old Georgian mansion in the second stage of the descent which Dublin houses of that kind inevitably follow. When the Act of Union drove its original aristocratic owner to London it had become the abode of comfortable people of the middle class. This was the first stage of the descent. As the house grew shabbier and society deserted the north for the south side of the city such tenants no longer sought it, and it descended to the second stage. When its present proprietor smashed or died it would pass into the third stage, becoming converted into offices for obscure societies and struggling young solicitors. Finally it would become a tenement house, and remain so until the day of its ultimate collapse.

Stephen washed and went down to the coffee-room, where on a tablecloth stained with gravy and mustard was laid a meal consisting of tea, bread and butter, jam, and nearly cold beef. In the centre of the table was a dismal and crooked cruet-stand: one of whose bottles was missing, another empty, while dried-up mustard occupied the third, a pinch of pepper the fourth, and quarter of an inch of vinegar the fifth. The tea was served in a chipped earthenware pot with a cover that did not match; the handles of the knives were loose and the blades worn and battered; while the prongs of the fork were bent, with traces of dried-up egg between them. In spite of these deterrents to appetite he made a good meal, distracted a little by the chatter of his host who sat with him for a while. Almost immediately after he went upstairs to bed, and lulled by the gradually decreasing sounds of traffic, fell asleep.

2

MASS was over at the Pro-Cathedral. The congregation swept in a dense jostling stream along the narrow alley

leading into Sackville Street, carrying Stephen along with it. In the great thoroughfare there was an air of expectation tenser than on the night before. There were small knots of Transport Workers here and there, but most of the occupants of the street were church-goers in their Sunday best who had paused on the way to and from their devotions in anticipation of excitement. The police were even more conspicuous than on the Saturday and there was a compact force at the north side of the street.

'Jem'll keep his word, never you fear,' Stephen heard a working-man say to an inquiring clerk.

Suddenly there was a murmur and then a cry from the crowd. Stephen, following the direction of the general gaze, saw a bearded man in a frock-coat step out on the balcony of the great hotel before him and raise his hand. In a second the beard and silk hat were cast aside revealing the well-known features of the labour leader. A cheer went up from the crowd, to be changed immediately into a cry of alarm. The press grew denser to Stephen's left, swayed a moment, and then broke up into stampeding units. Above the heads of the people Stephen could see the helmets of the police, who had formed into a close line and charged. Shouts and the sound of blows could be heard. He was almost lifted from his feet and borne away by the living avalanche. All round him men, women and children fought and scrambled their way to safety. After yielding at first Stephen managed eventually to hold his ground. The line of police was nearer to him now. He could see the rise and fall of their batons striking indiscriminately at the crowd. Women and old men seeking for nothing but escape were struck as savagely as young men who had tried to resist. Stephen saw one policeman deliberately strike on the head a middle-aged man who had already been beaten to the ground. Suddenly events took a new turn. The police thrust a wedge into the heart of the crowd, and the portion in which Stephen was included was driven back on the portico of the General Post Office. Some of the unfortunate

people descried a lane here which offered some prospect of refuge and there was an immediate rush in that direction. Stephen was swept along in the general panic into the narrow alley, which, however, proved to be a cul-de-sac, a veritable death-trap. The police were now fighting mad and beyond control. A few of them followed the terrified crowd into the cul-de-sac, plying their batons with demon fury on their unresisting victims. Shouts and shrieks hurtled through the air. In the main thoroughfare the crowd had broken up in panic flight, pursued by the unrelenting forces of the law. In the blind alley the huddled and paralysed mass of people was at the mercy of its assailants. A young woman near Stephen shrank cowering into the shelter of a doorway as an enormous policeman, raging like a bull, ploughed his way through the crowd towards her as if he had singled her out for destruction. Stephen hurriedly interposed with his ash-plant, but before he could free his arm sufficiently to use it the policeman's heavy baton had descended with crushing force on his head. Uttering a sharp cry Stephen fell to the ground insensible.

3

WHEN he regained consciousness he found himself lying on the ground, his head, which was bound up with a handkerchief, being supported by a young man who was kneeling beside him.

'What's happened?' said Stephen.

'You're all right,' replied the young man. 'You got a nasty bat on the head, but I don't think it's done any real damage. Let me shift you over so as you can rest against the wall there.'

With the young man's help he propped himself up in a sitting position in a slight recess. Looking round him he saw that the alley was like a battle-field. Slightly injured persons were moving away tying up their wounds with handkerchiefs; three or four prostrate figures were being attended to by their friends; ten yards from where he sat

lay the senseless figure of the policeman who had assaulted him.

'Not a bad bit of work that,' said Stephen's protector, following the direction of his glance. 'He bent down to finish you off with a second tap, so I caught up your ash-plant and laid him out. . . . Some stick!'

He fingered the ash-plant affectionately; then asked: 'How are you feeling now?'

'I think I can manage to stand,' said Stephen.

'Better stay where you are,' said the other. 'You might have concussion, you know. If the battle has rolled away, I'll try and get you a cab. Wait here till I come back.'

The young man ran off towards Sackville Street, where all seemed now to be quiet. During his absence one of the city ambulances came up the alley and took away the more seriously injured, including the policeman. A few minutes later Stephen saw an ancient cab come jogging along. His rescuer jumped out and assisted him to get inside.

'Where shall we take you?' he asked. Stephen painfully raked out the name of his hotel from the depths of a jangled memory, and lay back, semi-conscious, as the cab jolted over the cobbles.

'Holy God!' exclaimed the paternal proprietor of the Neptune as he and Bernard assisted Stephen to bed. 'I'd have the tripes out o' them peelers, so I would. Every bloody mother's son o' them . . . them an' their batons. . . . Ah, it's a quare world, glory be to God!'

4

BERNARD was now in the trough of reaction from the emotions roused by his historical reading. Ireland's abstract right to independence was undeniable; but the only way to assert it seemed to be by secret conspiracy, a course from which his temperament was naturally averse, even without the object lessons of treachery and futility afforded by the history of such movements. Several

recent incidents too had helped to disenchant him with the cause. He had read Sinn Fein, and found it full of unprovable charges against the characters and motives of the parliamentary leaders, and, worse still, hostile to the strikers; the Dublin Corporation had refused to build a municipal gallery for a collection of modern pictures offered by a public-spirited citizen on incredibly silly grounds, including the plea, advanced by some thoroughly comfortable oppressors of the poor, that so long as there were slums in the city it had no right to waste money on art; there had been yet another demonstration of the national puritanism, with the inevitable cant about 'imported foreign filth', which augured ill for intellectual freedom in an independent Ireland. Finally he had been present at a political meeting, at which a fat, prosperous person, whom he would not have trusted with sixpence, had spoken as follows:

'The day of victory is approaching. The dark clouds are being dispersed by the will of the people constitutionally spoken.' (Cheers.) 'Let cranks and faction-mongers croak as they will, the dawn was never more surely at hand. Let us stick by the old flag. The flag of Hugh O'Neill, and Owen Roe, and Tone and Mitchell; of Parnell and John Redmond.' (Cheers.) 'Only let us remain firm and united and loyal to our Heaven-sent leader,' (cheers) 'and freedom will be ours before the year is out.' (Tremendous applause.)

What hope was there, Bernard asked himself, for a people who could cheer such stuff as that? Surely his uncle had died in vain.

The day after the baton charge he went over to the Neptune Hotel to visit his protégé. He found him sitting in the smoke-room along with a dark-haired, florid-complexioned man of about thirty, whom Stephen introduced as Mr. McCall.

'Here's a man', said the latter, speaking with a slight Northern accent, 'who expects to appeal to the employers by reason.'

Bernard laughed.

'Why not?' said Stephen. 'The arguments used on both sides in this controversy have seemed to me stupid rather than malicious. I thought there was room for a little sound reasoning and that's why I left the mountains and came to Dublin.'

'Well,' said McCall, 'as far as the stupidity of the arguments is concerned you're right. But you needn't imagine that the people who use them are stupid. They aren't. They only use stupid arguments because the public is stupid, and because, owing to the hypocrisy of modern society, malicious arguments don't pay. I've been a journalist in my time, so I ought to know.'

'But surely if truth and reason were put before the public . . .'

'My dear sir, the public doesn't know the meaning of the words. If truth and reason were of any avail the strike would have been settled months ago by A.E.'s letter.'

'The fact is,' said Bernard, 'that the employers mean to smash the Transport Workers Union once and for all, and smash it they will. The strikers are half-starved already and can't last much longer.'

'A fight by an isolated section is bound to end that way,' said McCall, 'and I'm not really sorry. The workers will have to join in with the National fight now and make their cause a part of it.'

'You're an Ulsterman, aren't you?' said Bernard. 'Can you tell me what's at the bottom of this Ulster business?'

'Well, as far as the leaders are concerned it's simply that they know that Home Rule means the end of Protestant ascendancy, and they're just playing on the prejudices and ignorance of the workers in order to prevent it. With the workers it's just sheer ignorance. They think Ulster's prosperous, and that the Union is the cause of it, and they think the rest of Ireland is poor and backward on account of Popery and disloyalty. As a matter of

fact Ulster isn't prosperous at all. The population is falling there just the same as everywhere else, and there's worse sweated labour in Belfast than in Dublin, and worse slums too. You've heard of the famous linen company of Addison and Monkhouse? Addison himself is a millionaire and a political boss, but do you know what he pays his workers? Take the poor old women who work the initials on the handkerchiefs he sells at fifteen and eighteen shillings the dozen. He pays them twopence halfpenny the dozen, and it takes them a whole day to earn it. When I was a boy I served my time in a well-known cardboard-box factory that employed a couple of hundred girls. They were paid according to the amount of work they got through, and the most efficient of them could only manage to earn about nine shillings a week. Of course the average was much lower than that, and the girls who hadn't their parents' homes to fall back on had to supplement it by what they could get on the streets.'

'And those are the people who are arming to defend their civil and religious liberties against Home Rule.'

'Yes. It sounds comic enough,' said McCall. 'But there you are.'

'They must be a hard, implacable crew,' said Bernard.

'No,' said McCall. 'They're mad and ignorant on politics and religion, but otherwise they're just the same as the rest of the Irish—a decent, kind-hearted, hospitable people. Of course their politics are absurd. I had to leave Belfast on that account. I was never more than six months in a job before they found out I was a Nationalist and gave me the sack. And the whole thing's just sheer downright ignorance. In their schools they never learn a word about their own country. They know they're Irish and not English just as they know they're male and not female, or vice versa, but it's a matter of no importance. The only history they learn is English History, and they think King William founded the Orange Order.'

'Didn't he?' asked Bernard.

'Not he. It was founded in 1795. I once told an Orangeman that and he wouldn't believe me. I showed it to him in a book and he wouldn't believe the book, and it was written by an Orangeman. That's the Ulsterman all over. He knows what's so and nothing will ever convince him he's wrong. . . . But don't think the Ulsterman is loyal to England. He supports the Union because he's under the delusion that it makes Ulster prosperous. If he ever finds out his mistake—and some day he will—he'll cut the cable quicker than any of you. He's a business man, you know, and sentiment counts for nothing with him.'

'The Ulster Volunteer movement shows how little he cares for Parliament,' Bernard commented.

'Quite so. . . . Lord, what a mess the Irish party have made of things! Why on earth didn't they set out to convert Ulster instead of the English? The goodwill of the English doesn't matter a damn, whereas a united Ireland could bully the British Government into anything.'

There was a momentary silence and then Stephen spoke.

'We've one thing to be grateful to Ulster for, anyway,' he said. 'They've demonstrated a possibility.'

'What's that?' asked Bernard.

'Volunteering is a game that two can play at.'

'Begad!' said McCall, 'I wonder we never thought of that before.'

'If we had started first,' said Stephen, 'the Government would have suppressed us at once. But they'll hardly have the face to do it now, after tolerating the others for so long.'

'That's right,' said McCall. 'We can build up an army right under England's nose.'

'And what then?' asked Bernard.

'We'll pursue a policy of wait and see. One thing is certain, anyway. Ireland armed will get more out of England than Ireland blathering.' Stephen paused; then

added: 'I suppose you'll agree that a European war is inevitable sooner or later?'

'I doubt it,' said Bernard. 'Civilisation's got beyond that.'

'Has it?' sniffed McCall. 'I give Europe five years more of peace, and then——'

'I give her less,' said Stephen. 'Well, if the war comes before Home Rule, the Volunteers can extract some pretty strong measure of self-government right at the start. And if Home Rule comes first, the Volunteers will be there to extract a few more of our rights, and perhaps to maintain our neutrality.'

'You're a statesman,' said McCall.

'Pooh! That's common sense. I wonder no one else thought of it. I came to Dublin in order to get hold of people well enough known to father the scheme.'

'The Party won't cotton on to it,' said McCall. 'They're tied hand and foot to the Liberals. I wouldn't be surprised if they even denounced it.'

'I never even thought of the Party,' said Stephen. 'The people I want to get in touch with are the Gaelic Leaguers. They've more grip on reality than any politicians.'

'Well, I can introduce you to some of them,' said McCall, and they set to discussing ways and means.

5

BERNARD left them to their deliberations. Though he was impressed by Stephen's mind and character he could not imagine that he would be able, by the force of a suggestion, to change the entire direction of the national policy. It would take the trumpet call of a Rouget de l'Isle to summon this easy-going generation to arms. But the subject was put out of his mind on his arrival home by a letter from Willoughby asking him to come and stay at Willoughby Towers, and telling him, what he already knew from the papers, that his friend was contesting his native constituency in the by-election now being fought

there. Bernard, of course, wrote off his acceptance of the invitation, and a few days later was being welcomed by Willoughby at Deeping Station. They had much to talk about on the drive to the Towers, for neither cared much about letter writing.

'The first thing I've got to tell you', said Willoughby, 'is that I'm engaged to be married.'

'My dear chap, I congratulate you. Why didn't you tell me before?'

'It only happened a month ago, so I thought I'd keep the news until you came. . . . Do you remember a Miss Morecambé who was staying with us when you were here? It's her sister. They're both on a visit at the Towers at present.'

'And how's Mrs. Slitherly?'

'Maud's very well. . . . Second son arrived six weeks ago.'

'Have you heard anything of our old friend Murray?'

'Not a word for ages. He did brilliantly at Oxford, but he only wrote to me once since he left, and that's nearly a year ago. . . . We did miss you in our little set. Rotten luck, I call it.'

They talked for a while about the careers of various schoolfellows, but eventually Willoughby harked back to the subject that is always uppermost in the minds of young lovers.

'No,' said Bernard in reply to a feeler, 'I've been into love, through it, and out at the other end dozens of times. The woman doesn't live that I could be faithful to.'

'Nonsense,' objected Willoughby. 'You'll meet your fate some day, and be worse than any of us. That's what always happens to your sort.'

'I hope not,' said Bernard. 'I've more important things to bother about. How's the election going?'

'I haven't the ghost of a chance, I'm afraid. You see, the Tory push wouldn't have me as I wasn't true-blue on the Irish question—and a couple of others as well; so I'm going up as an Independent. It'll be a three-

cornered fight. Do you remember Frank's friend Hastings? He's the Liberal candidate, and the Unionist is a crusty old soldier—Major Allardyce. It's between those two really. My views don't seem to go down somehow.'

'What *are* your views?' Bernard asked. 'Remember, I've heard and read nothing but Irish politics for the last three years, and I haven't a notion what's been happening over here.'

'I want the Conservatives to *be* Conservatives—preserve all that's best in England and go in for decent social reforms. They should have introduced Old Age Pensions, for instance, instead of leaving it to the Liberals to do it, and then opposing them. And they ought to make up their minds to let Ireland go her own way. Unfortunately when I talk like that, the Tories think I'm a Liberal, and the Liberals think I'm a trimmer, and so I get nowhere.'

They swept along by highway, by-way, Roman Road and cedar-bordered avenue to the well-remembered entry to Willoughby Towers. Everything was the same as on Bernard's previous visit four years ago: a picture of unchanging prosperity. The squire's welcome was as hearty, his wife's as frigid as on the former occasion. The two Miss Morecambes came down to the drawing-room dressed for dinner. Bernard's attention was entirely occupied by Willoughby's fiancée, Dorothy, who was fair, graceful, and extremely pretty, so that the salutation with which he greeted her sister was of the most perfunctory nature. Dorothy, though pretty, was no doll, and Bernard highly approved his friend's choice, a fact which he communicated to him in a whisper as they moved in to dinner.

At the table the squire began gently to chaff Jack about his political speeches and about Tory democracy in general.

'Jack thinks it a good compromise between Toryism and democracy to take up both,' he said to Bernard.

'You talk as if they were opposites,' objected Willoughby.

'So they are, my boy. In my father's time all true Tories held the very name of democrat in horror. You might as well talk of a Christian atheist as a Tory democrat.'

'If I thought that,' said Willoughby, 'I should cease to be a Tory.'

'So you have, except in name.'

'Look here, father, can you not conceive a democracy of gentlemen? That's what they have in Ireland.'

'In Ireland!' interrupted Mrs. Willoughby. 'What nonsense you're talking, Jack! Ireland is a country of small farmers, cattle drivers, and murderers.'

'Mother!' exclaimed Willoughby. 'Remember Mr. Lascelles.'

'Oh, Mr. Lascelles knows what I mean. The Irish upper classes are different. I don't really count them as Irish. They're mostly of English descent, aren't they, Mr. Lascelles?'

'I don't think we bother much about our descent,' said Bernard. 'I'm Irish, and as for our being murderers, if anyone came to put you out of Willoughby Towers because they wanted the site to graze cattle on, I think it wouldn't be long before you took up a gun yourself.'

'We're not tenants, you know,' said Mrs. Willoughby, looking haughtily along her beautiful nose. 'Willoughby Towers is our own.'

'My dear madam,' said Bernard, aggressive in his turn, 'before England was ever heard of the O'Neills were lords in Tir Owen.'

This retort produced silence, for the point of it was utterly lost on its hearers. The altercation had introduced a certain embarrassment into the atmosphere, which Willoughby hastened to allay.

'You've picked up the deuce of an Irish brogue, Bernard, these last few years,' he remarked.

'In Dublin', replied Bernard, 'I'm perpetually chaffed about my English accent. I wonder what sort of accent I have in reality.'

'The most charming brogue I ever heard,' asserted Dorothy. 'What do you think, Janet?'

Janet regarded Bernard whimsically a moment.

'You've a distinctly Dublin accent,' she said.

'You speak daggers to me,' laughed Bernard.

'Dorothy's never been in Ireland,' said Janet. 'She thinks it's an island near Killarney where the people wear red petticoats and caubeens and keep pigs as pets and shoot each other with shillelaghs.'

'Janet stayed in Connemara for a month once,' said Dorothy, 'so she thinks she's a great authority. Have you a shillelagh, Mr. Lascelles?'

'Yes. Five or six. I use them to drive the pigs to market.'

'How lovely!' exclaimed Dorothy. 'I should so love to have one.'

'I'll send you one for a wedding present,' said Bernard.

'Oh, do! . . . And do you know, Jack wants to spend the honeymoon in Ireland. Do you think I ought to agree?'

'Certainly. But make him bring a revolver.'

Dorothy gasped. But here Janet interposed.

'Don't mind him. He's only "codding" you, as they say in Ireland. You're a regular stage Irishman, Mr. Lascelles.'

'Can't help it, Miss Morecambe,' Bernard sighed. 'You see I'm on the Irishman's favourite stage.'

'What's that?' asked Dorothy.

'England,' said Bernard.

6

To leave the lovers alone together Janet took Bernard for a stroll in the garden.

'It was a good deed', said Janet, 'to answer Mrs. Willoughby the way you did—even though she is our hostess. What was the point of what you said about Tyrone?'

'Irish landlordism only dates from the English con-

quest. There were no owners of the soil in ancient Ireland. The chieftains were just the leaders of the people, who owned the land in common. That was the only thing in the old Gaelic system that really appeals to me.'

'So you've been reading your history since we last met? It's altered your outlook, I'm sure.'

'Yes, I'm a convinced Nationalist now, and ruthless logic has driven me to believe in the necessity of Separation. . . . You English, I think, picture an Irish revolutionary as a dreamy idealist sentimentalising over a green flag. So did I at one time. But nothing could be farther from the truth. Anything harder, colder, or more practical than the young Nationalists who are responsible for my conversion you couldn't imagine. The real sentimentalists are those ardent Home Rulers like Murray—do you remember him?—who believe in the goodwill of England and expect justice from her. . . . I hope you don't mind such plain speaking?'

'Oh, no. I know what our politicians are like, and it's they who run our policy.'

'Well, as I say, I'm logically convinced, but I can't help a feeling that the cause is rather a small one. . . . I wish I could explain myself. . . . You see, all my enthusiasms are for mankind as a whole. Since first I could think I've thought in terms of the world, and I've a feeling that it's a narrowing, strangling thing to get caught up in an obscure local squabble. . . . I've a sort of fear of losing sight of the big human issue and getting stained in the muck of party politics. For it is a muck in spite of all the fine ideals of some of the fighters. . . . If you could hear some of the speeches I've heard. . . . Then the cause doesn't grip me very vitally. I feel to it rather like a sympathetic outsider. When I first read Irish history the tragedy and injustice of it filled me with wild emotions and resolves. But they had no roots. I feel that this is only one of a thousand tragedies and it has no more motive power for me than any of the others. . .

It isn't vital to my being like the great ideas, Republicanism or Socialism. . . . The Marseillaise means more to me, if you understand, than A Nation Once Again. A couple of bars of the Marseillaise is enough to set my heart throbbing and my nerves thrilling, whereas the other—it's just a song.'

'Then you don't . . . love Ireland?'

'I confess I don't see much to love in her. I can't stand my countrymen at all. They're shiftless, inefficient, not very honest, not very clean, very thin-skinned, and downright intolerant of criticism. They never keep appointments, they talk a great deal too much, they're insincere, and they're damnably shallowly clever. Why, their very virtues are only the reverse side of their vices. People praise their unworldliness and indifference to material gain: it's just part of their shiftlessness. They've a reputation for courtesy, but it's only part of their insincerity. And as for their charm and hospitality, as soon as the stranger has turned his back they're laughing at him and abusing him.'

'They have the softest voices in the world,' put in Janet.

'Maybe so,' said Bernard. 'I don't like them, all the same. . . . So much for my people. As for the country—well, you can get beautiful scenery anywhere.'

Janet laughed lightly.

'You don't understand the merest A B C of patriotism,' she said. 'Do you think I don't love England because I hate her oppression of other countries? Because if you do, you're wrong. Patriotism isn't all Kiplingism, you know.'

'I'm still in the dark,' said Bernard. 'I may be deficient in patriotism, but whatever the reason may be, while I'm firmly convinced of the righteousness of the cause I feel no overwhelming desire for action.'

'I'm afraid I must leave it to nature to help you out,' replied Janet.

They talked for a while on various topics: Janet's social

work, Bernard's August reading, and the labour crisis in Dublin. Janet was whole-heartedly with the strikers.

'That's what the papers called a riot,' she said when Bernard had described the famous baton charge. 'Good heavens, it's . . .' she paused for words but failed to find them, '. . . it's unspeakable!' she added lamely. Her eyes shone and her voice shook with indignation. For a moment she was almost beautiful.

There was silence between them for a while. This girl troubled the very depths of Bernard's soul. His mind leaped responsively to hers, and he was conscious of a reciprocal movement of hers to his. And now he was aware of an unfamiliar feeling of contentment in being with her, and as they walked in the ever-deepening darkness among the cedars he gave himself up to the enjoyment of this sensation. For many minutes the crunching of gravel beneath their feet was all that disturbed the delicious silence . . .

Then he turned to look at her and the spell was broken. The animal in him hungered for physical charms, and while all that was fine and civilised and cultivated in him cursed him for a shallow sensual fool, the animal won the day. A hard brutal desire to wound that which troubled him thrust itself uppermost in his consciousness.

'Jack and Dorothy seem very happy,' said Janet: an indication of the way her thoughts had run.

'I don't envy them,' said Bernard. 'I distrust and fear happiness. . . . I never see a happily married couple—especially an elderly couple—but I thank God I am not such as they.'

'Why?' asked Janet, a touch of alarm in her voice.

'I think happiness is demoralising. Also I think it's an accident. We weren't put here to be happy, but to work. Happiness this side of the grave is a fraud and a snare, and when you die your little smiling heaven dies with you. Leave happiness to cats; man has for ever: that's my motto, if I may misquote Browning.'

'You don't know what you're talking about,' said

Janet. Then, rather timidly: 'Have you ever been in love?'

'Too often. That's the trouble. I've gathered roses and they've turned to dandelions or nettles in my hand.'

Janet laughed at his tragic tone, a pleasant tinkling laugh peculiar to herself, and said:

'You talk like a disillusioned old rascal of fifty, and I don't suppose you're twenty-two yet.'

'I've no use for love,' said Bernard. 'A man in love is a pathetic idiot, and a girl in love is simply cloying.'

'Mr. Lascelles!' Janet gasped. 'I don't think you realise what you're saying. . . . You're . . . Oh, you're . . .'

She turned away from him abruptly and fled. Bernard stood staring stupidly after her for a moment, feeling a kind of gloomy satisfaction.

'Lord!' he muttered. 'I've done it now!'

7

THE Deeping by-election had fallen at a critical moment for the Government. Their position had recently been shaken by events unconnected with their Irish policy; and now this was being subjected to an onslaught unparalleled even in the recent constitutional controversy. The Home Rule Bill, after passing through the House of Commons amid scenes of furious disorder (with honourable members yelling like schoolboys and hurling missiles across the floor), had been thrown out a second time by the Peers. It would become law in spite of them by the next summer, and all the reactionary forces in the three kingdoms were fighting it with the ferocity of despair. Former Cabinet Ministers were preaching rebellion. There were hints of mutiny in the Army. The language of guttersnipes was freely used by statesmen both on the hustings and in Parliament. There was talk of hanging His Majesty's ministers on lamp-posts, alternating with pious invocations, in Cromwellian tone, to the

Deity, and the usual cant about dying in the last ditch in defence of civil and religious liberty by people who detested liberty and had demonstrated within very recent memory their recognition of the dignity of surrender. The late member for Deeping had held the seat by a very small majority, and an attack in full force was now being concentrated upon it. Sir Edward Carson himself had appeared on Major Allardyce's platform with his black scowl and his gospel of unreasoning hate. An ex-Minister of the Crown was now on the scene. Bernard heard his speech.

'I say, on behalf of the Conservative Party,' he said, 'that if the Government attempt to coerce Ulster, Ulster will do well to resist, and we shall support her in her resistance.' (Cheers). 'I am glad to receive that expression of your approval, but I ask you to realise what it means. It involves something more than making speeches. It means this: that when the time comes we should be bound in honour to use every means, any means which seem to us effective, to prevent British troops being used to shoot down loyal British subjects.'

Major Allardyce himself, a puffy little person with a very red face, also had his say. He was very insistent that Ireland was not a distinct nation, and even more insistent that its people were the hereditary foes of England. He denounced the Irish as rebels and traitors, and almost in the same breath proclaimed his intention of going into rebellion himself if his Parliament did anything of which he disapproved. Finally he worked himself up to a frenzied peroration:

'The people of Ulster have behind them the Unionist Party. Behind them is the Lord God of Battles. In His name and in their name I say to the Prime Minister: "Let your armies and batteries fire! Fire if you dare! Fire and be damned!"' (Loud cheers.)

'If Mr. Asquith', he concluded, 'does employ the British Army, and if by any chance he should bring bloodshed in Ulster by means of Imperial troops, then to

my mind any man would be justified in shooting Mr. Asquith in the streets of London.'

On the evening before polling day the squire motored his guests into Deeping 'to see the fun'. Threading their way slowly and with great difficulty through the crowds they passed close to the platform from which the Liberal candidate was addressing his supporters. Hastings had altered considerably in appearance since Bernard had seen him last. His figure verged on the middle-aged, and there was a laughable suggestion of Broadbent about his attitude.

'There is a well-known story', he was saying, 'which, however well known, I feel justified in repeating because of its remarkable aptness in the present political position. I refer to the story of the gentleman who met one day on a road a small party of workers followed at some distance by a solitary man, very tired and anxious and having obvious difficulty in keeping up the pace. "Why", asked the gentleman, "are you following these men?" "I must follow them", replied the other in plaintive accents, "because I'm their leader."' (Loud laughter.) 'Mr. Bonar Law', resumed Hastings, 'seems to be in a similar plight.' (Laughter.) 'He is the leader of a party, but . . .'

Here the motor, being clear of the crowd, took a spurt forward and the rest of the sentence was lost. Almost immediately they ran into Major Allardyce's audience and caught a few sentences as they passed.

' . . . In the House no doubt they profess loyalty, or what they choose to call loyalty, but the motto of their followers is "Ireland for the Irish".' (Groans.)

'And Redmond says the British democracy is with us,' observed Bernard to Janet.

She agreed with him listlessly. She spoke to him but seldom now, and never on her own initiative. He had long wanted to recall the cruel words of that first evening, but did not know how to begin, and with the lapse of time the difficulty increased.

They reached Willoughby's committee rooms and found him inside with his dispirited agents and friends.

'Hello, Jack, why aren't you out speechifying?' asked the squire.

Willoughby grinned helplessly.

'No good,' he said. 'Couldn't get a crowd. Let's go home.'

Polling day came and went, and in the evening Deeping was a seething shouting mass of people waiting for the result. It came at last. Major Allardyce was in by over eight hundred votes. Willoughby's total poll was seven hundred and sixty-nine.

Cheer upon cheer burst from the crowd as the results were announced. Then there were cries of 'Speech! Speech!' and Allardyce went out on to the balcony to address his constituents. There was a crescendo of cheers and boos, and as they died down scattered female voices cried 'Votes for Women'. Then there was a momentary silence.

'Gentlemen . . .' began Allardyce.

'Votes for Women!'

The persistent female voice was drowned by hoarse shouts of hostility. 'Put her out!' 'G-r-r!'

'Gentlemen, from the bottom of my heart I thank you for the honour you have done me. By your votes to-day you have shown what England thinks of the base plot of this corrupt and degraded Government to destroy the Union, disrupt the Empire, and hand over a loyal province to the mercy of its hereditary foes. Gentlemen . . .'

'What about Votes for Women?' screamed another female voice.

So it went on, the meaningless speech and its meaningless interruptions. In the end the squire and his party drove home through the mob that howled and sang and waved torches late into the night.

BERNARD returned to Dublin in October and at the first opportunity called at the Hotel Neptune. Stephen however was out, and McCall had gone the way of all commercial travellers. Bernard called again twice, but each time Stephen was away, and the proprietor informed him that he was very busy and seldom appeared even at meal time.

The last occasion was a Saturday afternoon and Bernard found himself with nothing to do. McGurk and Crowley were out of town, and O'Dwyer when telephoned for was not to be found. So Bernard took his bicycle and rode out through Terenure and Rathfarnham along the road to the mountains. Reaching the stiff slope leading to the Featherbed pass he was forced to dismount and walk. As he trudged up the narrow way his mind became violently active. His brief visit to England had given the *coup de grâce* to many illusions, and he was now faced with insistent realities. He began to see a certain ineptitude in his position. Was it not in effect little different from the snobbish negation of the Heuston-Harrington set? Was it any better even than the cowardly acceptance of the general herd of genteel dastards? He had feared to cut himself off from the world by serving Ireland; now he was being forced to realize that only in her service could he come in contact with the world. Alone he could achieve nothing; but a liberated and regenerated homeland might hold up a banner which all men could see. To do that she must be herself. She must be an Irish Ireland proclaiming her own soul, not a West Britain palely reflecting another. No nation had yet served the world by abjuring herself. The hoplites at Marathon had charged for Athens. France by her Revolution had freed mankind, but her revolutionists had arisen for France. Germany by her scientific work had become the school of Europe, but it was in developing herself that she had become so.

And Ireland, set free, would have her mission too. As once she had been the refuge of learning and religion in a Europe overrun by barbarism, so she might yet be the stronghold of the spirit in a world overwhelmed by materialism.

Thus pondering, he reached the summit of the rise. On a windy open space the road divided into two. One branch went winding back through rusting woodland to the plain beneath. The other curved over heathery bog to disappear in the mist among the looming purple mountains. Here, on a shelf, as it were, between the hills and the sea, he paused to take breath, leaning over his bicycle. The fresh damp autumn breeze fanned his cheek; autumn tints were in the landscape, and autumn grey was in the sky. The mountains looked their best to-day, remote, mysterious, empty of men. He breathed their names—Killakee, Corrig, Kippure—each a rugged poem. On the other hand lay the green farm-lands, sloping towards the coast, with the homesteads lying snug among their surrounding trees, and here and there a big house, or the signs of a village. Beyond lay the city, dim and distant, on the edge of the grey silent sea.

Close to his ear the wind whispered in the heather, in the dried branches of the stunted larches by the roadside, while a runnel of water made music in its course. Suddenly the beauty of it all overwhelmed him. O lovely land, my land! his heart made invocation. What service you ask, may it be mine to give.

CHAPTER X

THE RUSTY SWORD

I

THROUGH a powdery drizzle that danced and sparkled under the street lamps hundreds upon hundreds of men moved in one direction along the main thoroughfares of Dublin. Bernard coming down Nassau Street plunged into the stream at the foot of Grafton Street and was carried along in its course. This human river moved steadily and almost silently. Here and there a laughing girl with a red-clad soldier or a smart draper's assistant moved in the contrary direction like foam against the current.

Near the Rotunda the press grew denser, and it took Bernard twenty minutes to force his way into the great skating-rink. Through a door opposite to that by which he had entered came a procession of young men four hundred strong, the students of University College, among whom Bernard could see McGurk and O'Dwyer. They were followed almost immediately by another and somewhat smaller procession of grim dirty men carrying sticks and hurleys—members of the Transport Workers' Union still on strike.

'There'll be trouble wid them fellas,' said an ancient sage next to Bernard.

The crowds still poured in. The seats were filled, all standing room was occupied, and still multitudes clamoured for admittance. The atmosphere was stifling and already thickening with tobacco fumes. . . . An outburst of applause welcomed the appearance of a little

group of men on the platform, amongst whom Bernard recognised the stalwart figure of Stephen Ward, and the lean one of Austin Mallow.

When the applause had somewhat abated, Eoin MacNeill, the Chairman, a bearded scholarly-looking Ulsterman, stepped forward to speak.

'We are meeting in public', he said, 'in order to proceed at once to the enrolment and organisation of a National Force of Volunteers. We invite all the able-bodied men of Ireland to form themselves into a united and disciplined body of freemen, prepared to secure and maintain the rights and liberties common to all the people of Ireland.'

He went on to point out that the Irish Volunteers would be a non-partisan, non-sectarian movement whose sole object was to maintain the elementary right of freemen to bear arms for the preservation of their natural liberty. Their liberties were now menaced by the armed force of a section of their countrymen who were openly backed by one of the great English political parties and winked at by the other, and this line of action was calculated to diminish and mutilate the form of Self-Government which was ready to be put into force.

'If this is so it is plain to every man that even the modicum of civil rights left to us by the Act of Union is taken from us, our franchise becomes a mockery, and we ourselves become the most degraded nation in Europe. This insolent menace does not satisfy the hereditary enemies of our national freedom. Within the past few days a political manifesto has been issued, signed most fittingly by a Castlereagh and a Beresford, calling for British Volunteers, and for money to arm and equip them to be sent into Ireland to triumph over the Irish people and to complete their disfranchisement and enslavement.'

A savage yell burst from the Liberty Hall men as the next speaker, a stern black-bearded man, came forward. He stood for a few moments waiting for the uproar to subside, but it only increased in volume. In vain MacNeill

requested a hearing for the speaker. He pointed out that those who had come together that evening had done so in the cause of their common country and that no sectional disputes should intrude. This was too altruistic a philosophy for the Transport Workers, and as soon as MacNeill had resumed his seat the din broke out afresh.

'Who's the speaker?' Bernard asked of his neighbour.

'Larry Kettle, one o' th' employers.'

'Put out them Liberty Hall men!' yelled a voice.

In spite of the noise the dark man read out a long document from beginning to end at the top of his voice. All the time the Transport Workers kept up a deafening clamour, shouting, booing, stamping their feet and clattering their sticks on the benches, so that not a syllable of the manifesto could be heard.

'Well, to hell with the Larkinites!' shouted a man near Bernard.

'Come on, boys, and stop their row,' cried another, and a little knot of men began to make its way round the room in the direction of the disturbers. Things looked ugly for a moment, but opportunely the reading of the manifesto came to an end, and when the next speaker arose the clamour ceased and a collision was averted.

A succession of speakers, some constructive and passionless, some fiery and oratorical, addressed the meeting, and then the chairman called for the National Anthem. A man on the platform rose immediately and a hush fell on the gathering. The song began:

'When boyhood's fire was in my blood,
I read of ancient free men,
For Greece and Rome who bravely stood
Three hundred men and three men.'

For the first time the crudity of the versification and the banality of the tune failed to jar on Bernard. The vast size of the room, the vivid human excitement in the air, the emotions roused by ardent generous oratory, the portentous nature of the moment, all combined to invest

both song and singer with a certain dignity and symbolism. And as the voice of the singer, weak in the beginning, gathered strength and soared up to the girdered roof, he felt a pricking of the skin and a thrill of the spine such as only the Marseillaise had given him before.

‘ And then I dreamed I yet might see
Our fetters rent in twain,
And Ireland long a province be
A Nation once again.’

A vision of all who had died for that dream passed before Bernard's eyes and he knew he was one in thought and in hope with the rebels of all the ages. As the cadence surged up to the high note he felt himself swamped by waves of emotion. A myriad projects formed themselves in his brain and his soul made vows of service.

There was a pause, and the chorus came crashing from five thousand throats :

‘ A Nation once again !
A Nation once again ! ’

Magnificent passionate reiteration of the love and hate, the hope and despair, and the vengeful determination of seven centuries of woe.

‘ And Ireland long a province be
A Nation once again.’

Ere yet the echoes of the chorus had died away the singer had started on the second verse. Bernard felt that something was wrong. It seemed almost an indecent profanity to call forth again the emotions of a splendid moment. A second verse was an anti-climax. As it sped on its way Bernard became once more critical of the song (and indeed its later verses had better never have been written). Then the chorus came and he gathered himself together and joined his voice with the others.

And then— No! No! No! Surely he'd never sing a third verse.

But he did, and a fourth as well, each worse than the

preceding, until even the stately reiteration of the chorus became a tiresome redundancy. It came to an end at last and the stewards bustled about distributing enrolment forms.

As Bernard signed his the two Mallows came up to him.

'Glad to see you're joining,' said Austin. 'This is the beginning of a new era in Irish History. We're on the eve of great things.'

There was a feverish light in his eyes and his voice trembled.

'So you're converted at last,' said Brian. 'All due to me, you know.' He laughed hoarsely, and turning to his brother said: 'You should have seen him at Ashbury. He was the rottenest West Briton you ever struck.'

'No matter,' said Austin sharply. Then to Bernard, 'Won't you drop in and see us some evening?'

Bernard promised, and the brothers passed on. A moment later a heavy hand descended on his shoulder, and a coarse voice exclaimed in his ear: 'Glad to see you've seen the light at last, Lascelles.'

It was Leeds, dressed in a saffron kilt and plaid. Bernard put on his most distant air, but without effect, for Leeds was thick-skinned.

'We won't be long giving the English the boot now,' he said.

'Do you think so?' said Bernard indifferently.

'Don't say *you're* joining, Lascelles,' said another voice, and the solemn horse-face of Leeds's diplomatic friend Conachy appeared at his side.

'Aren't *you*?' demanded Leeds, turning to him.

Conachy shook his head. 'I don't believe in swapping horses in the middle of the stream,' he said with an air of great profundity.

'Now, look here——' said Leeds; but Bernard waited for no more. He hurried out into the street, looking for his friends. Almost immediately he heard McGurk's voice calling him from somewhere in the crowd and making

his way towards him with some difficulty found him standing beside a tall sandy-haired man whose face was vaguely familiar to Bernard.

'Here you are, Lascelles,' said McGurk. 'Let me introduce you. This is Mr. Hector Hannibal O'Flaherty all the way from Arizona.'

'Perhaps you remember me?' said Bernard. 'We knew each other as kids in Stephen's Green.'

'Sure thing. So we did,' said O'Flaherty. 'Put it there,' and they shook hands heartily.

'Some crowd, this,' remarked O'Flaherty. 'Gee, we'll waken this one-horse camp some before we're through. Yes, sir.'

They stood a while, watching the dispersing crowds. Suddenly McGurk darted forward and dragged a tall figure into the lamplight. It was Fergus Moore, bronzed by Mediterranean sunshine.

'This is a mad enterprise,' he said. 'Does anybody see very far into the future of this movement?'

'Far enough,' said O'Flaherty. 'The future only comes a day at a time, you know.'

'My sentiments exactly in regard to life,' replied Moore. 'But applied to politics, eh?'

'Have you signed on?' asked O'Flaherty.

'Of course. I'm always ready to play the fool, in season or out.'

Here the conversation was interrupted by the appearance of a round, ruddy, genial-looking person who seemed to be known to every one except Bernard.

'Well, this is a great day!' he said. 'This'll make England sit up, what! This'll be something for the Orangemen to put in their pipes! That was a magnificent speech of MacNeill's, wasn't it?'

'Who's this?' Bernard whispered to Crowley.

'He bounces to the name of Cathal Concannon,' replied Crowley.

'Bit of a humbug, isn't he?' said Bernard.

Crowley grinned. 'Ah, Cathal's a decent fellow

enough. But he'll never grow thin on his hard work for Ireland.'

'Say, boys,' came O'Flaherty's deep voice, 'I move that we all come up to my rooms for a bit. I'm living in a sort of backwoods shanty called the Neptune Hotel. Some hotel, take it from pop. But it'll do to be going on with.'

'I know a member of the committee who's staying there,' said Bernard as they turned northwards.

'Stephen Ward?' inquired O'Flaherty. 'Yes. I've met him. Good stuff he seems.'

They overtook Doran, the benevolent proprietor of the Neptune, on his way home.

'Well, Doran,' said O'Flaherty. 'Did you join up?'

'What else would I be doing? But sure what use am I? Fifty years of age and twelve stone o' me, God help me.'

Arrived at the Neptune the whole crowd poured into the coffee-room, and O'Flaherty ordered drinks all round. A few minutes later Stephen entered bringing with him Lynch, O'Dwyer, and Eugene. After the necessary introductions had been made O'Flaherty called for a toast, and Fergus Moore, raising his glass, gravely proposed:

'The Volunteers! Ireland, fed up with herself and the world in general, decides to cut her throat.'

'Moore, you're an ass,' said Lynch. 'Here's a proper toast for you.' He paused a moment and said: 'To the spontaneous rising of the Nation in arms in support of Mr. Redmond and the Irish Party. Here's to the Irish National Volunteers.'

'Here, less o' that,' said McGurk indignantly. 'You fellows never can think of anything but your bloody old party.'

'Well, well,' said Lynch agreeably, 'we'll leave the party out. Here's to the Irish National Volunteers.'

'Cut out the "National",' said O'Dwyer. 'It stinks too much of Westminster, and it's not the title, anyhow. Here's to the Irish Volunteers.'

The toast was drunk with acclamation.

McCall now came in to join the revellers and took a seat near to Bernard.

'Great meeting, wasn't it?' he said. 'The movement's sure to catch on. The country's about sick of the Party's weakness.'

'Let's have a song, boys,' said McGurk, sitting down to the battered piano in a corner of the room and jangling the keys.

Thereat every one who was not already seated seized a convenient chair and made himself comfortable. Bernard let his eye wander round the assembly, studying each face and attitude in turn. There was Eugene, shy and aloof, in the corner near the door; and beside him the expansive figure of Lynch, quietly enjoying a small cheroot. Then came the landlord, fat, vulgar and genial, smoking cut plug in a blackened clay pipe; then Moore, handsome and reckless, chewing a cigar; next to him Cathal Concannon, grinning like a punchinello; then Crowley with his chair tilted back against the wall blowing smoke rings up to the ceiling; and McCall meditatively puffing at a huge calabash pipe. On Bernard's left was O'Flaherty, square-jawed and masterful, and beyond him could be seen the flushed and excited face of O'Dwyer, whose teeth were clenched on an empty brier pipe. At the end of the line sat Stephen Ward.

At McGurk's call Lynch rose and sang T. D. Sullivan's famous song beginning:

'Deep in Canadian Woods we've met,
From one bright island flown.
Great is the land we tread, but yet
Our hearts are with our own.
And e'er we leave this shanty small
E'er fades the autumn day
We'll toast old Ireland, dear old Ireland,
Ireland, boys, hurray!'

The chorus rang out lustily. Bernard thought of the story he had heard lately of how an Irish regiment in the Federal Army, on the night before the battle of

Chancellorsville, had struck up that song round their bivouac fires, and when they had finished heard it come back like an echo across the Rapidan from the lips of another Irish regiment in the opposing camp.

'Come on, O'Dwyer,' said McGurk when the song was finished, 'give us your parody of that.'

O'Dwyer got up and sang to the same air :

' See bold Britannia greater grow
 On her high imperial throne,
 Small are the lands she loves, and so
 She's added them to her own.
 Then subjects all, both great and small,
 Fill up your glass to-day
 And toast old England, noble England,
 England, boys, hurray ! '

The company joined in the ironical chorus with a will, and verse after verse full of sarcasm and invective followed.

'Damn good!' cried McGurk enthusiastically at the finish, and then someone called to McGurk to sing the 'Stuttering Lovers'. The next hour passed merrily with song and story, and then as people made preparations to depart, Crowley sprang up and said :

'Another toast, boys! Here's Sever the Ligature.'

Those who had any dregs left in their glasses drank the toast and the remainder cheered.

'I suppose you signed on?' said Bernard to Eugene on the way home.

'Indeed I didn't,' said Eugene. 'I don't believe in violent methods. We have the law on our side and we ought to keep it that way.'

'To hell with the law!' said Bernard. 'You just take a trip to England, and you'll see how much the law will do for us.'

SIR EUGENE LASCELLES emitted a snort expressive of mingled wrath and contempt when he read in his Irish Times the report of the Rotunda meeting. He had, of

course, approved of the Ulster movement, and contributed generously to its funds; but, being constitutionally incapable of appreciating the soundness of the proverb that sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander, he looked upon the arming of Nationalists as an outrage. When, a little later, he learned that his eldest son had joined the organisation, a succession of violent emotions assailed him. Anger, shame, disappointment, fear, each in turn made him its prey. After the episode of the letter, however, he did not feel equal to tackling Bernard himself on the subject, and, for once in his life, was compelled to call upon the assistance of his wife, with what result shall presently be seen.

Merrion Square and its environs were distinctly perturbed by the new movement. His fellow Tories shared Sir Eugene's feelings; and the Whigs were embarrassed and frightened. It was but a few years since Nationalism had begun to live down its association with 'agrarian outrage' and 'treason', and to become respectable; and here was a regrettable lapse back to those bad old days of lawlessness and defiance. Good Whigs therefore felt bound to write to the newspapers 'sincerely deprecating this attempt to force the hand of the Government and substitute the out-of-date methods of violence for those of peaceful persuasion'.

Then there were the neutrals, the people who claimed to have no politics. Mrs. Heuston-Harrington, for instance, thought it rather absurd to arm and drill for the trifling and unimportant cause of Ireland, and Sir Marmaduke Perry expressed a hope that the Government would be firm and suppress both forces of Volunteers, Ulster and Irish alike. George, the only and darling son of Mrs. Gunby Rourke, was another neutral.

'I've no politics,' he said. 'But this armed bullying of Parliament by both sides is a menace to order and government.'

'Pity you didn't discover that when only one was doing it,' said Bernard.

It was at one of Mrs. Gunby Rourke's Tango Teas that this conversation took place. Bernard was there as an escort to Alice, who was an enthusiast of the new craze. They sat at tea in the front drawing-room watching through the folding doors the evolutions of the professional exponents of the dance. When these had finished Alice and George and another couple took the floor. Bernard watched his sister, looking, he thought, rather absurd in her outré frock, perform the movements of voluptuous symbolism with the nonchalance of perfect innocence.

'Isn't it lovely? Your sister dances beautifully, Mr. Lascelles.'

It was Madge Conroy, Eugene's divinity, who spoke. Turning to her brother she continued:

'You'll have to learn it, Teddy, and dance it with me.'

'Too much brain work about it for my taste,' said Teddy. 'The jolly old One-Step's good enough for me.'

'I say, you know,' said Molloy, coming over, 'this is a backward town. The Tango's been the rage for ages in London. Just about getting stale, as a matter of fact—and it's only beginning here. May I have the pleasure, Miss Conroy?'

He took her away to the dancing-room, and Teddy began to discuss critically with Bernard the musical comedy, a 'London success' of the year before last, then being performed by a fifth-rate company at the Gaiety. This interesting topic exhausted, he searched about in his mind for more to say.

'Awful rot this Nationalist Volunteer business' he said at last. 'But this Arms Proclamation ought to put the lid on them, what! And the good old Ulstermen are armed already.'

'The Arms Proclamation doesn't matter a damn,' said Bernard. 'We can get arms in spite of it.'

'We?' queried Teddy.

'Yes. I happen to be a member of the Irish Volunteers.'

'Rot!' said Teddy.

Bernard showed him his membership card. Teddy was stupefied and stammered incoherently.

'Thinking of joining?' asked Bernard.

'Me!'

'Why not? Tell me, do you think it right for Frenchmen to arm themselves in defence of France?'

'I suppose so.'

'And for Italians to arm themselves in defence of Italy?'

'Yes.'

'And for Englishmen to arm themselves in defence of England?'

'Of course.'

'And for Irishmen to arm themselves in defence of Ireland?'

'Ah, that's different.'

'Why?'

'I don't take any interest in politics, but I object to disloyalty.'

'Disloyalty to whom?'

'To the King, of course.'

'Then you disapprove of the Ulster Volunteers?'

'Oh, no. They're loyal.'

'They're resisting an Act of Parliament.'

'An Act that puts them under a rule they hate.'

'Then is it always right to resist being put under a rule you hate?'

'Well—I suppose so.'

'Then wasn't Robert Emmet right?'

'Oh, no. He was a rebel.'

Bernard felt like taking Teddy by the feet and battering his head to pulp against the wall. But all he said was:

'Look here, Conroy, you're a fool. You'd better start exercising your brain by learning the Tango.'

He got up quickly and took his cup over to Mrs. Gunby Rourke for more tea.

On his way home afterwards, Bernard encountered Ignatius Lynch. The latter was now a barrister of one

brief, and his self-confidence was not diminished by the responsibility. He was a member of Bernard's company in the Volunteers.

'Hello!' said Bernard. 'I haven't seen you at drill for some time. What's become of you?'

'Well, to tell you the truth,' replied Lynch, 'I'm not at all sure that in joining the movement I wasn't letting my heart get the better of my head. I don't think John Redmond quite approves of it, you know.'

'He's certainly not enthusiastic about it,' said Bernard.

'Would you blame him? Look at the men who are running the show.'

'What's wrong with them?' Bernard asked.

'Well, in the first place, nobody knows anything about them. Of course every one knows John MacNeill and one or two more, though not exactly as politicians; but the rest are nonentities, and probably most of them are cranks or extremists. Look here——' Lynch took a folded sheet of paper from his breast pocket. 'Here's their manifesto. Look at the names on it. Barrett. He's an extremist if his writings mean anything. Austin Mallow. You know what *he* is as well as I do. Then there's a whole string of people I never heard of. Stephen Ward. Who the dickens is he?'

'I've met him,' said Bernard. 'A very good fellow.'

'I'm not questioning his personal character,' said Lynch. 'Is he a man of any standing? Is he in any sense representative? Is he an extremist?'

'He's what you call an extremist,' said Bernard. 'So am I, for that matter.'

Lynch laughed. 'I might have guessed it. Converts generally do run to the opposite extreme. If you'll take my advice, Lascelles, you'll think twice before you commit yourself to anything in that line. It's all very fine and romantic in the abstract, but in practice it has a seamy side—as many a good man has found to his cost.'

'I've counted the cost,' said Bernard.

'Well, don't say I didn't warn you. I must be off

now. I've got a case on hand that keeps me burning the midnight oil.'

Drilling (under the instruction of ex-sergeants of the British army) was now in full swing, though recruiting was not as brisk as it might have been, owing to the dubious attitude of the parliamentary leaders. In contrast to its Ulster prototype, the movement was democratic to the core. There were no millionaires or noble lords to contribute to its funds. Each company had its own exchequer, made up of the pennies, often ill spared, of the rank and file, out of which all expenses were met. The officers were elected by their comrades.

Bernard's company met in a shabby dance-hall in the slums within a stone's throw of his father's house. Owing to his O.T.C. training he caught the attention of the drill sergeant on the very first night, and was at once appointed temporary section-commander. When the elections were held a few weeks later he was chosen first-lieutenant, the captaincy falling to a preposterous little fellow called Brohoun, who wore a beard, and was notorious as a writer of letters to the newspapers; which reputation, added to a swaggering manner, apparently gave the electorate an exaggerated view of his worth.

'This system of electing officers is absurd,' said Hector O'Flaherty one afternoon, meeting Bernard at tea in the Café Cairo.

'It's the only system we can manage at present,' Bernard replied, 'and I like the democratic idea of it.'

'Sir, you take it from me, democracy's a cod. It's ridiculous enough in civil affairs, but in military matters it's a washout, and I tell you, if we're to make this movement of ours a success it's got to be cut right out of it. That's all there's to it.'

'You may be right as far as the military side is concerned,' replied Bernard, 'but I'm a democrat, heart and soul, in everything else.'

'Well, I'm not,' said O'Flaherty. 'Democracy means the rule of cods, because it puts the government of a

country into the hands of the men who can cod the people most. If you want efficient government you must have the efficient people on top, and they'll never be put there by the votes of a democracy. No, sir. Monarchy for me. If you've a fixed and stable head to the state he can nominate the right people to the right place. . . . Look at Germany.'

'I prefer freedom to efficiency,' said Bernard.

'What do you know about it? I've tried both. You've had neither. . . . Hello! There are Ward and Crowley coming in.'

He called them over and made room for them.

'Lascelles has been telling me he prefers freedom to efficiency,' he said when they were seated.

'Freedom for me,' said Crowley.

'The two aren't necessarily contradictory,' said Stephen.

'They are in this country,' said O'Flaherty. 'When we put the English out, if we're to keep them out, we'll have to get ourselves licked into shape, and democratic ways won't do that. I'm for getting in a foreign king and giving him full powers.'

'You're talking rot,' said Bernard. 'The chance of any particular king being any use is jolly small. Look at the poor lot we've got in modern Europe.'

'No matter,' said Hector. 'Even a moderately intelligent king would be better than the rule of cods. And that's what an Irish democracy would mean.'

'Would it?' said Bernard.

'Well, look at the Party they send to Westminster.'

'Talking of the Party,' said Crowley, turning to Stephen Ward, 'have they made any advances towards us yet?'

'No,' said Stephen.

'All the better,' said O'Flaherty. 'But even the cods that follow them will come over to us soon if they go on hauling down the flag much longer.'

An attendant brought tea and cake for Stephen and Crowley, and for a time the talk was on trivial subjects. Presently Bernard said to O'Flaherty:

'You've knocked round the world a bit since I last saw you. Tell us some of your adventures.'

'I've had a few,' O'Flaherty admitted.

'Well, spit 'em out, old chap,' said Crowley.

3

'WELL,' said O'Flaherty, 'anyone who took the trouble to study my habits and inclinations, from the time I was a kid till I was seventeen, could tell I was cut out to be a soldier or a diplomat—or both. Lascelles here remembers the games we had in Stephen's Green when we were youngsters; and when I was fifteen or so, when I wasn't reading military books I was studying the diplomatic news in the papers and trying to catch their drift—as far as a man could for the flapdoodle and eyewash of the language it's written in. I wanted to be a soldier, anyway, but my father wouldn't have it. You know what fathers are, Lascelles. What a pity we can't have mothers only. Mothers are darlings, as Oscar Wilde says, but fathers——'

'Here's to parthenogenesis,' said Crowley gravely, raising his cup.

'Hear, hear! But I was telling you. My father was bound I'd be a respectable sort of guy, and tried to shove me into a business. But I wasn't having any. Unfortunately there's no opening for soldiers in this country, so I decided to join the French Foreign Legion. I waited about a bit and saved up some money, and the day I heard the examiners had stuck me I made a bolt for London, and a week later I shipped as a stowaway for Algiers. A stowaway's life isn't all romance and adventure, by the way. It's mostly boredom and seasickness, but we won't go into that. We reached Algiers at last, and as soon as I could escape from the ship, I struck out for the nearest depot of the Foreign Legion and enlisted.

'I dare say you've a lot of romantic notions about that Legion. I know *I* had. But they came out pretty quick in the wash, I can tell you. You take it from me, boys,

life in the Foreign Legion is no joke. It's a dog's life and about as profitable as selling bootlaces on O'Connell Bridge in wet weather. However I'd joined up at a pretty exciting time. Some months before a French company had begun to build a railway from Casablanca in Morocco, and right in their track was a very ancient Moorish cemetery. With the characteristic tact of Christians in dealing with people of another religion, and with the humanity and politeness which so distinguishes Europeans in dealing with backward peoples, they decided to cut right through this cemetery in spite of the objections of the natives. Naturally there were ructions, and some sacred European lives were lost. In next to no time we had invaded Morocco and marched on Casablanca. After some stiff fighting in the neighbourhood we bombarded the city, wrecked most of it, and killed several thousands of the inhabitants. Gee, it was dirty work, and when it was over we occupied the whole Shawiya district around it, not without some stiff fighting, for the Moors are tough stuff.

'Now, I hadn't read the diplomatic news of the last three years for nothing, and I knew that this invasion of Morocco was a flat violation of the Act of Algeciras, the treaty signed by the Great Powers in 1906 guaranteeing the independence and sovereignty of Morocco. France had already infringed it in a minor way by occupying Udja in retaliation for the murder of some damned idiot of a Frenchman who probably deserved all he got. Of course she made the usual promises of immediate withdrawal, but devil a one she kept, and as every one knows she's in Udja and Shawiya to this day. . . . I can tell you I was pretty well fed up. I hadn't joined the Legion to help France with England's connivance to put her yoke on a lot of unfortunate Moors: damn good stuff those Moors, take it from Pop. I got this scar over my eye taking a village in Shawiya. Anyway, I was fed up and took my first chance to desert. Getting away wasn't so very hard, though I had to tap an interfering sentry

on the head. Then I made my way southwards towards the desert. I had a bundle of native clothes with me that I stripped off a corpse (there were lots of corpses in Shawiya in those days) and as soon as I could I chucked off my uniform and put them on. All through the day I lay in hiding, thinking out a line of action. My only landmark was a great range of mountains a hundred miles away in the east. I knew Fez was behind them, and I decided to make that way, travelling by night and hiding by day, and then to pass myself off as a German and beat up the German consulate. You see the Germans are pretty popular in Morocco because they're the only European nation that treats the Moors any way decently. . . . Well, I struck out farther south the next night so as to get clear of the French lines of communication, and hid again all through the next day.

' Things had gone gaily up to this, but now I hit a bad streak of luck. Lying in the sun all day must have been bad for my head, for I don't know what I did or where I went that night. I must have wandered miles off the track and then dropped in a faint, for when I came to it was daylight and a Moorish girl was looking down on me and my head was in her lap. You won't guess what had happened to me. I'd fallen into the hands of a band of marauding nomads and she was the chieftain's daughter. I started babbling out at once that I wasn't French but German—in English too, like the sunstruck ass that I was. But it made precious little difference to the damsel, for she didn't understand a word. When my head got clearer I looked around and saw the band, half a dozen of the dirtiest-looking blackguards you ever struck, and a grey-bearded old patriarch, their chief. Their horses were tethered near at hand. (Arab steeds! Not on your life. A collection of the mangiest cab horses you could pick up.) Well, the gang seemed to be holding a sort of consultation as to the best way of disposing of me. One ruffian quite obviously wanted to practise his marksmanship on me, but he was outvoted. The chief's

daughter pleaded for me, and I was taken on as a sort of man-of-all-work to the gang. It wasn't a very dignified position for a white man, but it was that or starvation, which was rather a poor choice. I was given the spare horse. Some horse! I bet I'd seen him on a cabstand in Dublin a few years before. Well, on that horse's back I assisted in their marauding till we'd made the district too hot to hold us, when we bolted for a season to the Sahara and lay low.

' I stuck that life for nine solid months. I've practised many professions in my time, but I think marauding is the last one I'd go back to. It's a bit monotonous, you know, with its perpetual alternations of riding, raiding, and hiding. And I did get sick of that desert, all sand and sunshine. Don't you get taken in, boys, by any punk dope you may read about the free joyous life of the nomads. Not that I was badly treated. The chief was a decent old skin with an outlandish name I never quite got the hang of. I used to call him Methuselah. He kind of took to me because I reminded him of his son who had been captured way back in a raid on Tamagrut and tortured to death for the amusement of the Sultan. I got on all right with the gang too, all except the man who wanted to shoot me at the start. I never quite got *his* name either, so I called him Cain. It was he who rode after me and captured me the night I tried to escape, and stood by fingering his trigger in the hope that the old man would condemn me to death. You should have seen his face when Methuselah gave me a free pardon. The Sahara climate took a full week to warm my blood afterwards.

' But the chief's daughter—gee, she was a peach, and, though you mayn't believe it, she got quite a mash on your humble servant. She'd a heathenish name that I couldn't pronounce, but I used to call her Jenny, which pleased her just as well and suited her a lot better.

' You boys won't like what I did next, but I believe in taking what comes to you, and I was fair sick of the gang

and ready to do anything to get away. She tipped me the glad eye, and I responded so as to get an ally. I hadn't learnt much of her language, but we fixed up a means of communication somehow. These things come easy if you know how. I won't give you the details, but the gist of the matter was that she arranged to help me to escape if I'd promise to come back some day and fetch her away with me. It wasn't a fair promise to make, but necessity knows no decency, and I meant to keep the promise at the time, and maybe I'll keep it yet. Anyhow, she put some drug or other in their supper one night, and I took the best of the horses and my leave. She came a bit of the way to see me off, and there in the heart of the desert by the sandy bank of the Wady Saoora we took a tender farewell. The moon was up and the silence of the desert was all around us, and we kissed each other, and she made me repeat my promise. It was just like a romance by Robert Hichens. It only needed a few bulbuls to complete the picture, but I guess there weren't any in that locality.

'She went back to the camp, and I crossed the Saoora and followed the course of the Wady Susfana for several days. Then, about twenty miles south of Figuig, I struck off to the east into Algeria. This was the most dangerous part of my travels because I was on French territory now and liable to be shot as a deserter, if caught. However, I came through all right. After four months of travelling by night and hiding by day, and starving most of the time (not to mention such details as sicknesses and fevers), I crossed the frontier into Tripoli and joined on to a caravan making for Egypt. Boys, I never thought I'd live to be glad to see the Union Jack, but you'd be glad to see the devil himself if he marked the end of a journey you were sick of. At length I landed in Cairo, dead beat and without a red cent in my pocket.

'Well, I kept myself for a year in Cairo on all sorts of odd jobs, and at the same time I looked up the back numbers, so to speak, of the Moroccan situation. During

the time I'd spent in the desert things had been going from bad to worse there. The French, you may remember, sent in an indemnity bill to the Sultan for a couple of millions. Something like England charging the Union bribery on Ireland, eh? By this time poor old Morocco was tied hand and foot by European finance, and the Sultan was forced to torture his people to raise enough money to make ends meet. Result, fresh chaos in Morocco and a demand for renewed French intervention. . . . Useful sort of vicious circle, don't you think? . . . Then Spain thought she ought to have a finger in the pie, and answered France's occupation of Fez by pouring troops into the Riff. When I left Cairo there were a hundred thousand foreign troops in Morocco and the Act of Algeciras had been virtually torn up. Fine object lesson in Christianity and civilisation for the Moors, what? Well—

'I shipped from Cairo as a greaser on a steamship for Boston. A hundred miles south-west of Cape St. Vincent we sighted a little German gunboat making south. It turned out afterwards to be the *Panther*, bound for Agadir. You may remember the fuss kicked up in the English papers at the time about what they called this "display of German brutality". Well, the Germans hadn't more or less right in Morocco than the rest of the Powers, but they didn't shell any city or occupy any territory, anyhow. They didn't as much as fire a gun or land a marine, and if they were out for aggression don't you think they'd have sent more than a little tin gunboat? The Germans don't do things by halves.

'But I'm wandering from my story. When I reached Boston I got the nastiest shock of my life. I found I couldn't join the American Army until I was a properly squared-up citizen. It was some jar, but I quickly decided I'd stay and serve out my seven years for Rachel, so to speak. For six months I loaded cargoes on the quays of Boston and was a good deal more than sick of it when I knocked up against Augustus X. Skinner. He

was standing on the quay one day and seemed to be interesting himself in the way I manœuvred the landing of a cargo of lions and camels. (I didn't tell you I was foreman by this time.)

"Like a new job at four times what you're getting now?" says he.

"Sure thing," says I.

"Mind breaking the law?" says he.

"Try me," says I.

'And that settled it. He was organising a gun-running stunt on the Mexican frontier, and he'd spotted me as a likely second-in-command. Well, I stayed in that line of business for a good while, and when I'd put by a bit of cash I decided to increase it by blossoming out as a financier. I went to New York, studied the markets for a bit, speculated, and in a couple of days lost half the money I had. I went careful after that and lost more. Then in despair I put all my money to the last dollar into a gamble that would bring me five hundred per cent. or ruination. For a marvel it panned out all right and I made a pile, which I'm living on still. Then one day along comes a man I'd known at school—Sullivan, now on the Provisional Committee. He was touring America to get support for this movement. The idea of the old country arming herself and getting a buzz on things appealed to me some, and in a few days I'd packed my traps and come right over. . . . None too soon either, I think, because I tell you what, boys—when the *Panther* went to Agadir I sized things up pretty well. I guess there'll be a scrap in Europe soon, and Ireland will need every man if she's to keep her end up. Do you get me? What price armed Neutrality?'

The waitress came along scribbling the bill.

4

BERNARD'S action in joining the Irish Volunteers did not long remain unnoticed by his family. His mother called him to her room one day, having, as she said, something

very serious to say to him. He had not a moment's doubt as to its nature.

'Have you joined the Nationalist Volunteers?' she began directly.

'The *Irish* Volunteers,' corrected Bernard.

'What does the old name matter?' said Lady Lascelles irritably. 'I hear they've made you an officer.'

'Quite true.'

'You should have consulted your father before taking a step like that.'

'Why?'

'Because he's your father.'

'I don't see the force of the argument.'

'Oh Bernard, what a nasty thing to say! As if you didn't owe everything to your father, even your very existence. . . . And he's the best of fathers too. You've always had the best of everything—food, clothes, everything. The best of education and careers. . . . Everything,' she ended weakly.

'Well,' replied Bernard, 'he could scarcely afford to let his children go about in rags, or send them to Christian Brothers' schools, could he? As for my career, it was forced on me. I didn't want it.'

'That's a very ungrateful way to speak, Bernard. Your father loves you, and you know it, and it's your duty to try and please him.'

'Well, I've never done anything to disgrace him.'

'These Volunteers, darling—'

'Look here, mother, I have my own principles and opinions in these matters. I don't want to interfere with his, and I refuse to let him interfere with mine.'

'But he's your father.'

'I'd have my own opinions if I'd fifty fathers.'

'But you don't know how annoyed he is, my darling boy. I've had an unpleasant time of it these last few days, I can tell you. . . . Now, do give this up, just to please me. I don't want to have rows and unpleasantness in my home. I want peace and quiet.'

'Even peace with dishonour?' said Bernard. 'My dear mother, if father objects to anything I do he ought to come to me himself and not send you to plead with me. . . . It's no use, anyway. I have a right to my own principles and to think for myself.'

'Yes, darling boy. *Think* what you like. Nobody can object to that. Only don't *do* anything.'

Bernard fairly gasped at this piece of advice. What could one say to this type of mind? Where could it be grasped? And how?

'Mother,' he said at last, 'can't you see you're asking me to be a liar and a coward?'

'No, darling. I know my boy could be neither of those things. I'm only asking you to be sensible.'

'Mother, I do believe that if we'd lived in Judea in the time of Christ, if I'd told you I believed in him and meant to follow him, you'd have tried to stop me.'

'No, Bernard. What a thing to say!'

'Oh, yes, you would. And you'd have said too, "*Believe* what you like, but don't *do* anything," meaning "Be a Nicodemus instead of a Peter." Oh, yes. I can imagine it all.'

'That's absolutely different, Bernard. Amn't I always trying to keep you to your religion?'

Bernard laughed and kissed her cheek.

'You're a darling illogical old mother,' he said, and after another embrace ran away, leaving her very much puzzled.

Sir Eugene, knowing that Bernard, with an income of his own, and within a few months of qualification, was unlikely to be diverted from his course by any display of paternal wrath, had driven her to action by grumbles and threats to disinherit the boy. After her failure he redoubled his threats, and the poor lady had visions of her home broken up and her favourite son a penniless wanderer over the face of the earth. Diffident of her own controversial abilities she decided to secure allies, and went to her old friend Mrs. Harvey for advice and consolation.

'Why not get Augustine Reilly to speak to him?' said Mrs. Harvey.

'The very thing,' said Lady Lascelles, brightening.

Augustine consorted much with priests and read the Bible, or rather the Old Testament, more assiduously than is customary among Catholics. From his rare knowledge of rubrics and ceremonial he was supposed to be a great theologian, and his solemn platitudes passed among his simple relatives for deep philosophy and inspired wisdom. As a matter of fact he knew as much about theology and philosophy as he did about science, and the sum total of his knowledge of this was that the theory of evolution was wicked and not to be thought about. Lady Lascelles, however, was not in a position to know this, and like most of her relatives looked up to Augustine Reilly with awful respect.

'Yes. Augustine is just the man,' said Lady Lascelles. 'Bernard, I'm glad to say, is getting quite religious. He talked to me about our Lord the other day, so I'm sure Augustine should be able to manage him.'

'That's splendid,' said Mrs. Harvey. 'I'll say a few words to him myself, if you like. I know just how these clever young men should be taken, you know.'

'Do. That's awfully good of you. Why not come to lunch next Saturday?'

'Delighted,' said Mrs. Harvey. 'I'll bring Mabel along too. It'll be a nice birthday treat for her.'

In due course Saturday arrived and Mrs. Harvey with it. Mabel was now twenty years of age, a slim, fair-haired young woman nearly as tall as Bernard. Her pretty face was somewhat pale and there was a tired look about her eyes due to long hours of office work. She saw the sun only in the evenings in summer and not at all in winter; the air she breathed was mostly dust; the food she ate was not of the best quality, nor did she get enough of it; her surroundings both at home and at work were comfortless and unlovely; her pay was small and her mother took most of it; and she had but

sixteen days holiday in the year : yet she faced life bravely and with a smile. Bernard liked what little he had seen of her and he manœuvred to have her beside him at lunch. Lady Lascelles, however, had arranged things otherwise and took Mabel to herself. Bernard was at the foot of the table and Mrs. Harvey deposited her bulky form in the chair on his right. Alice sat on her mother's left and opposite to Mabel, and Eugene and Sandy were on Bernard's left. These two were deeply absorbed in discussing the route by which they intended cycling to Bohernabreena after lunch, and Lady Lascelles and the girls at the far end of the table formed a remote conversational group, so Mrs. Harvey had Bernard quite at her mercy. She talked winningly and sentimentally about Ireland, professing to hold moderate political views.

'I don't like extremists,' she said. 'I don't think they're practical. Mind you, I've no doubt the men who hold extreme views are honest and self-sacrificing. But I think our unfortunate country needs a little compromise and good-will.'

Bernard, having no desire to argue, simply said 'Yes, yes' to everything she said, so Mrs. Harvey was able to reassure Lady Lascelles and to inform her that her son was really a most reasonable and sensible young man.

'I'm sure he'll do well in his profession,' she volunteered at parting. Her visit had been a double success, for there was a glittering birthday present in Mabel's purse.

A few days later Augustine Reilly called, as had been prearranged, when Bernard and his mother were alone together at afternoon tea. He was an infrequent visitor, and Bernard was rather surprised to see him, but when, a few minutes later, Lady Lascelles slipped away on a transparent excuse, he realised what was coming.

Augustine began, in a way he thought diplomatic, to praise fulsomely the virtues of youth : its courage, its vigour, its honesty, its idealism. But youth, it appeared, needed the restraint of experience. It needed the guidance of age. Bernard listened to this homologue without

any attempt to conceal his impatience and contempt. Finally he took advantage of a pause to say:

'Look here, let's cut out the preamble. You've come here to advise me to chuck the Volunteers, haven't you?'

Augustine was a little disconcerted by this sudden rupture of the veils of diplomacy, but he replied almost immediately:

'Well, frankly, I have. Your dear mother, relying upon our time-honoured friendship—a friendship which began before you, Bernard, were born—has asked me to show you the rashness of the course you have recently undertaken. Personally I think that your mother's express disapproval should have been enough for you. It certainly would have been for me. The love of a mother for the child of her womb is the most wonderful and sacred thing in nature and entitles her to a corresponding obedience and respect.'

'I'm not a child,' said Bernard. 'I've a right to decide my actions for myself.'

'You are still a child to her. As I have said, the love of a mother for the child of her womb is the most powerful force in the universe. Did not even Our Blessed Lord give obedience to his mother?'

'She didn't try to interfere with his mission.'

'My boy, don't let us quibble. A mother's love is an ever-present love. It makes her always anxious for the safety of her child. The thought that he may be in danger is a pain to her. We are bound to consider this in any action we contemplate. . . . Moreover, your action tends to disturb the peace and harmony of the household over which she rules.'

'I can't help that,' said Bernard. 'I'm going to do what I think right. If other people upset themselves about it, it's their own look out.'

'My boy, it is never right to disturb the peace of a happy home. "My little children, let you love one another." Those are the words of Christ. Christ came

to this earth to preach the gospel of peace and love, and woe to those who infringe God's peace!

'As well as I remember, Christ said: "I come to bring not peace but a sword,"' retorted Bernard. Augustine was a little nonplussed by this, but his stock of clichés was inexhaustible.

'The devil can quote scripture to his purpose,' he said.

'Why did you quote it then?' said Bernard.

Augustine for a moment was at a loss how to continue. At last he resumed with his eternal tag:

'The love of a mother for the child of . . .'

But here Bernard interrupted him.

'You're only wasting time talking to me,' he said. 'I don't want to upset my parents if I can help it, but, after all, one's country comes first.'

'Yes. And you can best serve your country, not by following the lead of rebels and anarchists, but by obeying the law, your parents, and your religion. He who sets himself against the law, remember, sets himself against God.'

'Indeed?' said Bernard. 'Tell me, Mr. Reilly, do you approve of the crucifixion of Christ?'

Augustine turned very red.

'Good heavens!' he exclaimed. 'What a question to ask!'

'Oh, I'm glad you don't,' said Bernard. 'He was against the law and the priests in his own time, you know, and the respectable people like you howled for his death.'

'That', said Augustine, 'is a gross impertinence.'

'All right,' said Bernard. 'Keep your nose out of my affairs and you'll get no more of it.'

At this Augustine nearly choked.

Bernard, wishing to end the matter, suddenly changed his tone. 'But I'm forgetting my duties as host,' he said. 'I can recommend these hot cakes . . . or perhaps you'd prefer some of this chocolate cake . . . No? Then let me get you some more tea?'

But his attempt to mitigate the blows he had dealt

was a failure. Augustine was implacable. From Christian duty he blessed Bernard henceforward in his prayers, but he never forgave him in his heart.

The consequences of Bernard's intransigence fell heaviest on his mother, who was now deprived of what little conjugal affection still remained to her. Bernard himself was treated by his father with coldness and silence, but this worried him little if at all, for he passed his final examination in the following March and set about finding a house for himself at once.

5

'THE Lord has delivered them into our hands,' said O'Flaherty triumphantly, and crumpling the newspaper into a ball addressed himself to his breakfast.

The news that he had read was certainly momentous. Not long before the British Government, embarrassed by the continued threats of violence from the Orangemen and their English supporters, had proposed as a concession that the North-Eastern Counties should be permitted to vote themselves temporarily out of the jurisdiction of the future Irish Parliament. The Irish leaders had accepted the proposal; and now Sir Edward Carson had contemptuously rejected it; so that a vital part of the national claim—the unity of the country—had been compromised, without result.

'This ought to settle the Party's hash for good and all,' said O'Flaherty.

Stephen, on the other side of the table, looked gloomy.

'It's a pity,' he said. 'It sets up an issue between us at once, and our one hope of achieving anything is in unity. Why can't they be trusted to be strong even for a minute? Why can't they use us to put pressure on that quaking, shifting, bulliable Government? Why can't they learn something from Carson?'

'Because what little good was ever in them has been sapped by Westminster air and ministerial breakfasts,' said O'Flaherty.

'Well, it'll give a stimulus to our recruiting, anyhow,' said Stephen. 'But what we want now is arms.'

Stephen had prophesied correctly. In the weeks following Mr. Redmond's surrender recruiting for the Volunteers doubled and trebled. Then came a still more significant incident—the mutiny of the officers of the British Army in Ireland against the contingency of being ordered to suppress a revolt in Ulster against Home Rule. No Irish Nationalist, of course, wanted to see his countrymen shot down by British troops; but they could not recollect any notable reluctance on the part of either British soldiers or British statesmen to use the bullet or bayonet against themselves, whether to assist in clearing their land of people to make room for cattle, or to extort the tithes for the Protestant clergy. Neither government hesitation nor military mutiny could therefore be taken at its face value. Distrust spread far and wide among the people; and there was a fresh accession of strength to the Volunteers.

'I'm not sure that it's for the best,' said O'Flaherty to Stephen Ward. 'I think old Gideon had sound dope when he weeded his men out before smiting the Amalekites. It's quality, not quantity, that we want. At the beginning we knew that all our men were Separatists and meant business. Now we're swamped with Hibs and ward politicians and general codology. . . . Say, now, are the Committee beginning to think about getting guns?'

6

So Ireland once more drew the sword that had been rusting in its sheath for nearly fifty years. In the spring of 1914 men were marching and drilling on hillside, plain, and valley, in town and village, all over the face of the country.

To Bernard, recent adherent to the cause, it was a sufficiently moving spectacle. To O'Dwyer it was well-nigh miraculous.

'I wish I could make you understand how I feel about this,' he said to Bernard one day as they watched a company manœuvring in the fields near Rathfarnham. 'When I was a boy I dreamed of nothing else but a day of arming and revenge, and I thought every one else was the same. As I grew up I met with nothing but disappointment. Those were the deadest days in Irish history, when even Home Rule was barely spoken of. And now to see this. To see the spirit of the people. To see armies rising out of the earth. To hear Irish war-songs again. To see men drilling by moonlight, as I did the other night. . . . Visions of Ninety-Eight, Lascelles. Who would have thought it? After seven centuries of subjection. Lord, but we're a wonderful people! Poland is doing nothing like this—or Finland. . . . I say, doesn't it remind you of Wordsworth's lines

"Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
And to be young was very heaven."

CHAPTER XI

OMENS

I

IT was some time before Bernard fulfilled his promise to call on Austin Mallow. He had no liking for the disease-worn fanatic, and always experienced an odd uncanny feeling of uneasiness in his presence. However, one evening O'Dwyer induced both him and Stephen to pay the poet a visit.

Austin lived with his mother, brother, and sister in a little house on the Rathgar Road. Mrs. Mallow had a small private income on which she supported her invalid elder son, her incapable second son, and her unmarried daughter. Austin's poetry never brought him in a farthing, and Brian was still making futile efforts to pass his final engineering examination. Theodosia, their sister, was an ill-made, pasty-faced, unhealthy girl who wore spectacles and bedroom slippers and spent most of her day reading. In a futile effort to assist their mother's finances they ran a monthly (more strictly an occasional) review called *Manannan*. Austin was editor and contributed his poems; Brian was manager and contributed an occasional political polemic; Theodosia was office-boy and contributed stray verses and stories as mystical as Austin's poems. The financial status of the paper can easily be imagined.

When O'Dwyer and his friends arrived they were admitted by Brian who welcomed them with crushingly hearty hand-clasps into a hall lighted by a small oil lamp. As he hung up his hat and coat Bernard noticed a faint

aromatic odour in the air, which became suddenly intensified as Brian threw open a door to his left. Bernard now saw into a room dimly lighted by two oriental lamps and cloudy with tobacco smoke, which evidently was the source of the aroma he had observed. The mixed furnishing of the room produced a very bizarre effect. There were a table and chairs of mahogany of very ordinary pattern, and numerous easy-chairs. Along with them were a couple of Turkish divans, and in places the floor was heaped with brilliantly coloured cushions. There was no carpet, but its place was taken by rugs of various shapes, colours, and kinds, from Donegal, Axminster, and India. The windows were hung with curtains of Indian stuff, very fine and flaming with colour. In one corner stood a Ninety-Eight pike alongside a Japanese umbrella and an old-fashioned rifle. The wall opposite to the windows was adorned with three engravings and a tiger's skin, and over the mantelpiece were an antelope's head and an engraving of the trial of Robert Emmet. Most of the aromatic haze came from a hookah smoked by Austin, who sat curled up in an enormous arm-chair close to the fireplace. Opposite to him sat Theodosia smoking a cigarette, and on a divan at his left sat a small and rather corpulent man smoking a long churchwarden pipe, who was introduced as Mr. Umpleby. Mrs. Mallow did not appear. Brian bustled about getting chairs and cushions for the visitors, and when all were comfortable he came round with new churchwardens and a terra-cotta bowl containing a spicy sandy tobacco.

Mr. Umpleby presently cleared his throat and addressed the visitors. He was a little man with the beginnings of a paunch, fat cheeks, and a moustache and prominent canine teeth that gave him a comic resemblance to a walrus. O'Dwyer already knew him slightly and by repute. He was known to be extremely vain, but his vanity took the harmless and rather humble form of pluming himself on the great people—poets, artists, politicians, rather than aristocrats—with whom he scraped up acquaintance.

'We were just about to have the pleasure,' he said, 'when you gentlemen came in, of hearing Austin read his latest poem. Would you begin now, Austin?'

The request was backed up by polite murmurings from the rest of the company. Austin unfolded a sheet of paper which he had been holding in his hand, and began:

'IGNIS IMMORTALIS.

'Seven spears in the day of light
Shall avenge with might our blood and tears,
Seven seers shall in death indict
The blasting blight of the bitter years.'

There was a terrible energy in the voice issuing from so frail a frame, and Bernard noticed a feverish gleam in the eyes set so deep in their sockets. Austin went on to the second stanza:

'Seven victims upon the altar
Shall sing a psalter of faith renewed.
The flame rekindled no more shall falter
Nor word-wise palter the multitude.'

'Magnificent!' cried Umpleby fulsomely.

'What does it mean?' asked Bernard.

'What it says, of course,' said Austin contemptuously. Then seeing Bernard's lips twitch slightly, he added: 'You may smile. I'd expect it of you. But some poems are prophecies, and perhaps you'll understand this one in a few years' time.'

'I say, Austin,' broke in O'Dwyer, 'I've discovered a new poet who'd be exactly to your liking. He prefers to remain anonymous, but he gave me a poem to submit to your opinion.'

'Read it to me,' commanded Austin.

O'Dwyer took a folded sheet of paper from his pocket, and to Bernard's amazement read as follows:

'AISLING.

'A Vision in the Void of Night!
The moon her face in fear did veil;
The stars did shudder at the sight:
The firmament did quail.

'And through earth's rent and rotting rocks
The boiling billows broke and burst
Whereon cold flames in feral flocks
Assuaged their thorny thirst.

'Black lightnings seared the fallow air
The quaking sun dissolved in gloom.
Then oozed from out its loathsome lair
The pallid Worm of Doom !'

'By Jove !' cried Austin in tremendous excitement, 'that's wonderful ! A true vision ! That was written by a great poet.'

'Marvellous !' echoed Umpleby.

'I confess I don't see anything in it,' said O'Dwyer, 'but then mysticism isn't in my line. I suppose there must be a deep meaning in it somewhere.'

'The meaning is quite plain to anyone who knows anything of mysticism,' said Austin. 'You must ask that young poet to come and see me.'

'I remember once', began Umpleby, 'a most extraordinary experience occurred to me. I was . . .'

But here Brian cut in with :

'Look here, everybody. What about drinkables ?'

He wheeled forward a little table on which were a decanter of whiskey, a siphon of soda-water, bottles of stout, a bottle of white wine, and glasses. The kettle on the fire had just boiled, and Theodosia began to brew coffee in the urn on the hearth. When every one was served with his particular drink Umpleby had forgotten his story, and Austin launched into a dissertation on politics.

'This generation needs blood,' he said. 'We alone amongst all the generations of Irishmen have undergone no sufferings in the cause of freedom. We have submitted tamely to the yoke ; the mark of slavery is upon us ; and only by blood can it be wiped out.'

'I don't see much sign of slavish acceptance in the Volunteers,' interrupted Bernard.

'A parade army,' said Austin. 'Until they have taken

and given blood they can be nothing but a political demonstration—like the Orangemen. Until England strikes at us we remain as we are: an army of flag-wavers.'

'If England strikes we'll crumple,' said Bernard. 'I regard the Volunteers as a defensive force, of more value to stand up against political bullying than to take military action.'

'Nonsense!' said Austin. 'No bargaining for me! Martyr's blood is of more value than rifles.'

Bernard said no more. As he watched that emaciated body jerk forth the blood-lust of the restless tortured spirit it harboured, he realised that he might as well argue with a lunatic. It was a relief to hear Umpleby's commonplace voice recommencing his interrupted story.

At ten o'clock Stephen arose and said:

'I must go. Good night.'

It was the first time he had spoken that evening. Bernard and O'Dwyer decided to accompany him, and in a few minutes they found themselves in the street.

'Some entertainment!' said O'Dwyer.

'That poem of yours did some useful work to-night,' said Stephen. 'It confirmed a suspicion of mine.'

'Which?' asked O'Dwyer.

'Austin Mallow is a liar,' said Stephen.

'Exactly what I wanted to prove,' said O'Dwyer.

'Then that poem . . . ?' questioned Bernard.

' . . . Was my own,' said O'Dwyer. 'Look here, boys, the street's no place for metaphysical discussion. Let's drop into my place for a while and I'll tell you about a discovery I've made.'

O'Dwyer's father lived at Stephen's Green, so they caught a passing tram and arrived there in five minutes. O'Dwyer let them in by latchkey and led them to his sanctum, a comfortable little room in the return part of the house.

'Draw up your chairs, boys,' he said, lighting the gas-stove. 'And what about a *decent* smoke? . . . I'm

half poisoned with that muck of Mallow's.' He passed Bernard the tobacco-jar from the mantelpiece.

'Now, what about this discovery?' asked Bernard.

'Well,' said O'Dwyer, blowing forth a dense cloud of tobacco smoke, 'about a month ago I bought a splendid book: Jean Christophe by Romain Rolland. It's an enormous work—ten volumes of it, all packed with psychology and philosophy. But in the whole thing one sentence stood out for me that seemed to be an entirely new discovery and to be quite shatteringly true. It was this: "Every nation has its lie, which it calls its idealism," and the hero of the novel exposes in turn the German lie and the French lie. I found myself immediately wondering: "What is the Irish lie?" and thinking: "If we can discover it and rid ourselves of it we shall have taken a definite step on the road to freedom." Well, I set myself to the discovery. First I asked myself what did we call our idealism. I found that hard to answer, because the word has been so shockingly misused. Then I remembered that Jean Christophe discovered the French and German lies in their art, and I set myself to look for the lie in ours—at any rate in our literature, which is the only art I'm qualified to judge. Now, just look at our modern literature, and compare it with the stuff of the past. What's the first thing that strikes you about it?'

'You know quite well you don't want us to answer that question,' said Stephen. 'What is it?'

'It's not a question of merit,' said O'Dwyer. 'That has no significance at all in my thesis. It's a question of size. Look at the stuff of the past. Go right back twelve hundred years. Take the Táin Bó Cuailgne. I won't say whether it's as good as Homer, but it's on the same scale. It's a big thing. Skip a few centuries, and look at the Four Masters. Another big thing. Move on a few more to the poetry of the Penal times. It's on a different scale, because it's lyric stuff, but look at the quantity of it, even after so much has been lost. Come on further, and look at Carlton's great output, and Lever's. Look at Kick-

ham's Knocknagow. What's the mark of it all? It's big stuff right through. The work of the great men of a great people.

'Then look at the work of to-day—this alleged literary renaissance of ours—and what do you see? Not badness, not clumsiness; no real fault you could point to; but smallness. Apart from Russell and Yeats, who really belong to the last generation, no one in Ireland in recent years—not even Synge—has produced a work of decent size. You could add all the work of the poets of to-day to the Táin Bó Cuailgne, and not notice it was there. We've produced hardly anything but short plays, short stories, and a bewildering multitude of tiny booklets of microscopic verses. You'd find it hard to point to a flaw in any of them (they aren't big enough to make big mistakes), but the smallness and mediocrity of the stuff is appalling. That's the great Renaissance we hear so much about.'

'Yes,' said Stephen. 'That may be all quite true, but where's this lie you're talking about?'

'The lie', said O'Dwyer, 'is not in the smallness of the literature, but in the reason for it. I'm coming to that presently. But there's one other thing I want you to notice, and that is that half of the poetry turned out is what they call "mystic", and half the remainder is what I call "misty". As for the second kind, you know the sort of stuff I mean: poems full of "white mist on the brown bog", and that kind of tosh. The other's harder to deal with. You see it's quite unintelligible, and if you say so you're told you're unfit to criticise. However, after a careful examination into a number of these poems, I came to this conclusion: that they really mean nothing, and that anyone acquainted with the laws of prosody and gifted with a muddled head could produce them automatically by self-hypnosis induced by rime and alliteration. I immediately decided to try the experiment on myself, and produced the monstrosity you heard to-night. I had no idea in my head when I sat down. I honestly

assure you of that. I wrote down the first line that came into my head ; the rest were simply fitted in to suit the rime ; and I tacked on to every noun the first alliterative adjective I could think of. *Voilà tout !* Mallow thought the result a great poem and thought he saw a meaning in it.'

'If you were dishonest enough', remarked Bernard, 'you could make a book of those things and pass as a mystic poet.'

'And I wouldn't be the first. . . . Now do you see the lie? When nine-tenths of a country's literature is characterised by mistiness, mystery, and brevity, what conclusion do you come to? There's no imagination in mistiness ; it's mere sentimentality. There's nothing in their mysticism but muddled and slovenly thinking (Mallow, for instance, couldn't think clearly if he tried). And as for their brevity—they're not men enough to produce work of any size. That's the long and the short of it. Why do you think there's so much poetry produced in Ireland? Because it's the easiest form in which to say nothing impressively.

'Well, there's our lie. We've been posing as a nation of poetical, unworldly idealists, and we're really a nation of slackers. Our literature gives us away : it's the work of the lazy men of a lazy nation. Our energy's all spent. It went away with the Wild Geese. We're all descended from the dregs they left behind.'

'Our laziness is a bad sign,' said Stephen, 'but we're getting over it. . . . Your poem showed up something much worse to-night. The man who could pretend to see a meaning in that drivel is a liar and a self-deceiver. . . . Did you listen to his own poem?'

'Not particularly,' replied the others.

'He called it a prophecy. It's easy to prophesy what one intends to carry out . . . We'd better keep our eyes open.'

2

IN May Bernard wrote to Willoughby from his new flat in Harcourt Street, giving him a lengthy account of recent events. The letter concluded :

Would you like to have a glance at Ireland as she really is ? I'm going north in June with my brother Eugene and two or three friends to Cloughaneely, an Irish-speaking district, and we'll be delighted if you'll form one of the party.

You may notice I've changed my address. I've taken the hall-flat of this house, consisting of consulting-room, dining-room, sitting-room, and bedroom, with use of kitchen, and I'm busy looking over my blind for patients. I've engaged a servant too, an Englishman, a perfectly priceless person called Swathythe. Your 'lower orders' make much better servants than ours. They're more servile.

Hoping to see you in June, if you aren't married by then.

Willoughby replied that in June he would be honeymooning in Italy ; whereupon Bernard sent off a salad-bowl from West's and a copy of Mitchell's Last Conquest of Ireland.

He paid his second visit to Cloughaneely in a very different spirit from his first. He was determined now really to learn the language, and when he stepped out once more upon the wooden platform at Cashelnagore and heard that familiar, though still unintelligible music, he felt like one coming home. Here was peace. Back in Dublin was a growing ill-feeling and discord. The parliamentary leaders had at last definitely claimed a place in the governance of the Volunteers—not unreasonably, since their followers now formed a majority of the rank and file. The Volunteer Committee, of course, did not want to admit them, feeling sure, with equally good reason, that their purpose would be to keep the organisation impotent as a military weapon. But the Committee was itself divided. One part was for openly refusing Mr. Redmond's demand ; the other maintained that in existing

conditions this was impossible, and proposed that they should be admitted on terms. It was characteristic of our unfortunate nation that this quarrel over means should be more bitter than the other over ends, and it was still in progress when Bernard left town.

Cloughaneely, he found, cared nothing for politics: Dublin was as remote from the thoughts of the Gael as London; and he was glad of it. The owner of the little shop at Bedlam was unfeignedly pleased to see him again. So was Mrs. MacDonnell. Nothing had changed about the place. Mr. MacDonnell and his daughter rose and stood exactly where they had stood a year ago. The great pot hung over the turf fire that had been burning uninterruptedly since the house was built. There was even another young turkey pecking around, but it was not so friendly as its predecessor.

Bernard set to work at once at the humdrum task of learning the language, attending classes in the morning, and writing exercises in the evening. The beginners' class fortunately contained rather more intelligent members than on the previous occasion. One of them was a University College man, Conachy—he of the horse face and the everlasting discretion—and this brought Bernard into touch with his friend Leeds, who was in a more advanced class. Leeds insisted on going out of his way to be agreeable to the convert to Nationalism, which was extremely embarrassing to Bernard, who could not bear the sight of him. Leeds was the worst type of the city-bred neo-Gael—vulgar, ignorant, dogmatic, intolerant, an underbred chauvinist. He had the most extravagant notions about Ireland. He maintained that ancient Irish literature, which he had not read, was the greatest literature in the world; that Irish music was the greatest music in the world; that the Round Towers were the most beautiful pieces of architecture in the world; and that the Book of Kells was a greater work of art than all the pictures ever painted. Those who differed from him in this opinion he considered traitors to Ireland. He was always ready,

however, to welcome a saved soul, and as such he recognised Bernard. With the best intentions he used to press cigarettes upon him, seek his company for walks, and lecture him inaccurately on Irish history. He would always link arms on these walks, a familiarity which Bernard hated even from people he liked, and in general he made himself so detestably affable that it became impossible not to try and snub him. Snubbing, however, was of no avail. He was too thick-skinned.

In spite of these annoyances Bernard pursued his studies assiduously. The language began to come to him more like a reviving memory than a new acquisition. After all, it was the tongue of ancestors not very remote; not only of the Celtic O'Reillys, but even of the Huguenots whose name he bore—for so long as the language lived the colonists had had to learn it. If there were anything in heredity its germs must still be in his brain. They would grow once more, given the chance, like some temporarily suppressed bodily faculty.

But their cultivation was interrupted in dramatic fashion. One day he and O'Dwyer took the train to Letterkenny in search of some better tobacco than could be got at Bedlam or Gortahork. They found the little town seething with excitement. The streets were full of hurrying crowds, and the thump and rattle of different bands could be heard in the distance. One band swung past them in seedy uniforms adorned with tarnished gold braid; a tawdry banner borne in front; a terrible blare bursting from its battered instruments. Behind marched a company of half-disciplined Volunteers in fours armed with dummy rifles and commanded by an obvious ex-Sergeant Major of the British Army. Our friends followed in their wake to the focus on which all were concentrating—the market-place, one vast discordance of sights, sounds, and smells. Men, organised and unorganised, hurried here and there. Banners of motley kinds flaunted the sky. Pipes, bugles, fifes, drums rent the air. Shouts and bells added to the confusion. The

atmosphere was stifling ; it barely stirred the great green flag over the platform in the centre of the square.

Suddenly a big, burly, red-faced man mounted the platform, and as he raised his hand silence gradually fell.

'Ladies and gentlemen,' he said, 'we have assembled here to-day, we men and women of the land of the O'Donnells' (cheers) 'to pledge once more our renewed faith and loyalty' (cheers) 'to the men who have fought for us so long and so faithfully on the floor of the House of Commons, and have brought the Home Rule ship to the mouth of the harbour' (cheers)—'to Mr. John Redmond and the Irish Parliamentary Party' (loud and prolonged cheering). 'And, ladies and gentlemen, we would associate with them in our gratitude those young men' (cheers) 'who, inspired by them, called the people of Ireland to arm themselves, lest the rights they had won by constitutional means should be filched from them by the armed bullying of the Orangemen' (groans). 'But——'

It was a long-drawn-out and ominous 'But'. It transpired that the young men who had founded the Volunteer movement were not the right people to carry it on. They were rash, unskilled in politics. Their leaders must be 'tried and trusted men', for now 'by a single false step the cup might be dashed from the Nation's lips just as it was about to bear fruit'. In short, the speaker moved that this meeting requested Mr. John Redmond and the Irish Party to take over the leadership of the Volunteers. (Tremendous cheering as the speaker made place for another.)

'Shows the way the wind's blowing,' remarked Bernard to O'Dwyer. 'Wonder what's happening in Dublin.'

'Goodness knows,' said O'Dwyer gloomily. 'But it looks like mischief.' His tone suddenly became angry. 'Why the devil couldn't the Party be content with co-operation? Why must they dominate everything?'

The following afternoon they described what had happened to their friends, as they basked in glorious sunshine

in a field near the College. There was general wrath, deprecated mildly by Eugene.

'The Party', he said, 'have a big responsibility. They can't leave the control of a movement like the Volunteers in the hands of a few extremists.'

O'Dwyer gave a snort of contempt. 'That word "extremist"'. What the devil do you think it means? It's just the muddle-headed sort of cliché the English like. What you really mean when you say "extremists" is "separatists".'

'Well, they are extremists, aren't they?'

'Of course, but not more than other people. Redmond's an extremist. Horace Plunkett's an extremist——'

'Oh, get away!'

'Yes. An extreme Home Ruler and an extreme Co-operator. They wouldn't be much use if they were only moderate ones, would they?'

'You're only playing with words,' said Eugene.

'No, I'm not. It's you that are misusing them. When you call us extremists you think of us as desperate fellows who like fighting for its own sake. Well, we aren't. I'm all for peace. I want to get this question settled once for all, not left at loose ends, so that I can chuck politics and get at my writing. I can't fiddle while my country falls, but I wish she'd stop falling so that I might have a chance to do some fiddling.'

'All the more reason for moderation,' said Eugene. 'That's the way to peace and prosperity.' He lay back enjoying the sun. 'How beautiful and peaceful nature is, so different from the angry passions of men. Look!'

Sentimentally he gazed up at a skylark winging its way aloft. 'Hail to thee, blithe spirit!' he spouted.

Suddenly a hawk swooped from nowhere on its prey.

'What price peaceful Nature now?' said O'Flaherty.

'Nature's an extremist all right,' said Bernard. 'Only civilisation saves your type from extinction, Eugene.'

'Well, moderation is the civilised thing,' said Eugene.

'I'm glad you admit it.' He spoke triumphantly as having gained a point.

At the same moment the conversation was interrupted by the appearance of a boy at the gate of the field. It was the son of the Gortahork postmaster. He held an orange-coloured envelope in his hand.

'Bhfuil Bernard Lascelles annso?' he inquired on reaching the group.

Bernard took the telegram and read:

O'Flaherty and you come to town at once.

WARD.

3

BIG things meanwhile had been happening in Dublin. The Provisional Committee had held a meeting to come to a final decision on the question of admitting Mr. Redmond's nominees. The case against it was put by Barrett: Barrett, the tall shy scholar and poet with the big head, who never smiled, whose manner had always some indefinable quality, the mark, not yet to be interpreted, of one foredoomed by his own will to death. He spoke with a quiet eloquence and a tense conviction, as if he saw in the immediate issue the whole cause to which he was devoted.

'To admit these men is to make an end of the movement; to sacrifice an opportunity which does not come twice in one generation. Their entire purpose from the moment of their entry will be to confuse our councils, to obscure our purpose, to undermine our strength——'

'As their English masters have told them to do,' put in Austin Mallow.

'I don't say that,' said Barrett. 'I give them credit for meaning to do their best for Ireland. But they will do what I have said, and we shall be powerless to prevent them.'

Up to that point all the Committee were agreed. They all knew too that to refuse the Party's demand was to present an issue to the people on which they would be

immediately divided ; and there could be little doubt that a majority of the people would side with Mr. Redmond. The question of the moment, therefore, was which of two evils to choose : which would be less injurious to the cause of independence? To this definite point the discussion, which tended to ramble over general principles, was turned back again and again by a persistent young man named Stephen Ward, who gradually emerged from inconspicuousness to become Barrett's chief opponent. He eschewed all eloquence, this dark and hitherto silent man, contenting himself with calling to witness the unpalatable facts which others seemed either unable to fix in their minds, or else determined to ignore. To these two finally the argument was left. As they faced each other at the table, all present felt that between them was a perfect antagonism—the idealist and the realist, implacably hostile in pursuit of the same object. For the moment victory lay with the realist. He managed to get in the last speech, and he added to it an argument which won the waverers.

'Let them come in, and let them talk,' he said. 'The real obstacle to getting arms is the British Navy. If we can get them past that, no amount of blathering in committee will obliterate them.'

4

BERNARD and O'Flaherty learned the result from a newspaper which they bought at Portadown on their way south. The list of Mr. Redmond's nominees meant nothing to Bernard, who as yet knew little about the personalities of Irish politics. But O'Flaherty burst at once into a rage.

'Great Scott!' he cried. 'Half the crooks and jobbers in the U.I.L. ! Is that what he calls his representative men?' Then he added as an afterthought : 'Well, I suppose they're representative enough. Haven't I always told you democracy's a cod?'

Stephen Ward met their train at Amiens Street. He

was pale and haggard, and his weary eyes told of sleepless nights. He recounted briefly what had occurred.

'And now', he said, 'the real work begins. While civil war rages on the Continent we've got to get in guns. We've formed a special sub-committee for the purpose, we've raised most of the money, and we're just thinking out the best way of landing the guns when we've got them. They'll have to be bought on the Continent, so we'll need men to go for them who have leisure, who know their way about, and who aren't too well known to the authorities. That description seems to point to you two, I think. Will you be ready when wanted?'

'Rather,' said Bernard.

'Sure thing,' said Hector.

They had to wait impatiently for a couple of days before Stephen was able to tell them that everything was settled. The Committee had had to decide between two lines of action: whether to smuggle the arms in by night by some unfrequented inlet, or to land them openly by day at a port near Dublin. The bolder plan had been adopted, and was now worked out to its last detail.

'And we're in luck,' Stephen added. 'Two of the best yachtsmen in Ireland or England have offered their yachts and their services. The first is George Calverley—you've heard of him, of course. He strikes me as one of the finest men I ever met—exactly what you'd imagine him from that book of his. The other is Angus O'Connor, a good man too, but I haven't seen so much of him. Well, Calverley's going to run one cargo into Howth, and, in case of accidents, O'Connor will run the other into Kilcool. You two are to go and buy the guns at Antwerp, and deliver them there to Calverley and O'Connor. If you'll come along now to the Committee you'll receive full instructions.'

In the street Stephen went on:

'By the way, you're to have a colleague in this business. You know him, Lascelles. It's that fellow Umpleby. He's rather an ass, but he has the tremendous

OMENS

advantage of being a good French speaker, and he knows his way about Antwerp. He's not very discreet, he's a fair supply of brains, he's a sublime egoist and a snob of the first water. You'll find him amusing on the whole, but you'll have to keep him in order. I may add that he's quite insuppressible.'

'Some handful!' said Hector.

'He's so hopelessly indiscreet', said Stephen, 'that we're telling him nothing that he needn't know. So he thinks the guns are going to be run home in a fleet of fishing smacks, and if that rumour gets around it'll be all to the good. . . . Hello, here we are.'

They turned into a hotel in Sackville Street and, ascending to the second floor, entered a small private sitting-room. There were several men in the room, but one of them instantly focused Bernard's attention. He was standing with his back to the fire, leaning against the mantelpiece, a tall man of splendid proportions, with fine features and a curling black beard. He looked up with a smile of welcome as the young men entered.

'Here are my volunteers,' said Stephen. 'Mr. Lascelles and Mr. O'Flaherty—Sir Roger Casement.'

Bernard took the hand that was extended to him, and looked up into a pair of dark eyes sad with memories of unforgettable horrors witnessed in the forests of the Congo and Putomayo.

'Any relation to Sir Eugene Lascelles?' asked Sir Roger.

'Son,' said Bernard.

'I knew him slightly in days gone by. He's not one of us, I'm afraid.'

Bernard laughed, pleasantly flattered by the great man's 'us'. Sir Roger turned now to greet Hector, and Bernard had an opportunity of observing the other people present. Sullivan, of the Provisional Committee, was sorting papers at a desk. Cyril Umpleby stood in a far corner of the room conversing with a tall dandified man with well-oiled hair and a neat moustache. A fourth man was bent

over a table at the window with his back to the door, so intent on the study of a map as not to have paid any attention to the new arrivals. However, Sir Roger now came forward and interrupted him by quickly going through the necessary introductions. Umpleby's companion turned out to be Angus O'Connor. The man with the map was George Calverley, a sturdy, clean-cut, sailorly man of few words and brisk action.

'Were you followed?' Umpleby anxiously inquired of Stephen.

'Who by?'

'G men, of course.'

'I don't suppose so.'

'Do you mean to say you didn't make sure?'

Stephen rudely turned his back on his questioner, as if to dismiss his anxiety as trivial, and remarked to Sullivan:

'Umpleby has G men on the brain.'

'We can't be too careful,' said Umpleby.

'Just what we can be,' said Hector.

'Let's get to business, anyway,' said Sullivan. 'In the first place here's the money, divided into three packets for safety. Take one each.'

He handed over the packets, and went on: 'I take it you can start for Antwerp in the morning. Get as many rifles as the money can buy, with a good supply of ammunition. You must then ship them down the river and out to sea to a spot marked on this chart—I'll entrust it to you, O'Flaherty.'

He produced another packet and handed it over.

'You must be at that spot punctually at midday on the fourteenth of July next, when you'll meet the—er—fleet of trawlers commanded by Calverley and O'Connor, who will take over all responsibility from then. This is the twenty-seventh of June, which gives you exactly sixteen and a half days for the job. Is everything quite clear?'

Hector repeated these instructions correctly, and Umpleby immediately prepared to leave.

'I've a lot of arrangements to make,' he said, 'and then I've my packing to do. We can plan out the rest of our journey on board: I have a Bradshaw. Au revoir.' And he went out.

'Thank Heaven for his packing,' said Calverley. He turned to Bernard. 'You're Lascelles, aren't you?' he said. Bernard nodded. 'I hear you can sail a boat?'

'Pretty well,' said Bernard.

'Well, I'll have to pay off several of my hands for this trip as they aren't all trustworthy. Now, I don't mind sailing the *Cormorant* short-handed on the outward journey, but I wouldn't care to risk it coming home with the cargo. So if you're willing I'll take you on.'

Bernard was perfectly willing. It appeared that to make quite sure of punctuality the yacht was to remain longer at sea than was necessary, the date for delivering the arms at Howth being the twenty-sixth of July at 12.45 p.m., when the harbour would be occupied by the Dublin Volunteers.

'I'll see you again off Antwerp on the fourteenth of July,' said Bernard, taking leave of Calverley. 'And you on the twenty-sixth at Howth,' he said to Stephen. 'Good-bye, Sir Roger.'

'Good-bye,' said Casement, 'and good luck.'

Bernard never saw him again.

Parting from Hector in the street, he turned towards home. Arrived there he summoned before him the excellent servitor Swathythe, mentioned in his letter to Willoughby. Swathythe was a treasure. He did everything for Bernard, from tending his clothes and polishing his door-plate to cleaning his motor. He was an impassive dark-haired man who might have been any age from twenty to forty and was actually twenty-six.

'Swathythe,' said Bernard, 'I'm going away again for a month.'

'Yes, sir,' said Swathythe.

'To-morrow morning, Swathythe.'

'Yes, sir.'

'You show no surprise, Swathythe?'

'I am not surprised, sir. No business to be, sir.'

'I'll be back to dinner at seven sharp on the twenty-sixth of July, Swathythe.'

'Yes, sir.'

'I'll have oysters, Swathythe.'

'Impossible, sir. No R in the month, sir.'

'Oh, bother! Caviare then.'

'Very well, sir.'

'And tomato soup, Swathythe.'

'Yes, sir.'

'And a sweetbread. And roast duck and green peas.'

'Yes, sir.'

'And a chocolate soufflé, Swathythe.'

'Yes, sir.'

'At seven o'clock on the twenty-sixth prox., Swathythe.'

'Yes, sir.'

'And now you might go and pack my bag, Swathythe.'

5

ALL the world was at peace when Bernard and his friends started on their mission. The most disturbed spot in all Europe was Ireland, but even there the trouble did not seriously affect ordinary life. There was no need to notice it at all if one did not read the newspapers, and there was a general feeling that things would soon settle down to their normal state. Bloodshed and starvation seemed very impossible occurrences in those days. The world sprawled in blissful ignorance under the glorious sun of June.

'Thank God for a quiet life,' murmured O'Dwyer to McGurk as they basked on the beach at Magheruarty. 'I wonder what fetched those fellows off in such a hurry.'

At that very moment Gavrilo Prinzip in the streets of Serajevo fired the first shot in the great European War. The news was known over the whole world the following morning, but nobody anticipated the drama to which it was a prelude, or saw anything beyond the actual tragedy.

'The poor, poor Archduke! What a blow to the old Emperor!' exclaimed Mrs. Harvey, who always felt the misfortunes of royalty acutely and personally . . .

'Those savage Balkan states!' said Mrs. Gunby Rourke. 'They ought to be exterminated. I hope Austria will wipe the Servians off the face of the earth . . .'

'What a lesson to our Government!' said Sir Eugene Lascelles. 'They've no excuse for not suppressing these Volunteers now . . .'

'Dear me!' said Mrs. Heuston-Harrington. 'Fancy anyone taking another man's life and risking his own for a wretched little country like Servia!'

And in a hotel in Antwerp Hector O'Flaherty said to Bernard:

'We aren't arming a bit too soon. This means war.'

CHAPTER XII

GUNS

I

CYRIL UMPLEBY hurriedly drew Bernard and Hector into his cabin and shut the door.

'The less we're seen together', he said, 'the better; for fear of spies, you know. I'm afraid I've been noticed already. I'm really too well known to get out of the country unobserved. However, it can't be helped. We'll just settle on our plans and then separate until we reach Euston. I consulted my Bradshaw last night and I find that if we leave London at seven to-morrow we can get an afternoon boat from Harwich that will land us at Antwerp in the small hours of Thursday. What do you say to that?'

Bernard and Hector had no objection to this course, so they left Umpleby without any reluctance, and, regardless of his warnings, paced the deck together. After a calm crossing they reached Holyhead, where they saw Umpleby, ostentatiously ignoring them, plunge into the first-class dining-saloon. The friends were glad to be without him, and the journey passed uneventfully. At Euston they went straight to the hotel, booked rooms, and, after an aperitif in the lounge, went in to dinner.

There were few people in the dining-room when they entered. They chose a table in the emptiest part of the room, and were already at the soup when Umpleby came in, and, ignoring them in the same ostentatious way as at Holyhead, took a table in the extreme opposite corner of the room.

'Theatrical ass' said Hector to Bernard under his breath. 'He enjoys all this as if it were a game.'

Umpleby was not long over his meal, leaving the room while the others were still at the sweet course. A few minutes later the waiter brought Hector a note, which he tossed over to Bernard with a laugh after a glance at it.

'Come to my room at once,' Bernard read. 'Number 146. I wonder what's up.'

'A mare's nest probably,' said Hector. 'However, we'll go along. But let's finish our dinner first.'

They found Umpleby pacing his room in a state of wild excitement.

'Did you see the lady in black at the third table from mine?' he demanded in a hoarse whisper.

Hector shook his head.

'You had your back to her,' said Bernard. 'I saw her. What about her?'

'I'll bet my last shilling she's a spy,' said Umpleby.

'Oh, rot,' said Hector. 'You've got spies on the brain, my son.'

'You haven't seen her,' said Umpleby. 'Didn't you notice the way she looked at you, Lascelles?'

'I've been given the glad eye before in my time,' replied Bernard.

'This wasn't the glad eye,' said Umpleby. 'It was the look of a person who wanted to make sure of knowing you again.'

'Well, we'll keep an eye out for her,' said Hector. 'If we find that she's following us we'll think out a way of throwing her off the trail.'

'We mustn't let her see us together for an instant,' declared Umpleby. 'You two had better go down and see if she's in the lounge, because it's important for you to know what she's like.'

'I want some coffee, anyhow,' said Hector, and he and Bernard promptly went downstairs.

The lady who had excited Umpleby's suspicions was sitting in an arm-chair in the lounge reading an illustrated

paper. She was dressed in black, and was slenderly built and very pretty, though perhaps there was rather more colour in her lips than was quite natural. She gave Bernard and Hector one languid glance, and then returned to her paper.

A few minutes later, while they were drinking coffee, Umpleby came in with his usual elaborate affectation of indifference. When the waiter came to take his order he asked, in a voice loud enough for the whole room to hear, what time the Scotch express left in the morning.

'Gosh, doesn't the idiot overdo things,' said Hector. 'Say, Lascelles, I can't stand any more of this. Let's go out to some show or other.'

Having consulted an evening paper, they went out and took a taxi to a music-hall in Leicester Square. Here, during an interval, they adjourned for a moment to the bar, where, in 'immaculate evening dress', the first person they saw was Bernard's old schoolfellow Molloy. Bernard introduced him to Hector after a whispered injunction to 'mark him well'.

'Dull show, isn't it?' said Molloy. 'I came here to kill time. Where are you fellows staying? I'm at the Carlton.'

'Euston,' said Bernard. 'But we're only passing through. Surprised to see you . . . but one meets Dublin people everywhere.'

'One does,' said Molloy. 'Considering what a little bit of a place it is its population scatters pretty well. Lord Carrickmines is staying at the Carlton, and I met Sir Marmaduke Perry at the Ritz the other night. . . . How are things with you? Patients rolling in?'

'Slowly. But we won't keep you. So long.'

Bernard and Hector returned to the auditorium, where the latter asked: 'Why did you tell me to mark that ass?'

'Because he's a proof that truth is stranger than fiction. Besides, your neck may depend on him some day.'

'How?'

'He's a solicitor. He did quite a business defending rioters during the strike, and I rather fancy that if you or I ever stands on a gallows we'll have his bill of costs in our pockets.'

'No gallows for us, old son,' said Hector. 'We're going to win this time.'

2

UMPLEBY was already on board the train and buried in his newspaper when Bernard and Hector arrived at Liverpool Street, so they did the journey to Harwich without him.

'No sign of the lady in black,' said Bernard as he watched the crowds on the platform before departure. 'We must have given her the slip, or else she was never after us.'

On the arrival platform at Harwich Umpleby, jostling against them, said between his teeth :

'Different hotels. I'm for the Royal.'

The railway hotel was good enough for the other two, and there they took a hearty lunch, interrupted by occasional glances round for the lady in black.

'We've shook her off for sure,' said Hector. 'Well, if she's a fair sample of the English secret service, God help them.'

The boat was to start at half-past two, but Bernard and Hector went on board half an hour beforehand to secure berths. That done, they took seats on deck and awaited Umpleby's arrival.

'Who'll arrive first?' said Bernard. 'Umpleby or the lady in black?'

'Ten to one on Umpleby,' replied Hector. 'Black Lady's scratched.'

'I'll chance it,' said Bernard. 'Take you in sovereigns.'

'It's taking your money,' said Hector.

'Just you wait,' said Bernard.

Scattered passengers kept coming on board during the next quarter of an hour, and they were beginning to feel

anxious lest Umpleby should be late, when suddenly Bernard cried :

‘ You owe me a tenner, Hector. Here’s the lady !’

‘ Well I’m jiggered !’ said Hector.

Down the gangway came the tall slim figure of the lady in black. She passed them without a sign of recognition and went down the companion-way.

‘ Well,’ said O’Flaherty, ‘ if she isn’t after us, coincidence must have a jolly long reach. What’ll Umpleby say ?’

‘ That reminds me,’ said Bernard. ‘ Where is Umpleby ? The boat starts in four minutes.’

They waited anxiously. Non-passengers were being cleared off the decks, steam was getting up, already one of the gangways had been pulled in, and still there was no sign of Umpleby.

‘ Twenty-eight minutes past,’ said Bernard, glancing at his watch.

Another minute sped by and preparations were being made to pull up the last gangway, when in an instant Umpleby leaped into view and literally hurled himself on deck.

‘ You’ve cut it rather fine,’ said Hector.

‘ Sensible thing to do,’ said Umpleby, panting for breath. ‘ Suppose you two . . . here this . . . hour or two . . . Lay low till last minute. . . . That’s the way to dodge spies.’

‘ No luck this time then,’ said Hector. ‘ The lady in black came on board five minutes ago.’

‘ My God !’ said Umpleby. ‘ And you two refused to believe me.’

‘ Never mind, old chap,’ said Bernard. ‘ The question is : What’s to be done now ? We ought to be able to give her the slip in Antwerp.’

‘ No use,’ said Hector. ‘ If she gets even an inkling what we’re up to there she’ll wire back, and there’ll be cruisers patrolling the straits for a month to come. She’s got to be convinced that we’re up to nothing.’

'We'd better chuck her overboard when it's dark,' said Umpleby, trying to make his funny little face look stern and relentless.

'No good,' said Hector. 'You bet they know exactly where she is and if she disappeared it would be just as good as a telegram declaring us dangerous.'

'Besides, she mayn't be a spy, after all,' said Bernard.

'If she isn't,' said Umpleby, 'I'll swallow my six-shooter.'

The boat was now standing out to sea, and the lady in black, emerging on deck, went to the railings and gazed back sentimentally at the land. She was just within earshot of the three Irishmen.

'Isn't she like Milady in the Three Musketeers?' whispered Bernard to Hector.

'A little too like for my taste,' returned Hector.

'What on earth are we to do?' whispered Umpleby. 'Really the situation's desperate.'

'I've an idea,' said Hector. 'Just leave me a moment to do a good think on it.'

They relapsed into silence and the little steamer throbbed its way over the water. . . . After about ten minutes of cogitation Hector spoke:

'We may take it that if we give Milady the faintest cause for suspicion, in fact if we don't eradicate the suspicions we've roused already, Antwerp will be watched by British cruisers for months. That means that we must convince Milady of our innocence before this sea trip is over. And how are we to do that? One of us has just got to go and make friends with her—make love to her if necessary—and tell her what good little boys we all are and how we're off for a summer spree over Belgium and Holland. Probably he'll also have to occupy her attention, if she stays in Antwerp, while the others do the work.'

'Excellent,' said Umpleby. 'The question is, who's to be the man?' He paused, waiting for the others to give what seemed to him the obvious answer. Hector, watching his transparent face; could see plainly that he wanted

the task for his own glorification ; that he was already enjoying in anticipation the telling of anecdotes about the episode to admiring friends ; that he was thinking what copy for short stories in the monthly magazines the experience would supply ; that he was tasting in advance the notoriety he would achieve as the gay and gallant hero of the whole expedition ; that he was even looking forward with enjoyment to the carrying out of the deed itself. He saw too that Umpleby would inevitably overdo it ; that in his overweening vanity and egotism he would forget to carry out the essential points of the whole deception ; that he might even be pumped in the end by Milady herself. So he said :

'Yes. Who? Which of us is the best looking? I think you are, Lascelles.'

Umpleby's face fell.

'No, thank you,' said Bernard. 'That sort of thing isn't in my line at all. I wouldn't know how to begin.'

'He's a bit young,' said Umpleby judicially.

'Not a bit of it,' said Hector. 'Come on, Bernard, it's up to you. What's the good of a handsome face if you won't put it to your country's service?'

'Well,' said Bernard with a grimace, 'I'll do my best, but I think I'll go below first for a bracer.'

Apparently Milady had decided on Bernard, the youngest and most guileless-looking of the party, as the one meetest for whatever purpose she had in hand, so, both parties being anxious for an excuse to meet, they were not long in making one. Bernard, having emerged from the saloon well primed with whiskey and soda, found his legs entangled by Milady's silk wrap which the rough breeze had torn from her shoulders. To restore it was but common courtesy ; to remain, charmed by her beauty and the limpid sweetness of her voice, for a few moments' conversation was to be expected ; the hint that she was tired and would like a seat quite naturally suggested deck-chairs for two in a sheltered spot.

Looking at her, Bernard found it hard to believe that

she could be a spy, for she was undeniably beautiful. She had golden hair, a clear ivory complexion faintly tinged with pink, and very red lips, which, on parting in a smile, revealed a set of teeth as nearly resembling pearls as Bernard had ever seen. But the most distinguished characteristic about her was the colour of her eyes: they were a rich brown. Bernard wondered for a moment where he had seen brown eyes with fair hair before. In a moment he remembered. . . . Mabel Harvey. But Mabel's hair was not of this metallic sheen, but of the commonplace fluffy kind.

'I knew a girl just like you at home,' declared Bernard romantically. 'She had just your hair and eyes.'

'*Had?*' queried Milady.

'She's nothing to me, any more,' said Bernard ruefully. 'She encouraged me and led me on, and then just threw me aside. . . . That's why I'm here. I'm travelling so as to forget.'

'I must say you don't seem to find forgetting very difficult. You always seemed quite cheerful whenever I looked at you.'

'I was very fortunate in meeting those two men you saw with me. . . . Mr. Umpleby, the small man with the moustache, is one of the wittiest people I've ever met. He has sometimes almost made me forget my sorrow.'

'Indeed. I should like to meet him.'

'So you shall, if I can manage it. Unfortunately he's extremely shy. One of the most unassuming and retiring men I ever saw. With his friends he's delightful, but he absolutely shrinks from strangers.'

'Really? He doesn't look it.'

'No, but it's a fact. He's so shy that when he found that Mr. O'Flaherty and I were going the same journey as he, he actually tried to avoid us for fear we'd think he was thrusting himself on our society. He even went so far as to change his plans, and would have been off to Scotland if we hadn't stopped him.'

Milady laughed, and then remarked: 'What a charmingly Irish name your other friend has.'

'We're all Irish,' said Bernard.

'Indeed? There's a great deal of excitement going on over there now, isn't there?'

'Yes. My friend O'Flaherty is a great politician. He's one of these Nationalist Volunteers in fact. I caught his enthusiasm for a time myself, and even drilled once or twice. But I must confess politics interest me very little. I think it would be a wise thing to have a sort of Council in Dublin to decide purely local affairs too trifling to submit to Westminster, but we are really unfit for full Home Rule. . . . But perhaps I'm boring you. I must apologise for talking politics.'

'Not at all. I love them. I should like to meet this rebellious friend of yours.'

'I'm afraid he'd bore you,' said Bernard. 'He's a good fellow, but rather dull. A man's man in every sense. He can talk of nothing else but racing and politics.'

Milady seemed inclined to pursue the subject of Hector further, but Bernard skilfully steered away from it. He had never found his tongue so fluent. On any topic that came up he talked gracefully and at great length, giving Milady no chance of getting in any questions. He brought her tea on deck, supplied her with cigarettes, and in the evening took her down to dinner on his arm. She ceased her probing, and he his inventions, and they talked agreeably about books and music and the pictures they intended to visit at Antwerp, where they hoped to meet again, and at Munich, whither Milady professed herself bound and where she longed, so she said, for Mr. Lascelles to follow her.

The steamer still throbbed its way over the water, and in the evening they watched the moon rise, standing together looking over the forward rails. Bernard had almost come to believe in her innocence, but he stuck to his pose. He became very romantic in the dusk and quoted Yeats's poem beginning:

One that is ever kind said yesterday :
Your well-beloved's hair has threads of grey.

And when he came to those last despairing lines :

O Heart, O Heart, if she'd but turn her head,
You'd know the folly of being comforted,

Milady put a kindly hand on his arm and consoled him so gently for his loss that he felt quite ashamed of his deception.

By midnight the other passengers had gone below, leaving them alone on deck, and, as the ship approached the mouth of the Scheldt and they saw the lights of Flushing twinkling on the port bow, they bade one another a tender adieu. Bernard then proceeded to Hector's cabin to report.

Hector chuckled with amusement. 'But all the same,' he added seriously, 'I'm bound to admit that it looks as if Umpleby was right. Of course she may be only an adventuress and wants to find out which of us is the bird best worth plucking. But, on the other hand, she may not, and we can't afford to take any risks. You'll have to carry on as you've begun, and keep her occupied while Umpleby and I get the guns.'

'I'll tell you what I'll do,' said Bernard. 'I'll pretend that you two have gone on to the Rhine Valley or somewhere, and that I've stayed behind for the sake of her beaux yeux.'

'That's the stuff,' said Hector. 'Umpy and I can put up at some shebeen in the low quarter of the town, and you'd better go to one of the posh places. We've been consulting Baedeker's hotel list. Where's Milady going to stay?'

'Hôtel de l'Europe,' said Bernard.

'Well, you can try the Grand Laboureur on the Place de Meir.'

'No, thanks. An English hotel for me. My French was made at Ashbury, you know: damn little, and pronounced wrong.'

'Well, here's the thing for you.' Turning over the

pages of Baedeker he read out: 'Hôtel d'Angleterre. Quai Vandyck. Under English management . . .'

'That'll suit me all right,' said Bernard.

'Well, now clear out and let me get a snooze.'

3

ON landing next morning Bernard insisted on escorting Milady to her hotel.

'But your friends?' she said.

'I have no other friends when you are near,' said Bernard, and with becoming reluctance accepted her invitation to breakfast; in the course of which she elicited from him, with a skilful indirectness which won his admiration, the name of the hotel at which he and his friends were staying.

'Perhaps you won't mind if I come to see you again some day?' he inquired shyly on taking his leave.

'I shall certainly be much offended if you don't,' replied Milady graciously.

He spent the rest of that morning waiting at his own hotel for news from his friends. He had received none by one o'clock, when he lunched, so he sat on in the lounge killing time with *La Vie Parisienne*. While he was thus engaged, who should walk into the hotel but Milady herself.

She showed quite as much surprise as he at the meeting.

'How stupid of me!' she said. 'Of course you told me you were here, but I had forgotten. You mustn't keep me, though. I've come to see a friend of mine, a Miss Wilson, who should have arrived here last night. Au revoir now.' And she went to the Bureau.

A moment later she came back.

'Isn't it tiresome?' she said. 'Miss Wilson hasn't arrived.'

'In that case,' Bernard suggested, 'why not spend the afternoon with me?'

'I should be delighted,' said Milady. 'But do you think your friends can spare you?'

'They've gone on to the Rhine,' said Bernard. 'I preferred to stay here'—he blushed and stammered—'for—oh—various reasons.'

'What would the fair—what is her name?—think if she heard that?' said Milady slyly.

'Blanche?' Bernard tried to look suddenly tragic. 'Let me forget her,' he said.

Did she suspect or not? Bernard could read nothing in her eyes. Whatever she thought, she accepted his invitation, and they went out into the glowing sunshine of the Place Verte. Milady was no longer in black. She wore a delicious-looking white summer frock and carried a dainty parasol. Bernard began almost to fall genuinely a victim to her charms. What a pity, he thought, that such a beautiful creature should have to earn her living in so base a way. They duly admired the statue of Rubens in the centre of the Place, and then turned to regard the magnificent façade of the Cathedral, whose south transept rose above them. They entered and inspected the interior of the building, with its two great pictures, Rubens's 'Descent from the Cross' and 'Elevation of the Cross.'

'I wonder why all these great painters love to put dogs in their pictures,' said Milady, sending Bernard's mind back to the Ghirlandaio and Perugino chromolithographs at Ashbury before which he had so often asked himself the same question. Through the majestic nave and aisles of the Cathedral they wandered for nearly an hour, and then went out again to the Place. They strolled about the busy streets, rested for a while at a café, visited some shops, and altogether spent a very pleasant afternoon.

'How well their streets are named,' thought Bernard. 'Avenue des Arts, Avenue Rubens, Rue Van Dyck.' He compared them with the Dublin streets, all called after departed Lords-Lieutenant. 'When independence comes we must change all that. . . . Wolfe Tone Street. . . . Sráid Eoghan Ruadh O'Neill . . . Yes. The Irish way

sounds better. . . . Sráid Séumus Fiontán Lálór. . . .
Rue Jean Jacques Rousseau.'

'Penny for your thoughts?' said Milady.

'I'm feeling hungry,' said Bernard. 'Where shall we dine?'

Milady left it to him to decide, and after a little exploration they found a charming little restaurant where they had a really *récherché* meal in the open air. Bernard, warmed with wine, did his best to assume the manner and ways of speech of a wealthy young patrician intent on nothing but amusement, and Milady matched her mood to his so completely as to suggest that perhaps Hector's alternative theory of her profession might be the right one. They wound up the evening at a music-hall, and parted at the door of her hotel with an arrangement to meet again the next day.

'Does she still suspect us?' Bernard wondered. 'If she doesn't, she wouldn't go on gadding about with me. On the other hand, if she does, she wouldn't let me keep her off the track so easily. . . . But perhaps she's guessed our trick, and hopes to pick it up again by sticking to me.'

When he reached his hotel he found a note awaiting him from Hector containing his friends' address. A taxi took him quickly to a dingy estaminet in a poor neighbourhood, where he discovered them preparing for bed.

'We drew blank to-day,' said Hector. 'I visited five gunsmiths, and they were all too inquisitive to deal with. Umpleby's story is the same. What about Milady?'

Bernard reported the day's doings, and declared his doubts.

'Better keep on the safe side all the same,' said Hector.

'I quite agree,' said Umpleby.

'Give her another round of sightseeing to-morrow', said Hector, 'while we try our luck again.'

Next morning Bernard and Milady spent doing picture galleries, and in the afternoon they went to the Zoological Gardens. She no longer bothered him with questions

about his friends, but when he told them this in the evening Umpleby refused to accept it as evidence of her innocence.

'She's only biding her time,' he said.

They had not yet succeeded in finding an incurious gunsmith, so there was nothing for it but to carry on with his philandering. Not that Bernard objected. Indeed, he was quite disappointed when after three days of picnicking, sightseeing, and trips on the river, he learned that Hector had accomplished his task. A gunsmith had at last been discovered who would sell them two thousand rifles and fifty thousand rounds of ammunition, and ask no questions. Umpleby, however, had not yet found a boatman, and the two were going to continue the search together. So Bernard had to pursue his round of pleasure with Milady a little longer.

'I wish to Heaven you'd hurry up,' he said a few days later. 'My virtue won't stand the strain of perpetual temptation indefinitely, you know.'

'It's in your country's cause,' said Hector. 'However, it's all right now. We've found our man, a sturdy Fleming called Klapdorp. He was a bit inquisitive—the Belgians are the most inquisitive people I've ever struck—so we told him we were running the guns into Mexico for Villa. That satisfied him.'

'Two days to wait now,' said Umpleby.

'I say,' said Hector, 'you'd best arrange an all-night entertainment for Milady to-morrow. We'll be loading up then.'

4

So to make quite sure that his friends should have a free hand in the most arduous portion of their task Bernard took Milady to a great public dance that night. It was a summer dance, and took place in a great hall that opened into wonderful spacious gardens where the dancers could wander to refresh themselves during the intervals. Bernard enjoyed the whole thing tremendously. Always

full of the zest for life, now the importance of the moment and the anticipation of a rush of events to come increased the natural excitement due to music, crowds, and festivity. He and Milady were quite the gayest of the gay throng.

He called for her at half-past six and they went to the Queen's Hotel to dine. Milady looked adorable and Bernard's admiration for her was immense. His emotions were really beginning to be stirred and he was not a little proud to have so brilliant a companion to show off. Mrs. Gunby Rourke at a neighbouring table saw the sparkle in his eye and whispered something to her husband.

'An adventuress, I suppose,' replied the latter. 'Young fool.'

'Mischief thou art afoot,' thought Bernard as he noticed her presence and returned her distant bow. 'Lord, this'll be all over Dublin when she gets home. What'll my mother say?'

They walked in the delicious evening air to the dance-hall, and arriving early had some good dances before the floor filled up.

'I'm glad we had these dances,' said Milady. 'We can sit out when the crush comes. You dance beautifully.'

She danced like a leaf herself and Bernard was intoxicated with the charm of her. Presently she begged him to lead her to a quiet spot to rest, and they found one, after some search, in a corner of the garden, the band meanwhile playing the sensuous strains of Offenbach's Barcarolle. Milady sat down, stretching out her feet in front of her so as to reveal a pair of ankles that promised even greater beauties above. Bernard, admiring them, was tempted to quote a favourite triolet of O'Dwyer's:

'Why are ladies ashamed
To show us their ankles?
I have often exclaimed
"Why are ladies ashamed?"
When I looked I was blamed
And the memory rankles.
Why are ladies ashamed
To show us their ankles?'

'We aren't nowadays, anyway,' laughed Milady. 'Did you write that?'

'No. It's by a friend of mine.'

'I'd give anything to be able to write poetry,' said Milady.

'So would I. Anything . . . with one exception.'

'What's that?'

'You,' said Bernard.

'Fickle boy!' said Milady. 'And what of Blanche?'

'She is nothing to me . . . she is forgotten . . . she never was.'

It then occurred to him that it would be pleasant to kiss her; which it certainly was. Too pleasant: for he had no conception of what the kisses of a passionate woman might hold. His discretion was swamped by floods of emotion. 'Tell me—tell me,' he was saying presently, 'why did you . . . why did you . . .?'

'Call to you? Why do you think, silly boy? What a slow coach you have been.'

5

ALL night long, while these gallantries were in progress, Hector and Umpleby were assisting Klapdorp and his men to load the tug, *Van Dyck*, from the quays of the Scheldt. At eight in the morning a taxi drove up, and Bernard, white-faced and weary, stepped out.

'Gee, you've been making a night of it,' said Hector, as he came down the gangway. 'You're a regular wash-out.'

'My first need is something to eat,' said Bernard. 'I hadn't time for breakfast.'

As the *Van Dyck's* screw began to churn up the waters of the Scheldt they took him below and rummaged out a meal of ham, bread, cheese, and bottled beer. While Bernard made hungry inroads into these he told them about the night's adventures, and how before leaving he had left three letters with the commissionaire at his hotel to be posted on three successive days. In the first he

begged to be excused from meeting Milady that day owing to a headache resulting from the dance; in the second he pleaded continued indisposition, but promised to call on her next day; the third letter ran thus:

I die for love of Blanche. No flowers by request.

'I'd like to see her face when she reads that,' said Umpleby gleefully.

'I wouldn't,' said Bernard. 'I was beginning to like her. What's more, I don't believe she was a spy at all. She was just an ordinary adventuress amusing herself.'

Umpleby looked at O'Flaherty with a knowing wink.

Down the busy commerce-filled Scheldt they sped, out from the narrow river into the broad estuary. They passed Walsoorden at half-past nine and Terneuzen an hour later. By twelve they had left Flushing behind and were speeding to the rendezvous, a spot five miles out from the Zeeland coast. Before they reached it they could see two widely separated craft converging towards them.

'Those are our men,' said Hector confidently.

As they watched eagerly the foremost yacht swiftly bore down on them. Nearer she came and nearer, and they could distinguish the figures on her deck.

'Is it dese are your Mexican friends?' inquired Klapdrop of Hector.

Hector assured him that they were.

Someone standing in the bows of the yacht shouted something unintelligible through a megaphone, but in a few minutes more the screws of the *Van Dyck* were reversed, bringing her to, and the yacht came near enough for them to see that the man with the megaphone was Angus O'Connor.

'Cionnus tá tú?' came Angus's voice across the water.

'Are you the tug with the guns for Ireland?'

'Qu'est-ce qu'il dit?' asked Klapdorp suspiciously, turning to Umpleby.

'We're done,' thought Bernard, staggered by O'Connor's carelessness.

'Je ne sais pas,' said Umpleby blandly. 'Il parle Mexican peut-etre.' Then he shouted over to O'Connor: 'Dun do bhéal, dtuigeann tú. Tá tú amadán.'

O'Connor grinned and called back:

'Día 'smuire agat.'

'Vous parlez donc—Mexican?' asked Klapdorp of Umpleby.

'Un peu,' said Umpleby.

The *Spindrift* now hove to about ten cables off, and the *Cormorant*, which had come up in the meantime, did the same. The transshipping of the cargo began at once, and was carried out by means of a large boat carried by the *Van Dyck*, assisted in a small way by the yachts' dinghies. It was difficult and dangerous work, for there was a swell on, and the ammunition cases in particular were extremely heavy and awkward to handle, but by good luck it was accomplished without mishap. Bernard went on board the *Spindrift* with the first boatload and drawing O'Connor aside told him about the Mexican fiction. O'Connor was delighted and thereupon set about giving the thing an air of verisimilitude by shouting a fervent '*Caramba!*' at every hitch in the lading.

The *Spindrift*, being the smaller of the two yachts, was loaded first. She received nearly half the rifles and a small proportion of the ammunition, and promptly sailed away amid a salvo of cheers. The *Cormorant* was then loaded in her turn, Bernard himself going aboard with the last consignment.

'I'll have Umpleby all to myself now,' said Hector ruefully as they parted. 'Well, see you at Howth.'

6

THE *Cormorant* was a yawl, rather beamy in build, and painted white. Though a stout craft, intended for cruising in all kinds of weather, she was ill designed for the task to which she was now devoted. The fifteen cases of ammunition were lashed in various positions on deck where it was hoped they would be least in the way; and,

in order to ensure speed in unloading at Howth, when every second might be of importance, the rifles had been unpacked and laid in rows on the floor of the cabin, which they filled to within three feet of the roof ; so that Bernard could not help wondering how the crew were going to dispose of themselves. The yawl was weighted down, too, to an extent which would be perilous unless the fine weather continued.

When everything was snug and the *Cormorant* was gliding slowly out to sea after the now distant *Spindrift*, Calverley came up and introduced him to his shipmates. There were only two—his brother, Frank, who was at the helm, and a young London Irishman called MacCarthy, who sat on the main hatch playing a concertina.

‘Say, Captain,’ remarked the latter, ‘are you aware that your Plimsoll line is awash, and that the cubic space allotted to the crew’s sleeping quarters isn’t up to Board of Trade requirements?’

‘By Jove, you’re right,’ said Calverley, looking down into the rifle-crammed cabin. ‘We haven’t left ourselves much room, have we? However, ’tis but in vain for soldiers to complain, as Tone used to say. What about lunch?’

A ham, tomatoes, some ship’s biscuit, cheese, and a melon were produced, with a goodly array of bottled beer, and they held a picnic on deck.

‘Our task now’, Calverley explained while they ate, ‘is simply to waste time. We’re not due at Howth for twelve days, and we’ve got to keep out of Irish waters till the last possible moment, so we’ll loiter about the Channel for the present.’

‘Loiter it is, Captain,’ said MacCarthy, touching his forelock solemnly.

Those twelve days were uncomfortable in the extreme. It was impossible to stand upright, or even sit at one’s ease, anywhere but on deck, where one was exposed almost constantly to a broiling sun. Every meal was a scramble, and sleep was difficult. Nevertheless the spirit of adven-

ture was in the party, and MacCarthy's concertina kept their hearts up.

For two days they sailed down the Channel within sight of the white cliffs of England. On the third, about noon, as they approached Portsmouth, MacCarthy, who was on the look-out, suddenly exclaimed: 'Sail, ho! I say, boys, here's the whole British Navy come out to meet us.'

Bernard leaped to his feet and sprang to the side, but Calverley only laughed.

'It's all right,' he said. 'They're holding a review off Spithead. It'll be a sight worth seeing.'

And so it was. The little white yacht pursued her course as innocently as if she were one of the many pleasure craft making for Cowes Roads, and passed right through the lines of grey monsters. As she did so, Calverley said jestingly to Bernard: 'Don't you wish you were an Englishman?'

'This certainly makes our little cargo sing very small,' replied Bernard; and added gloomily: 'I can't believe we'll ever be free.'

'Nonsense!' said Calverley breezily. 'Perseverance does it. Look at the luck we've had in this venture.'

That luck continued. The following day, off Portland Bill, they passed by a fleet of trawlers which was being searched by a British cruiser. The yacht went by, all unsuspected.

'By gad!' exclaimed Bernard. 'Umpleby must have blithered. Just like him. It's well we spun him that yarn. Luck seems to be with us all right.'

'What did he say when he saw the yachts?' asked Calverley.

'Nothing,' said Bernard.

'That was wise of him. It was all he could say, of course. He'd be too vain to ask an explanation.'

'His face spoke volumes,' said Bernard.

Hitherto the weather had been fine, but on the afternoon of the fifth day, forty miles south of the Lizard, a darkening of the surface of the sea and a cold nip in the breeze

prophesied a change, and in a few hours the storm broke. Calverley was well prepared for it. The mainsail had already been taken down, and the yawl rode the rising sea gallantly under reefed mizzen and jib. The next two days were one long thundering drenching confusion. Short-handed as they were, there was little rest for anyone. Bernard found himself working perpetually in an unceasing mêlée with wind and lashing spray, with occasional intervals of watching helplessly while great green mountains of water piled themselves up mast-high, to come roaring down with an overpowering might which it seemed hopeless to escape. Yet somehow or other the *Cormorant* rode safe through it all. Shuddering under the buffets sustained by her frail sides, half smothered sometimes under a deluge of foaming brine, still she held on her way bravely, like a symbol of life amid the forces of destruction. Calverley himself was at the helm the whole time. Bernard marvelled at the man's skill and endurance, wondering fearfully the while how the smaller *Spindrifi*, with her less experienced captain, was faring in the turmoil.

On the second day, when the tempest was at its height, Bernard was engaged in belaying the jib sheet after a perilous change of tack, when he heard a shout from MacCarthy: 'My God! The ammunition's loose!'

Scrambling forward over the slippery deck he saw that two of the cases had broken from their fastenings, and, an instant later, they crashed into the lee bulwarks, while simultaneously a wave broke over the side. Knee-deep in swirling water, Bernard and MacCarthy stumbled forward to grapple with the nearest case; but as they reached it the *Cormorant* lurched violently under the impact of another wave, knocking them down and nearly flinging MacCarthy overboard. Bruised and breathless, they struggled to their feet, and, gripping the case, were beginning to haul it back from the bulwark when Frank Calverley appeared beside them.

'No good trying to save 'em,' he said, as yet another wave swept over the wallowing yawl. Blinded and half

suffocated in the foam, Bernard thought for a moment that she had foundered. But the wave passed, and, recovering his senses, he heard Frank bawling: 'Heave it over, quick!'

Swiftly he bent himself to the task. With their united strength the three men managed to raise the heavy case to the level of the gunwale, and let it go.

'Look out!' yelled Frank a second later.

As the *Cormorant* lifted her bows to climb out of the trough in which she was sunk, down the streaming deck rushed the second ammunition-case with the heavy blundering charge of a bull. MacCarthy was felled, but rolled clear, and it would have gone hard with the others to check its career if the yacht had not tilted forward again on the summit of a billow. This brought the case to a standstill for a moment, and after another grim tussle they sent it after its fellow. Thus lightened, the *Cormorant* began to sail more easily and to ship less water; so they utilised the respite to get out more rope and doubly secure the remainder of their store.

Next day the storm had somewhat abated, but it was still blowing hard. They had been carried far out of their course and were now driving in a south-westerly direction out to the Atlantic. The weather-worn *Cormorant* accordingly went about and began to beat up northward almost in the teeth of the gale: a long and bitter struggle. Yet another anxious night was spent, but in the morning the sun came out and the breeze had considerably moderated its violence. By the afternoon the weather was so much improved that they were able to heave to off the Scilly Isles and take some sorely needed rest in dry clothes. The principal danger now was from British cruisers, for, though they knew it not, the Irish sea was at the moment being actively searched and all trawlers were being held up and boarded. Four days had still to pass before the *Cormorant* was expected at Howth, and they spent three of them loitering about the lee side of the Isles as if for pleasure.

Meanwhile those at home were rendered very anxious by the arrival of His Majesty's cruiser *Forward*, which about this time took up her station just outside Dublin Bay and so right in the track of the white yacht for which they were eagerly watching. A rumour was accordingly spread amongst the numerous people in Dublin whose indiscretion could be relied on that gun-running on a large scale was to be indulged in on the coast of Wexford. The result was that on the twenty-fourth of July the *Forward* weighed anchor and steamed south, leaving the way clear for the *Cormorant*.

Running before a stiff breeze the white yacht scudded northward all through the night of Saturday the twenty-fifth, and in the morning set her course north-west, heading straight for Howth. At breakfast time the Dublin Mountains rose from the sea. An hour later they sighted Howth, and as the hot July sun mounted to the meridian they passed obliquely across the mouth of Dublin Bay, all glittering in his rays, rounded the Bailey, and came in full view of Howth Harbour and Ireland's Eye.

Nearer and nearer they sailed. They reached the harbour mouth, and Bernard, straining his eyes, could see the heads of a marching column of men above the sea wall. At quarter to one exactly the yacht crossed the bar, and at the same moment the column of Volunteers, one thousand strong, came down the East Pier at the double. The yacht was immediately brought alongside and the unloading began. At first the sight of the cargo so astonished the Volunteers that they broke all discipline in their eagerness. But only for a moment. Hector, Stephen, and the other officers soon restored order. The men were formed up in two lines and the rifles were passed along from hand to hand, while a number of motors came up and whirled off with the ammunition. Within forty minutes the work of unloading was complete and Bernard, stepping ashore, was greeted by Hector and Stephen.

Meanwhile the alarm had been given, and the first sign of

opposition from the forces of the Crown was the arrival alongside the yacht of a boat containing three or four coastguards. They were easily disposed of. A firing party of half a dozen men pointed empty rifles at them and they beat a hasty retreat. At the same time a few police tried to force an entrance to the pier, but were repelled by a rear-guard, armed with oak cudgels, who had been drawn across the end of it. The most persistent enemy was the old Harbour Master, who came up clamouring for his dues, but had to go empty away.

Preparations were now being made for departure, and a small guard was told off to remain behind and secure that the *Cormorant's* retreat should be unmolested. Bernard returned on board to bid farewell to Calverley, and then stepped ashore to rejoin Hector and Stephen.

'Any news of the *Spindrift*?' he asked.

Hector told him that O'Connor had sent word that he had been compelled by the storm to put in at a Welsh port, and would be in Ireland next week.

'I suppose I'd better go and join my company,' Bernard said as the commanding officer ordered the 'Fall in'.

He went at once and reported to his Captain, the preposterous Brohoon, an untidy little man with a brown beard and a general air of self-satisfaction, but a welcome and homely figure to the wanderer from Antwerp and the high seas. Commands rang out:

'Battalion . . . shun! Slope . . . arms! Move to the left in fours. . . . Form fours! . . . Left! By the left . . . quick . . . march!'

An Irish army was marching on Dublin.

7

It was an historic moment; the beginning of a new act in the national drama. So Bernard thought as, rifle on shoulder, he marched by Brohoon's side at the head of the column. (It happened that theirs was the leading company.) The weapon he carried was a long heavy wide-bore Mauser of an old-fashioned type, but strong and

serviceable. His spirits were high and he was fit and well after the sea voyage. It was rather restful, contrasted with all he had been through, to listen to Brohoon jabbering small talk. It appeared that the Redmondite nominees had been behaving very badly on the executive, obstructing at the meetings, and preventing progress, and evidently trying hard to break up the movement. This coup would come as a shock to them, Brohoon said, and added :

‘ See if they don’t try to get a holt of the guns for their own crowd.’

Meanwhile Bernard was wondering what lay ahead of them. If the Government could collect their forces in time they could easily hold the narrow neck of land joining Howth to the mainland against the Volunteers. On the other hand, if the Volunteers could once pass the isthmus they had a choice of many roads, and could if necessary break up into small bands and so defy interception. The whole success of the expedition depended therefore on reaching Raheny at the far end of the isthmus in time, and the weary column of men pressed forward at their best pace in that direction.

‘ Can we do it ? ’ was the anxious query in every heart.

For a breathless moment it looked as if they had failed. A handful of constabulary armed with rifles awaited them just outside Raheny, but, deeming it prudent not to interfere with so large a force, opposed no obstacle to their advance. Raheny was reached at last and a much-needed halt was called, the exhausted Volunteers lying down by the roadside at once. Their weariness was understandable. They had been mobilised at ten that morning and had already marched fifteen miles without refreshment, burdened during the last five with their exceptionally heavy rifles. And the column was made up of very uneven material. Many of the men were sturdy labourers, but many were in sedentary employment, and so in bad physical condition. Many were poor and their footwear was unsound. Many were oldish men, many mere boys ;

none had imagined when starting that they were out for anything more serious than a route-march. Moreover the day was hot, and to add to their discomfort they had encountered a shower of rain just after leaving Howth.

While they rested one of the advance cycle scouts rode back with the report that a military force had marched out to Clontarf, a mile and a half away, and seemed ready to dispute the passage. At once the order to fall in was given and, groaning and cursing, the dusty and footsore men tumbled into their ranks and resumed their march. Bernard wondered whether the leaders intended to fight their passage, but the truth was that the men were so tired that the staff had decided that it would be useless to attempt any manœuvres and were relying on bluff and good fortune to carry them through. The prospect of a possible conflict made Bernard ask himself what his sensations were. Was he exhilarated or afraid? He was surprised to find that he was neither, and wondered over his coolness. As a matter of fact his attitude was the same as that which dominated the whole of Europe prior to the outbreak of the Great War. He was so used to civilisation, with its smoothness and peacefulness, that he did not really believe that violence was possible in this quietest of all possible worlds. His whole habit of mind led him to believe that, by what chance or miracle mattered not, at the last moment things would straighten themselves out and all would be well.

Painfully, patiently, the leaden-footed men plodded onwards. Bernard could hear Brohoon muttering things about 'the bloody redcoats'—absurd melodramatic phrase—under his breath. Stray complaints and curses could be heard breaking from parched lips in the ranks. Heavier and heavier grew his rifle. Sweat trickled down his face. . . . Then, rounding a bend, he saw the line of soldiers drawn right across the road a hundred yards in front of him. . . .

'Right wheel!' came an order from the rear, and the column turned into a byway that led to the Malahide

Road, parallel with that on which they were marching. It was evident that the Volunteer leaders wished to avoid a conflict, but the military had other intentions. Doubling back along the tram road they reformed their line at the foot of the Malahide Road. The police were drawn up on the sidewalk in front of them. The Volunteers marched straight on and halted within a short distance of the flashing bayonets. After a tense moment of expectation the Volunteer staff, amongst whom Bernard could see Umpleby looking immensely important and pleased with himself, went forward to negotiate with the officers of the Crown. There were a few moments of argument and then an order rang out. The police, drawing their batons, began to advance on the Volunteers. Some seemed to be hanging back, but the great majority after a moment's hesitation came on with a rush.

Brohoon gave a shout. Bernard gripped his rifle and swung it clubwise over his head. The foremost Volunteers lined up to meet the shock, and the next few minutes were a confused *mêlée*. A few stray revolver shots were fired and there was the sound of blows and the clatter of baton on rifle. Police and Volunteers became inextricably mixed up, and Bernard found his heavy rifle a crushing though rather unmanageable weapon. The dense mass of Volunteers in rear, pressing forward, drove the comparatively few combatants down towards the line of bayonets. Brohoon, who at the outset had been stupefied by what was happening, now lost his head completely and rushed about raging hysterically and shouting abuse at the soldiers. One of these, getting irritated, made a pass at him with his bayonet, wounding him slightly, and about the same moment the police withdrew from the fray.

'It's all up, boys. Give up the guns!' cried Brohoon, and collapsed into Bernard's arms. Bernard lowered him to the ground and opened his shirt, but found nothing but a rather deep scratch. Dropping Brohoon's head with a good bump on the road he went to the help of other sufferers, who, now that the scrimmage was over, were

sitting or standing about, bandaging their hurts with the help of the first-aid sections. Fortunately there were no serious cases.

Matters now seemed to have reached a deadlock, but the situation was saved by Umpleby. Approaching the Commissioner of Police he imperiously demanded that he should withdraw his forces.

'Not till you hand over those rifles,' replied the Commissioner stoutly.

'Now, look here,' said Umpleby. 'Let's thrash this matter right out from the beginning. O'Rourke, Prince of Breffni, having carried off Devorgilla, wife of Diarmuid MacMurrough, King of Leinster, the latter appealed to the High King, Roderick O'Connor . . .'

'What the dickens are you talking about?' said the Commissioner.

'I'm trying to demonstrate the ultimate equities of this situation,' said Umpleby, 'by going to the historic causes which lie at the root of it. O'Rourke, Prince of Breffni . . .'

'Prince of what's-his-name be damned!' said the Commissioner. 'I want those rifles.'

'All in good time,' said Umpleby suavely. 'The vital thing is to get down to the underlying causes. MacMurrough having appealed, as I say, to the High King . . .'

'Look here. I've no time for nonsense of this sort,' said the officer angrily.

'Surely I have a right to state my case?' said Umpleby. 'My purpose is to demonstrate to you that the adulterous intrigue of this O'Rourke, Prince of Breffni, with Devorgilla, wife of MacMurrough, being the *causa causans* of King Henry the Second's invasion of Ireland, and therefore the basis for that monarch's subsequent claim to the overlordship of the island, cannot be said in equity to confer in perpetuity on the servants of his successors any absolute *jus arma rapiendi* . . .'

The Commissioner of Police tilted his cap over his eyes

and scratched the back of his head. He was stupefied by the torrent of Umpleby's language.

'Just a minute,' he began feebly, but Umpleby put up his hand.

'Allow me,' he said. 'If you interrupt I shall have to begin all over again.'

This prospect so alarmed the unfortunate policeman that he held his peace.

'As I was saying,' resumed Umpleby—but we shall leave him to his task of holding the enemy's attention and return to the Volunteers.

As soon as it was observed that the Commissioner of Police was completely occupied with Umpleby the Volunteer officers ordered their men to disperse. Abandoning their formation accordingly the latter began to leave the road and make their way across fields and private demesnes in the direction of the city, so that when, during a pause in Umpleby's eloquence, the Commissioner of Police looked up he found that the strategical and moral questions involved had been settled by the disappearance of his opponents from the field of operations. He turned angrily on Umpleby and said:

'Well, I think, Mr. Umpleby, you've played me a very dirty trick.'

'Not half so dirty as the trick O'Rourke played on MacMurrough,' retorted Umpleby.

The Battle of Clontarf was over. An hour later the solemn Swathythe admitted a dusty tattered master to the trim flat in Harcourt Street.

8

'THAT'S an excellent soufflée, Swathythe,' said Bernard.

'Yes, sir,' said Swathythe.

'You might run out and buy me that stop-press they're calling, Swathythe. It'll contain an account of my exploits.'

'Yes, sir,' said Swathythe and silently evaporated.

Bernard reflected what an excellent servant Swathythe

was. Here was he, Bernard, obscure and not very rich, after journeying a thousand miles, perfumed and dinner-jacketed, eating the very soufflée he had ordered a month ago . . . without doubt an excellent soufflée. How imperturbable Swathythe was. He had made no comment whatever on his master's strange return, but had respectfully relieved him of the battered rifle as if it had been a walking-stick, placed it in the umbrella-stand, and said : ' Dinner will be ready in half an hour, sir,' just as if Bernard had been out for a short stroll. And the dinner had been perfect : the soufflée was not alone in its excellence. Luxuriously he revelled in the pleasure of being home again.

Swathythe returned and served coffee and the paper, lighted Bernard's cigar, and vanished. Bernard opened the paper and in an instant had read the terrible news of Bachelor's Walk : how the soldiers from Clontarf on their return to Dublin had been jeered and taunted by the crowd, and had finally turned and fired a volley that killed four and wounded forty people . . .

And then he came upon a letter to the editor, in which Mr. Cyril Umpleby, with characteristic modesty, told how, ' ably assisted by Messrs. O'Flaherty and Lascelles ', he had conducted the Howth gun-running.

' The impudent little beast,' said Bernard to himself. Then he turned to Swathythe, who had come in to clear the table.

' Would you remove an enemy from my path, Swathythe ? ' he asked.

' In what way, sir ? '

' Oh, by the dagger or by poison. I care not.'

' No, sir,' said Swathythe without a smile.

' Then you aren't quite such a perfect servant as I thought, Swathythe. . . . However, that soufflée was excellent.'

CHAPTER XIII

WAR

I

THEN began that slaughter of the world's sons which is known as the Great European War. Half a century of the organised fraud and bullying conveniently termed international diplomacy had produced a situation which the diplomats were incompetent to solve without calling for blood. The world is strangely generous in response to such demands. All over Europe boys of eighteen and twenty, their generous emotions roused, were summoned to the defence of treaties and the fulfilment of obligations which the cynical politicians who made them would have repudiated without scruple if circumstance had so required : and all over Europe youth, trusting and obedient, answered to the call. Gay and gallant, the young men went forth from the peace and comfort of their homes, with a smile on their lips and love in their hearts, to face toil and hardship and sleeplessness and disease and danger ; torture of the senses, wounds, mutilations ; death in a hundred ghastly forms. They slew each other from a distance with shell and ball ; they disembowelled each other with the bayonet ; they poisoned each other with gases ; they rent each other asunder with explosives ; in desperate combats in the night they stabbed and battered each other to death. And there were other and fearfuller deaths than these : drowning like rats trapped in submarines ; living burials in mines ; sickening falls from great heights ; burnings. Mankind was united in an awful companionship of pain.

Until the storm had actually burst few among the masses of Europe realised what was happening. All through those sunny July days, while the diplomatists wrangled, the ordinary man went about his ordinary business, prepared for his holiday in August, and wondered how long the present spell of glorious weather would last. In Ireland people's minds were too much occupied with the course of events at home—with the Howth and Kilcool gun-runnings and the Bachelor's Walk atrocity—to notice any signs of the impending disaster, and even when, two days after these occurrences, Austria-Hungary declared war on Servia (as we then called her) not many realised the inevitable sequel.

'Can't you see, mother?' said Bernard. 'Russia's bound to defend Servia; that brings in Germany to back up Austria; France must then come to help Russia, and that brings England in too.'

Lady Lascelles was incapable of following a chain of reasons.

'I can't believe it,' she said.

Neither could Eugene. 'Modern Europe's got beyond that sort of barbarism,' he declared.

And then event followed event with surprising rapidity. Germany declared war simultaneously on Russia and France. Belgium was invaded, and England plunged into the fray. There was a rushing about in the streets of great cities; and a shouting and a bustle on the bourses; and a buying of stop-press editions, and panic and chatter everywhere. People stood about at street corners in animated discussion of what they could not understand. Chance acquaintances stopped you to say: 'Awful business this! Isn't it?' And you answered: 'Yes, awful!' . . . Wild rumours were circulated and implicitly believed. There were accounts of great naval battles, with convincingly detailed lists of losses. Wise-acres darkly hinted that Paris had already fallen and the Government daren't admit it.

'Where do *we* come in?' asked some.

THAT question had, in fact, already been answered, when, on the very eve of war, Mr. Redmond had risen in the House of Commons to declare the unconditional adherence of Ireland to the British and Allied cause. A storm of rage burst from Bernard's friends when the news became known.

'What the devil does the man think he's up to?' said O'Dwyer. 'He hasn't even got his rotten Home Rule Bill through yet.'

'I suppose he's afraid of damaging its chances,' Bernard suggested. 'The English will be touchy at a time like this.'

'Of course. I wasn't expecting him to declare our independence. But he might have shown ordinary common sense and self-respect. There was no need for him to throw the whole national case overboard just to oblige the Liberals.'

'He's thrown away the greatest opportunity an Irish leader ever had,' said Hector gloomily. 'He could have had Repeal of the Union for the asking. Not a reservist in the country would have joined the colours if he gave the word.'

'He could have bluffed the English out of any damn thing he liked,' said McGurk.

'And the opportunity's gone for ever,' said Crowley. 'Half the reservists are in England by this time.'

'The question is: how will the country take it?' said O'Dwyer.

'Repudiate it!' said Bernard promptly.

'I doubt it,' said Crowley. 'They've shown no signs of it yet, anyway.'

'The Volunteers will repudiate it,' said Hector.

'They might,' said McGurk. 'But sure they're young, and they haven't votes most o' them.'

'I'll tell you how the country'll take it,' said Stephen. 'Volunteers and all,' he added.

'How?' asked several.

'Lying down,' said Stephen.

Bernard, full of the zeal of the convert, refused to believe this.

'You'll see I'm right,' said Stephen in his quiet dogmatic way. 'They're not ripe for bold action yet. Our history has left our people incapable of sound political thinking, so they'll just do what they're told. Perhaps things would have been different if the Volunteer movement was a year or two older, but as it is . . .' He shrugged his shoulders. Every one was unwillingly convinced that he was right.

It was the War and the anticipation of exciting possibilities that had brought our friends to the capital in August. Moore had returned hurriedly from holidays in France. Crowley had rushed up from Ballylangan in Ossory where he was now dispensary doctor. O'Dwyer had left his family down in Greystones. He was not yet qualified, nor was McGurk. The latter indeed was now a confirmed 'chronic', for he was due for his third attempt at his final examination in September. Bernard's flat was the scene of their assembly.

'We must bank on a German victory now,' said Hector.

The words came as a shock to Bernard, who had not yet learnt, what was second nature in his friends, to regard every enemy of England as a potential ally of Ireland. While not crediting the chancelleries of Europe with any marked devotion to the purest and highest ideals, or suspecting any of them to be much worse than the others, he still, as a result of his English education, looked upon German militarism with disfavour, and felt that in the present quarrel the Allies had a *prima facie* case. His friends, however, had no such notions, and they laughed to scorn the professions of the Allies.

'The whole position's absurd on the face of it,' said Crowley. 'The Czar of All the Russias and Hetman of the Don Cossacks fighting for democracy and civilisation! France fighting for Christianity and against militarism!

England fighting for small nationalities and the sanctity of treaties! It wouldn't take a baby in.'

'The British Empire against imperialism and world domination!' exclaimed O'Dwyer. 'Men must be a pack of fools.'

'Well, who's denying it?' said Fergus Moore.

Events justified Stephen's prophecy. At first indeed Ireland was a little taken aback by the new departure. 'That was a queer speech of Redmond's' was the general comment heard in trams and trains and public places generally. Mr. Redmond's step was unprecedented in the annals of nationalism. The majority of even the most orthodox Home Rulers were at bottom only Home Rulers *faute de mieux*, and regarded England as an enemy who, being too strong to be fought, had to be cajoled; and the traditional attitude of Ireland towards England's wars had always been one of hope for her defeat. Various, therefore, were the explanations put forward for the present policy. Some considered it mere bluff. 'Redmond's coddling the English so as to make sure of Home Rule,' they said. Others opined that he was genuinely convinced that a German victory would merely mean a change of masters for Ireland, and acted on the principle that 'the devil you know is better than the devil you don't know'. Few people, in fact, realised the completeness of Mr. Redmond's surrender; or saw how very much the reverse of complimentary was Sir Edward Grey's reference to Ireland as 'the one bright spot' in the situation. The Irish question, said the British Foreign Secretary, was not a consideration which would now have to be taken into account. In plain words, we were a people without honour, without self-respect, without ordinary regard for our own interests, content to be the tools of others. A nation of no account! Tame indeed was the generation that could be flattered by such a description, and could read without shame its representatives' answer to it.

'The slaves are content with their fetters and will fight loyally for their masters like the good little slaves they

are.' This was Crowley's paraphrase of Redmond's speech. The papers, however, both Irish and English, called the thing a 'Statesmanlike declaration', a phrase bestowed henceforward almost automatically on each successive gracefully-worded surrender.

And the Irish people, as Stephen had prophesied, took it all lying down. Acquiescence in the Party's policy had become a habit, yet it took some time before people got completely accustomed to the new 'Union of Hearts' as it was called. Their 'loyalty', like a strange garment, clove not to its mould, needing the aid of use. This showed itself specially in the Volunteers, many of whose companies were presented with Union Jacks by enthusiastic Unionist ladies. This was felt to be rather too much. Home Rule was on the Statute Book all right, and there was peace between the nations, but flags are thicker than paper, and Irishmen could not learn to love the symbol of their slavery in a day. So the flag of the Empire was generally accepted bashfully, and, as soon as the innate politeness of the people allowed, relegated to the dust-bin.

But the new way of thinking began to take root. Reservists going to join their units were fêted and escorted to the railway stations by the town and village bands. Young men flocked into the army. Soldiers were no longer looked upon as janissaries and alien conquerors; while the stern spirits who distrusted England and refused to assent to the surrender were regarded as unforgiving, mean-spirited cranks. The Nationalists of the middle and upper classes were of course the first to adapt themselves to circumstances. They were in fact very much pleased with the whole trend of events. The last remaining taint of 'lawlessness' had now been removed from their party, and such of them (never very many) who adhered to the principle of remaining seated for the playing of 'God save the King' were relieved of that unpleasant necessity.

Bernard did not realise how far things had gone until

one night at the beginning of September when he went to the Hippodrome with Geoffrey Manders. This man in his bloodless, muddled, and not very sincere cosmopolitanism, professed a detached point of view both towards the war of controversy in Ireland and the war of steel in Europe. His interest lay in watching the effects of these things on others, and he was rather amused at the heat and excitement of Bernard—the Bernard whose development he had quietly watched from the days when he had held views very similar to his own down to his recent emergence as a 'hillside' Nationalist.

The programme that evening was a tiresome one. A war-song or two roused little enthusiasm. A conjurer made the audience frankly yawn. Then a screen was lowered, the house was darkened, and a succession of war-pictures was thrown upon the screen. The audience woke up. '*War scenes from all Fronts*' they read. A Belgian cavalry patrol cantering across the screen was warmly applauded, while the orchestra played the 'Brabançonne'. *French troops on the march* produced even warmer applause, for Irishmen, with memories of 'Ninety-Eight in their hearts, have always a soft spot for France; and as the first familiar bars of the 'Marseillaise' sounded from the orchestra the song was taken up lustily in all parts of the house. Bernard's pulse could not help responding to the old song of the Revolution, and he felt bitterly the hard stroke of fate in placing him amid the ranks opposed to it. There was a perceptible slackening in the popular enthusiasm when a view of Russian soldiers resting on the march was flashed forth, and Bernard wondered what was happening in Poland and Finland. How would they take the war? There would be less hypocrisy used with them, anyway, he reflected. They might even be dragooned into quiescence: a more honourable fate than Ireland's. . . . Then came the climax: *British troops landing in France* said the screen, and as the bustling scene was revealed, cheer after cheer went up from the auditorium. 'This is great!' chuckled Manders in huge amusement.

'I wonder will they try them with "God save the King,"'

The picture flickered along, and no sign of the anthem.

'They don't like to risk it,' said Manders.

'It'd make the worms turn,' said the disgusted Bernard.

But a moment later the slow solemn anthem rolled forth, and Bernard was the only member of that vast audience who did not spring to his feet and burst into song.

'Fickle, fickle people,' he said to himself.

When it was all over Manders lay back in his chair laughing loudly: a jarring blatant laugh for which Bernard never forgave him. . . .

The Southern Unionists professed themselves delighted at the Nationalist *volte-face*. Their young men flocked into the Volunteers, whom they now regarded almost as a part of the forces of the Crown, and their newspapers glowed with admiration for Mr. Redmond's statesmanship. 'At last we see what we have long wished to see,' quoth the Irish Times. 'Ireland a Nation, brave, united, and in arms.' Strange words from a paper whose policy was based on the denial of Ireland's nationhood, bravery, unity, and right to arm. For acting up to the ideal there mouthed so hypocritically Robert Emmet had been hanged. The Ulstermen were more honest, and changed not their attitude to the rest of their countrymen one iota. They vowed that when the war was over they would send Home Rule to the devil; and their reservists marched to the stations to the tunes of 'Boyne Water' and 'Kick the Pope'.

The fruit of Mr. Redmond's statesmanship, the return for all this surrender of principle and tradition and national advantage, was the passing of the Home Rule Bill, followed immediately by a Suspensory Bill, postponing it until it should be so modified as to be acceptable to the Orangemen, or, as McGurk said, till Tibb's Eve: and at the very moment that Mr. Redmond was representing this achievement to his countrymen as a 'Treaty of Peace' and 'Charter of Liberty', the English Tories were

denouncing the passage of the Bill as treachery and openly promising to tear the 'Charter' to pieces, while the Orangemen no less frankly promised to put the 'Treaty of Peace' in the fire. The 'moderate' course, in short, had lost everything and conciliated nobody; yet the Irish leaders, with a pathetic faith, pursued it to the end. In a manifesto to the people Mr. Redmond announced the opening of a new era. The democracy of Britain, he said, had kept faith with Ireland: it was now a duty of honour for Ireland to keep faith with them; and the way to keep faith was to send every available man into the British Army.

At this gross misrepresentation of the position Stephen took up his pen and wrote a reasoned reply to the newspapers. The Home Rule Act, he pointed out, was not regarded in England as an international treaty, but as a party measure, which an opposing party might rescind without in any way tarnishing England's honour in the eyes of the world. If, after the war, Nationalists could claim its enforcement in return for keeping their faith, Unionists could with equal justice demand its repeal in return for keeping theirs. Yet for such a precarious and one-sided 'treaty' the trusted leader urged his people to involve themselves in war with a country which not only had done them no wrong, but whose scholars had done them inestimable service by helping to preserve their language which England had done her best to destroy.

The letter, of course, was never printed; and the Manifesto met with instant response. Ireland, generous, credulous, impetuous, only too ready to forgive and forget, hastened 'to keep faith'. And how was she received? The English, of course, had no idea that Ireland had anything to forgive, but they were pleased in a vague sort of way to hear that the Irish were at last showing themselves 'loyal', and felt that they might overlook their past offences in that respect. Even this benignant mood did not last, but changed presently for one of carping criticism. They complained that Ireland was not doing enough;

they made insolent demands for more and more men. As for Mr. Redmond's suggestion that they should withdraw their troops and leave the defence of Ireland to her own people, while they belauded it in their Press, and spread it world-wide for propaganda purposes, so far from acceding to it, they increased their army of occupation. It was an ironical situation—the leaders of the people urging them to fight for the rights of small nationalities against militaristic imperialism, while their own country was virtually under military rule.

'When will the worms turn?' Bernard asked of Stephen.

'Goodness knows,' said Stephen. 'I confess the workings of the Parliamentary mind are beyond me. Of course, so long as Redmond speaks for his party and they accept him, we've no right to complain, not being Parliamentarians. But if he goes on pretending he speaks for the Volunteers he's got to be stopped. There's nothing about Imperial Thinking in our constitution and Redmond's got to realise it. He can do what he likes with his own party, but hands off the Volunteers.'

'That'll mean a split,' said Bernard.

'It'll be his doing then. All we ask is that he'll let the Volunteers alone. But if he insists on a split he'll have it. Disunion is the devil, but there's one thing worse, and that is—acting a lie.'

3

MEANWHILE in a seemingly irresistible rush the German armies poured into Belgium and France, and the great slaughter began.

Bernard and his friends regarded the war in totally different lights. Bernard had come to Nationalism as part of a general revolutionary and Internationalist creed, whereas his friends were Nationalists first, and such Internationalism as any of them possessed was but an expansion of their Nationalism. To Bernard therefore the war was evil unmitigated, whilst to the others the evil was

considerably modified by the hope of freedom which it offered to Ireland.

Bernard, however, was not a mere pacifist : he was perfectly ready to shed his own or others' blood in a good cause : but he hated to see human life and achievement wasted in the culmination of a mere game of capitalist diplomacy. So with a heart full of anxiety for his fellow-men he had watched all the manœuvres that preceded the outbreak. Even after the formal ruptures he hoped against hope that the diplomatists would realise the horror of the game they were playing and pull up before it was too late : a perfectly disinterested hope, for he felt certain at the time that Ireland's attitude would be one of neutrality. But with the first news of bloodshed these hopes vanished, and as the sun rose on the second day of hostilities he knew that a thousand men who might have seen that dawn were dead. He felt it as a personal grief, as was his habit. . . . And then all Europe was ablaze with hatred. He saw quiet decent men and elderly ladies rejoicing over the news that four thousand German corpses had been counted on such-and-such a front : he saw his own friends rejoicing over similar heaps of British corpses. To him the slaughter gave a sickening sense of personal loss : every death was a separate tragedy : and every man cut off in the bloom of his youth made him think of the children who would never be born. . . . He hoped that the rulers, the organisers of slaughter, would even now relent when they realised the magnitude of the massacre ; would shrink from piling up yet more and more misery on the shoulders of men. But no. On went the appalling butchery day after day, week after week, month after month, until hope died away, and he could only look on helplessly and bemoan the pity of it.

Very different were the views of the others. Hector was not an Internationalist at all : in a free Ireland he would have been inclined towards jingoism. McGurk was much the same : he was no politician and merely wanted Ireland free. O'Dwyer was an Internationalist of a sort :

he felt a benevolent neutrality towards all nations but England, whom he hated with all the powers of his soul ; not merely British government of Ireland, he would explain, but England herself, the English people, the make of their minds, their methods of thought, their philosophy of life, the look in their eyes, and the screeching of their damned voices. To a virile hatred like this partisanship in the war was inevitable. And as for Stephen, the intensity of his purpose left no room for vicarious sympathies.

All these therefore watched the German advance with hope and feverish impatience. They pictured the German Army as a great relief force moving nearer and nearer to Ireland's deliverance, and while Hector with a professional eye followed events on a large-scale map and weighed and discounted reports, McGurk danced in jubilation over every fresh town occupied, and O'Dwyer prayed desperately at every check.

On came the grey masses. Liège fell. Namur, it was predicted, would hold out for months. Its fall was reported the next morning. Back went the Belgian army fighting manfully step by step. Back went the British : slowly, stubbornly, hitting out heavily, but still going back. Back went the French : grimly, desperately resisting ; taking and giving blood for every inch of the fatherland surrendered : but still going back.

' *Germans on the Road to Paris,*' screamed the newspaper placards. The war seemed to be won. O'Dwyer was exultant ; Hector was calmly confident, full of soldierly admiration ; even Stephen showed himself less impassive than usual.

' Paris to-morrow,' said the optimists, but to-morrow showed no startling developments.

' Preparing to spring,' said the optimists to console themselves.

Then came the Marne and the disheartening days of the retreat. The hope of a decisive German victory was gone, and the great days of the war were over. Later indeed,

when the Germans were fighting their way step by step towards Calais, hope for a time revived.

'When they've got Calais,' said O'Dwyer, 'they'll plank down some of those big howitzers of theirs and hold up the Channel. . . . Dover next. Then's our chance.'

But the Germans never reached Calais. The fighting on the Western Front after an orgy of bloodshed ended in stalemate and settled down to the monotony of trench warfare, and the young strategists turned their attention to events nearer home.

4

'I SUPPOSE I'll be losing you one of these days, Swathythe,' said Bernard.

'I hope not, sir,' said Swathythe.

'What? Aren't you going to fight for your King and country, Swathythe?'

'King and country never did anything for me, sir.'

'I'm afraid you're a materialist, Swathythe.'

'No, sir. Methodist, sir.'

'And your country's call means nothing to you, Swathythe?'

'Never heard it, sir. Shouldn't recognise it if I did.'

'Dear me! This is very disappointing. I met a man down town this morning who asked me what I was doing in the Great War. I said I wasn't doing anything. He was very shocked and said: "*I've* given my son." Now, wouldn't it have been nice if I'd been able to say: "*I've* given my valet"?''

'Very nice, sir. For you.'

'Exactly, Swathythe. That's what I said to the gentleman in question. . . . By the way, Swathythe, you might put the spare room in order. Mr. O'Dwyer is coming to stay with me for a few days.'

'Yes, sir.'

'And Mr. Ward, Mr. O'Flaherty and Mr. McGurk are dining here to-night. Mr. Ward may be late, but you may serve dinner in any case at half-past seven.'

'Yes, sir.'

Bernard had been rung up that morning by O'Dwyer, who told him that he had been ordered out of the house by his father on refusing to take a commission in the British Army, and requested an asylum while looking for lodgings. In the course of the afternoon O'Dwyer arrived, still seething with indignation.

'Tell us all about it,' said Bernard.

'Oh, we had ructions,' said O'Dwyer. 'We'd only just started breakfast when the boss let me have it. "I met Bonegraft at the club last night," says he, "and he told me he'd given his son to the war. I was wishing I could say the same," says he. "In fact I was quite ashamed of myself," says he. I sat tight and said nothing. Suddenly he raps out: "Why don't you apply for a commission?" "You know my politics," says I. "Politics be damned," says he. "It's every man's duty to go to the front." "I beg to differ," says I. "Oh, do you!" say he. "Well, differ or no, you've got to do it," says he. "No, thank you," says I. "Look here, my lad," says he, flying into a rage, "I've never interfered with your holding what principles you like, but in a time of crisis you've got to obey ME!" (Fierce emphasis on the ME, Bernard.) "Can't be done, governor," says I, and with that he lets a yell out of him, and "Out of my house you go!" says he. So I went upstairs and packed my bag. Then I telephoned to you, and after that I went off and had a farewell lunch with the mother and sisters at Jammet's, and here I am. . . . Aren't fathers the blue limit? Talking about "giving their sons"!''

'This damned notion of *patria potestas*!' exclaimed Bernard. 'There's too much of it in this country—in every class. When I see the way the farmers slave-drive their sons I wonder parricide isn't commoner. And these middle-class despots! . . .'

He showed his guest to his room, and questioned him about his prospects.

'This is all to the good in reality,' said O'Dwyer.

'I can chuck medicine and follow my own bent now.'

'But how will you live in the meantime?'

'I have about fifty pounds lying in a savings bank. It was deposited there by my grandfather when I was a baby, and I've never touched it. I won't be long getting a footing in the papers. I've had several odd things accepted already, you know.'

Bernard was relieved to find him so well provided for. 'What did you think of the Woodenbridge oration?' he asked.

This was the topic of conversation all over Ireland that day. What Stephen had feared had occurred. On the previous afternoon Mr. Redmond had turned up at a Volunteer parade at Woodenbridge, Co. Wicklow, and told the Volunteers that whereas this was a war in defence of the 'highest principles of religion and morality' it was the duty of Irishmen to rush at once to the fighting line.

'A split is inevitable now,' said O'Dwyer. 'Redmond is entitled to think that sort of flapdoodle himself if he likes. He can even dish it out to the U.I.L. if he thinks fit. But he's no business to put out that policy from a Volunteer platform. We're a non-party organisation formed to give Ireland a defence force, not to give England recruits. Redmond and his party will just have to clear out of the force.'

'They're the majority,' said Bernard.

'No matter. They've violated the constitution, so out they'll have to go.'

They went out for a stroll down Grafton Street, where Bernard laid in a supply of cigarettes for the evening. Then they returned to await the arrival of the guests. McGurk was the first to arrive, jovial and hungry, and, as he said, 'kilt with work'. He was soon followed by Hector, heavy with bad news from the Aisne. Stephen not appearing when dinner was announced, Bernard explained that he had expected to be late as there was a session of the Provisional Committee to consider what

steps were to be taken in view of the Woodenbridge speech.

The mere mention of this oration produced a highly censorable flow of language from McGurk, and Hector pronounced the event the greatest disaster in Irish history since the Battle of the Marne.

Stephen arrived while they were still at the soup and was at once eagerly questioned. He took from his pocket a sheet of paper and read them the short pointed statement drawn up by the Provisional Committee and sent forth that evening to all the newspapers in the country. It said, in brief, that whereas Mr. Redmond and his nominees had propounded for the Volunteers a policy fundamentally at variance with their own professed objects and constitution, they had ceased to hold any place in the administration of the movement: that the object and policy of the Volunteers still remained the same as on the day of its foundation: and that Ireland could not with honour or safety take part in foreign quarrels except through the free action of a National Government of her own. It concluded by demanding the immediate establishment of that National Government.

'And what about Headquarters?' asked O'Flaherty promptly.

'We've an armed garrison in occupation already,' said Stephen.

'Good for you,' said Hector. 'Dublin will stick to us, anyway.'

'Dublin stuck to Parnell,' said O'Dwyer. 'I wonder how will the country go?'

'To pieces,' said Stephen. 'We expect a backing in Kerry, Athenry, Cork, and perhaps Wexford, but the rest of the country will go with Redmond.'

'Then', said Bernard, in slow realisation, 'we're in a hopeless minority.'

'Hopeless,' said Stephen. 'About ten thousand men against the whole country.'

These words came as a shock to Bernard. He had been

looking forward to a great national fight for liberty, and here he found himself a member of an insignificant faction.

'Not only that,' said Stephen, 'but we'll have to go through a storm of abuse and misrepresentation and persecution. Our own countrymen will denounce us and the enemy will try to destroy us.'

'Begob!' said McGurk, 'we're going to get it in the neck. You take it from me, boys, all the dirty tongues in the Hibernians and the U.I.L. will be let loose on us.'

'We're at war from this moment,' said Hector. 'Hostilities will commence at dawn.'

'Well,' said O'Dwyer, 'it's a relief. The compromising of the last few days was getting to be a bore. I like a clear issue.'

The prospect of what was before them seemed to brace his friends, but it had a depressing effect on Bernard. To have to oppose the will of the country he had so lately learned to love was a hard trial to him. He had none of the habit of hatred and opposition to England which buoyed up the determination of the others. They were certain that, however Ireland herself might be led into wrong courses, the anti-English attitude was the only safe and patriotic policy. They were equally certain that it was the policy to which, after the English treachery which would inevitably manifest itself, Ireland must eventually return. But Bernard had none of these consolations. He foresaw no change in the situation. Hatred of England had not yet been ground into his soul by circumstances, and love of Ireland was his predominant passion. To oppose her will, therefore, was a very painful duty.

But the others were quite hilarious. McGurk was already looking forward to the reaction.

'They'll be sick of loyalty in a month,' he said, 'and they'll be clamouring to come back to us. "I told you so" we'll be saying to them, and we'll just give them a toe in the rump to teach them sense next time.'

Hector was less optimistic.

'They won't come back as quick as all that, Hugo,' he

said. 'At least, not unless the English are clumsier fools than I think them. I give 'em two years.'

'Sure the war'll be over by then,' said McGurk.

'Not on your life,' said Hector. 'The Marne's put the kybosh on that.'

'We're at war with the Empire . . . our little crowd,' suddenly interjected O'Dwyer. 'Ten thousand men against—God knows how many . . .'

The prospect of a struggle against odds mightier than those against Xenophon roused Bernard somewhat. And he remembered his duties as host.

'Hector, you aren't eating. Another slice of duck? . . . Fill up Mr. McGurk's glass, Swathythe. . . . O'Dwyer, that's a new sauce made to my own recipe, *sauce franc-tireure irlandaise*.'

'That was a nice little girl I saw you with in Grafton Street, Bernard, the other day,' said McGurk.

'I don't remember her,' said Bernard.

'Galong now! She was a neat little cailin with fair hair and brown eyes.'

'Oh,' said Bernard, 'I just met her by chance.'

'Will ye listen to him,' said McGurk, 'and he eatin' the face off her with his great hungry eyes!'

'You're an ass, McGurk.'

'Love's a queer thing,' said O'Dwyer. 'It makes shy things of us all. Fancy Lascelles blushing.'

'I'm not in love,' said Bernard, 'and if I were I shouldn't be ashamed of it. I've been in love often, and I don't think anything of it. It's just an exanthematous fever we go through periodically. Like the 'flu, a previous attack seems to confer no immunity, but each successive illness becomes less and less serious.'

'Love isn't a disease,' said Hector. 'It's a game.'

'To men,' said Bernard, 'love is a luxury. To women it is the necessary anæsthetic to render the pains of procreation bearable.'

'How can a thing be both a disease and an anæsthetic?' asked O'Dwyer.

'Oh, by a little judicious mixing of metaphors.'

'Love's all my eye' said McGurk scornfully. 'We all enjoy a bit of flirting round when we're young, but when I want to marry—which won't be for a long time yet, I hope—it'll be for something a bit more solid and lasting than love. Sure all that gibberish and ráiméis about love is the invention of female novelists.'

'Hugo puts things rather crudely,' said O'Dwyer, 'but I agree with him in the main. We Irish seem to be a bit saner about love than the English, and we'd be saner still if we didn't read their novels. Think of the slush Wells writes at times. There's nothing like that in our literature. We keep love in its place: the same place that it has in life.'

'I wonder', said Bernard, 'if love has as big a place in English life as it has in their novels.'

'God forbid!' said Hector.

Stephen, who had hitherto been silent, projected himself suddenly into the conversation at this point.

'You'll find', he said, 'that love occupies the same place in the lives of the English as it does in the lives of other people—no more and no less. The difference is that they're more sentimental about it than we are. They're born sentimentalists, like all materialists; because sentimentality is only the softer side of materialism. There's nobody so sentimental as a hard-fisted millionaire, and I suppose the most sentimental nation in the world is America.'

'Well, as to that,' said McGurk, 'can you imagine a greater materialist than an Irish farmer selling his neighbour a spavined horse?'

'I'm talking of nations, not individuals,' said Stephen. 'When I call the English and Americans materialists I don't merely mean that they're fond of money and what it can buy. Who isn't? I'm thinking of the general make of their minds. I'm thinking of their indifference to truth, for example——'

'Oh, say, what about ours?' Hector interjected.

'I'll make myself plain presently,' said Stephen. 'I don't mean that the average Englishman is a liar. He's probably more truthful than the average Irishman. I mean that as a race they don't care about abstract truth—don't want to know it, and don't think it important. Now, we do care about it. So do the French. Take religion, for example. The French are militant Catholics or militant atheists. We're militant Catholics or militant Protestants. The English are just sloppy muddle-headed tolerationists. Take politics. We're more concerned to demonstrate the truth of our claim to independence than to win it——'

'I'm not,' said Hector.

'Well, you're half American. The English, on the other hand, don't care whether our claim is just or not. They'll grant or refuse it to suit their own convenience without even thinking of that.'

'You're right,' said O'Dwyer, 'quite apart from politics. It's no use trying to convert an Englishman to anything he doesn't want to believe. Prove your case up to the hilt, and he'll only say: "I quite see your point. There's something in what you say."'

'All this generalising about nationalities leaves me rather cold,' said Bernard. 'Most men are fools, and you don't have to go to England to find people impervious to reason. Look at the travesty of reasoning that passes current with our people to-day.'

'That's because they aren't using their reason at the moment. They're suffering from a temporary inflammation of the emotions, but when it passes you'll see a change. As a doctor you ought to know that anything wrong with the lower functions interferes with the working of the higher.'

'That's true enough,' said Bernard. 'Yesterday I met a man, otherwise intelligent, who called me a cynic because I suggested that England hadn't entered the war out of pure unadulterated love of Belgium.'

'Isn't it curious how people misuse that word cynic?'

observed Stephen. 'It's generally applied to people who are the exact opposite.'

'How do you mean?' asked McGurk.

'Well, a cynic, I take it, is a person who doesn't believe in truth or goodness, and the name is always applied to someone with a passionate belief in both—that is to say, to a man who doesn't believe in current cant, or in the goodness of some plausible knave. Take our own case. We all know what'll happen at the end of this war if the Allies win.'

'They won't,' said McGurk.

'If they do,' said Stephen, 'we know that though England declares she doesn't covet a yard of territory the peace terms will give her several thousand square miles. We know that this is no war to end war: we know that Allied militarism at the end of it will be a far bigger thing than German militarism to-day. We know it's no war for democracy: we know that all the democratic safeguards now given up won't be restored in a hurry. We know that it's no war for small nations: Ireland will be still under the Act of Union, and likely to stay there, long after the Germans are cleared out of Belgium. We know all this is so, and time will prove us right; but meanwhile we're called cynics.'

'Ironical, isn't it?' said O'Dwyer. 'And the sentimental drivellers who believe all that they're told about this freedom-and-justice stunt call us unpractical dreamers because we hold the very practical policy of drilling and arming to secure our own rights. And the very same people who call this policy dreamy and unpractical also call it selfish and narrow-minded. Lord!' said O'Dwyer, 'the contradictory abuse that I've listened to these few days! "Look here," I said to one man, "we may be dreamy idealists, or we may be selfish cynics, but we can't possibly be both." But he couldn't see it.'

'We should be flattered by being called dreamers,' said Bernard. 'All the great things in life have been done by people who were called that, for every achievement is

the materialisation of a dream. In fact, the only really practical people are the dreamers. The man who prides himself on being practical is mentally blind.'

'Hm?' said Hector dubiously. 'That's a dangerous doctrine to let loose in this country. Our people are only too ready to take people for dreamers who are merely wool-gatherers.'

'We're no bloody dreamers,' said McGurk, swallowing his ninth glass of wine. 'We're the only people with a grain of sense in this goddam country. If anyone calls me a dreamer I'll burst his face for him!'

'That's right, Hugo,' said Hector. 'Give us a song, boy.'

'I'm too drunk,' said McGurk. 'Give us a toast, Hector Hannibal, to set me going.'

'The Captain of the *Emden*,' said Hector, rising, glass in hand.

'That's the stuff!' cried McGurk.

'For to-night we'll merry be,
For to-night we'll merry be,
For to-night we'll merry be.
To-morrow we'll be sober.'

The others, with the exception of Stephen, who had not drunk, took up the chorus.

'Come on, boys,' cried McGurk at the finish. 'Here's another for you. The cast-off mistress of the seas!'

The toast was drunk amid roars of laughter, and McGurk followed it with a couple of verses of the Soldier's Song—Bernard's first introduction to that lugubrious anthem. Afterwards they adjourned to the sitting-room, where, through all the jokes and arguments that whiled away the evening, one thought kept beating in Bernard's mind:

'We're at war with our own country, and with the world.'

THE next morning the Volunteer manifesto appeared in the newspapers, and, in fulfilment of expectation, the vast majority of the Volunteers gave in their adherence to Mr. Redmond, only about two thousand men in Dublin and about ten thousand over the rest of the country standing by the original Committee.

Then the flood-gates of abuse were opened and the fountains of decency were broken up. Reason and argument were consigned to oblivion and it was attempted to swamp the recalcitrant minority with a flood of obloquy. They were called traitors to Ireland who stood for the very cause for which Mitchell was jailed and Tone died. They were called cowards who had thrown down the gauntlet to a mighty Empire and had had the courage to stand out against their own country when she took the wrong course. They were called hirelings, many of whom went without a coat in order to buy a gun. They were called selfish who submitted to persecution and imprisonment for justice' sake. They were called narrow-minded, who stood for the oldest and greatest of causes—the cause for which the whole war was alleged to be fought—the sacred cause of national freedom.

It was necessary, however, to find a shorter name for current use. Their proper title—the Irish Volunteers—held no derogatory connotation. The whole of the young manhood of the country had recently taken pride in it. But there was another convenient to their opponents' purpose. Many years before, a quiet obscure person called Arthur Griffith had propounded a policy of economic development and abstention from Westminster which he had called Sinn Fein. His views not meeting with the approval of the Party machine, he had been driven out of public life by lies and obloquy. The name of Sinn Fein, though the party had virtually ceased to exist, was still remembered by the electorate as one of ignominy, and it was a simple matter for the Parliamentary leaders to

attach that name, along with the whole load of calumny associated with it, to the Volunteers. So Bernard and his friends, most of whom had never belonged to Sinn Fein—Bernard himself had barely heard of it—were labelled Sinn Feiners: traitors and outcasts.

All this abuse hurt Bernard acutely. Reading the newspapers made him rage incoherently. Stephen, however, took it all very philosophically; advised him to be calm and not to read leading articles; and prophesied the inevitable reaction. But in vain. Bernard argued high and low with every one he met; broke with many friends; and wrote furious letters to the papers, which were never printed. Still moving in the social circles to which he was accustomed he found himself perpetually involved in controversy. Mrs. Gunby Rourke having heard that he did not intend to apply for a commission, intimated that their acquaintanceship should come to an end. (Her own darling boy, George, developed a stiff ankle, and served his country on 'work of national importance', to wit, a couple of hours' clerical work per week in a recruiting office for the first few months, to be dropped afterwards when people had ceased to enquire were you 'doing your bit'.) Sir Marmaduke Perry was not so drastic, but he expressed unbounded contempt for 'shirkers and slackers', and laughed Bernard's politics to scorn.

'Wish I was your age, my lad,' said the knight. 'I'd be the first in the firing-line. By gad, what a chance for a young man!'

Augustine Reilly said the war was for truth and justice and religion and all that Ireland held dear.

'It isn't,' said Bernard. 'But even if it was Ireland couldn't fight in it unless she had a Government of her own to declare war.'

'We ought to stand by England,' said Augustine. 'She has given us Home Rule. It's our Christian duty to forgive her. "Love your enemies," says Christ.'

'He didn't tell us to show it by making new enemies,' replied Bernard.

“ Let every soul be subject to the higher powers,” ’ quoted Augustine.

“ No man can serve two masters,” ’ answered Bernard.

‘ I don’t see the point,’ said Augustine.

“ Which of you by taking thought can add one cubic inch to his brain ? ” Oh, go and boil your head.’

Mr. Bonegraft appealed to Ireland’s historic friendship for France, and Bernard responded by appealing to England’s historic friendship for Prussia. Mr. Bonegraft had no answer to this, and Bernard took advantage of his silence to add :

‘ And talking about our French alliance in ’Ninety-Eight you’d have been the first to denounce it if you’d been alive then. You’d have called us pro-French and said that Ireland’s duty was to help England in the fight against French domination.’

‘ But this is Ireland’s war.’

‘ I don’t see it.’

‘ Ireland will be disgraced for ever if she leaves civilisation in the lurch.’

‘ She’ll be disgraced in good company, then,’ said Bernard. ‘ She’ll rank with Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Holland, Bulgaria, Greece, Spain, and Italy, to say nothing of Asia and America.’

‘ Well, how will you like the Germans to come over here ? ’ said Mr. Bonegraft.

‘ They aren’t coming.’

‘ Look at Belgium.’

‘ Look at Denmark. She’s in much greater danger than we are. If the Germans are so desperately keen on annexing small nations, why don’t they tackle those that are near at hand ? ’

Mr. Bonegraft was again at a loss for an answer, so he fell back on his last line of defence.

‘ Ireland must do her duty as part of Britain,’ he said.

‘ Then ’, said Bernard, ‘ why didn’t you say so at once ? If you believe that, the other reasons don’t arise ; and I deny that we’re part of Britain.’

This was Bernard's universal quarrel with the garrison classes. They wanted to have the argument both ways: to deny Ireland's nationhood, and yet to use arguments for her entering the war that could only apply on the assumption that she was a nation . . .

'What a narrow, selfish view you take!' said Mrs. Heuston-Harrington. 'Sinn Fein: Ourselves alone: and the whole of civilisation in danger!'

'England and France and Russia are all Sinn Fein,' said Bernard.

'How do you make that out?' sneered Mrs. Heuston-Harrington.

'Each is governed by itself alone, isn't it? Aren't they all fighting to establish Sinn Fein for Belgium.'

'Yes, but they're all united for a common aim.'

'So might we fight for the same aim if we were free to do so.'

'But you *are* free.'

'I beg to differ.'

'Home Rule is on the Statute Book. What more do you want?'

'I'd like to see it in force before I went to war on the strength of it.'

'But that would be so mean! A piece of political bargaining, with civilisation hanging in the balance!'

'So you call it mean to demand our own freedom before we go to fight for the freedom of others?'

'But, my dear Mr. Lascelles, we *are* free.'

'I'm afraid we're arguing in a circle,' said Bernard.

'Exactly! That's always the way with you Sinn Feiners. You always come back to your stale old hatred of England. That's so narrow-minded of you. France and England have made up their quarrel. Why can't Ireland?'

'Because the cause of our quarrel still remains.'

'What cause?'

'We're still deprived of our freedom.'

'Quite right. Why should England give up what she's won?'

'I thought you said we were free? If England's right to conquer Ireland, why is Germany wrong to conquer Belgium?'

'Oh, that's different.'

'How?'

'They did it in such a disgusting way.'

'I suppose England conquered us in a decent way?'

'Now, you needn't dig up old grievances from 'Ninety-Eight. They're past and gone.'

'Perhaps. But we're still deprived of our rights.'

'Oh, it's no use arguing with you! I hate politics and I hate disloyalty, and Ireland's a sink of both.'

'Ah! So you dislike Ireland?'

'I should think so. Nasty narrow little hole!'

'Then why are you so keen on bringing it into the war?'

'I'd much rather it was sunk into the sea.'

'So', said Bernard, 'the whole of your broad-minded attitude is this, that you simply prefer another and bigger country to your own. You might as well consider yourself broad-minded for preferring a fatter man to your husband.'

This was very bad taste on Bernard's part, especially as Mrs. Heuston-Harrington was a widow. But he was too much exasperated to reflect.

Lady Mallaby Morchoe was very severe on what she called Bernard's hatred of England.

'Madam,' said Bernard, 'I love the English people a great deal better than you do. I should like to see them paid decent wages and properly fed and housed and educated, and I should like to see their execrable social system destroyed.'

'Oh, you're a Socialist,' said Lady Mallaby Morchoe . . .

Many a grave humbug lectured Bernard on this subject of hatred, and then went away to buy an evening paper

and gloat over the reports of German slaughter. Bernard, whose heart bled for every man killed, Allied or German, used to listen with a bitter smile.

Soon Bernard grew tired of arguing. The Whigs in their fatuous reliance on the English Liberals and their belief in the justice of the war were scarcely less irritating than the Tories. With these latter, however, he soon found it impossible to converse without losing his temper. While the whole of Nationalist Ireland in its generous foolishness surrendered freely to the 'Union of Hearts', these grim stalwarts, trenched in their haughty stupidity, made no sign of softening their opposition to the national idea, and, as Bernard found, all their arguments boiled down to a bitter sediment of hatred for Ireland. . . . Moreover his father, already treating him with coldness as a result of recent events, now became completely estranged, and Bernard gradually ceased to associate with the class in which he had been brought up, and began to make a place for himself in the society of his political brethren.

The very day after the split was his company's drill night. The pompous little Brohoon looked almost dignified as he put the simple issue to the men drawn up in company column in the gas-lit hall.

'Those who consider that the only authority capable of committing Ireland to a foreign war is an Irish Parliament elected by the Irish people will remain in their ranks,' he said. 'Those who accept the rule of the British Parliament will fall out. No doubt they will immediately go and enlist in the British Army.'

With the issue put so clearly, few men, however loyal to Mr. Redmond, had the courage to step forward. Only four, bashfully and with hesitation, fell out, and handed in their rifles to Brohoon. A jeer from the remainder was instantly suppressed by the officers. Bernard hoped for a while that this was a sign that Stephen's prophecy would be falsified, but next week only eighty men out of one hundred and ten turned up for parade, and the following

week only sixty. Within a month their strength had been further reduced to less than fifty, but after that it decreased no more. By that time the popularity of the Volunteers had reached its lowest ebb and the inevitable flow had begun.

6

A FEW days after the Split, the British Prime Minister addressed a War meeting at the Mansion House. Whether because the authorities did not fully trust the new-born 'loyalty' of the people, or because they feared some desperate deed by the recalcitrant minority, the Irish public, to whom Mr. Asquith's words were directed, was carefully excluded from the building, which was filled, by ticket, with stalwart members of the ascendancy classes and a few of the very tamest variety of Nationalists. The streets swarmed with police, who formed a cordon round all approaches to the Mansion House, while a force of cavalry was drawn up in the Castle Yard, ready for all eventualities. Altogether the preparations suggested the visit of a dreaded tyrant rather than that of a friendly Prime Minister come to ask a free people for their assistance in a war for liberty. There was a similar incongruity within the Mansion House, where Mr. Asquith's philo-Irish and democratic sentiments fell on ears to which both Ireland and democracy were anathema, and to which his declaration that the country's contribution to the Crown forces must be the free gift of a free people seemed little short of treason.

Bernard moved about the crowded streets that night observant of the temper of the population. There was a general atmosphere of curiosity and excitement. Questions of policy were freely discussed by groups of people meeting one another for the first time in their lives. The sentimental Englishman wandering amidst the crowds would have heard little to flatter him from these people whose 'loyalty' had touched every soft heart in the Empire; for the Great War was looked upon entirely from

an Irish point of view, and Irish 'loyalty' was quite obviously conditional. The universal argument that turned the scale everywhere was that German rule would probably be worse than English rule, and the fact that France was on England's side was the only argument in favour of England's sincerity that carried any weight whatever. The general belief in France struck Bernard as rather pathetic. Many men of unshakable nationalism had been led to join the British Army by a feeling that Ireland ought to repay France for the help she had given us in 'Ninety-Eight. 'France'll see us through all right' was a frequent reply from people to whom Bernard expressed doubts of England's good faith.

In the streets leading to the Mansion House the 'free people' surged fruitlessly against the rocky line of police. Mounted constabulary clattered up and down the centre of the streets. Men and women, white-faced under the arc lamps, wandered aimlessly hither and thither. Sounds of singing came from divers directions: rebel airs now deemed harmless.

Resting on a seat outside Stephen's Green, Bernard found Edwin D'Arcy, the young poet who frequented Mrs. Heuston-Harrington's at homes.

'Well, what's your opinion of all this?' asked Bernard.

'I have none,' said D'Arcy. 'Opinions form no part of the poet's equipment. I prefer to stand aloof from material happenings. Politics are no concern of mine. They're a dirty game.'

'Ass!' cried Bernard. 'The life of man is in politics. All his greatness and smallness, all his nobility and meanness. You describe a man fully to me if you tell me his religion and politics, and if you desert politics you desert life. Great art can't be made out of the pathology of a neurotic soul. Man is the only theme worth singing, and man collectively should be the hero of great novels.'

'Lascelles, you're a philistine,' said D'Arcy.

'The hair of the human head', said Bernard, 'is a hollow tube growing from a follicle. If allowed to exceed

a certain length a hair is liable to split and dry up. You really ought to get your hair cut, D'Arcy.'

He left him, gaping prosaically.

The opposition element was now beginning to make itself felt in the streets. Arriving at the top of Grafton Street, Bernard could see above the crowd a string of torches approaching. In their midst was a waggonette. Arrived at the open space the waggonette halted and was immediately surrounded by the torch-bearers and a cordon of armed men, whom Bernard recognised by their uniform as members of the Citizen Army: dark, stern, dirty men, they stood at attention, their fixed bayonets flashing in the dancing light of the torches. In the waggonette Larkin arose and addressed the crowd.

Bernard shook himself free from the press and walked back towards Dawson Street. Behind him he could hear an occasional cheer punctuating the Labour Leader's speech. At the top of Dawson Street he encountered Mabel, Molly, and Jack Harvey.

'Hello, Lascelles! This is a pleasure, old chap,' cried Jack in his effusive way. 'Magnificent display of loyalty, what? Makes one proud to be Irish, doesn't it?'

'Does one need the compulsion?' asked Bernard drily. Mabel and Molly both laughed.

'Jack's a desperate loyalist,' said Mabel.

'Well, I should think so,' said Jack. 'Even the most extreme Fenians must realise that England's on the right side this time.'

'I don't,' said Bernard. 'And even if she is I don't see that it's any reason why we should fight for her. We're not called upon to fight in every war that happens to be just—unless we're a very exceptional nation.'

'But we're British subjects,' said the scandalised Jack.

'Oh, go to hell!' exclaimed Bernard impatiently.

He saw Mabel watching his impatience with eyes gleaming with amusement.

'Let's have a stroll around,' he suggested.

'Oh, let's!' cried Mabel, and, starting off by his side, left Molly to follow with Jack.

'Are you a loyalist, too?' asked Bernard.

'I don't know what I am,' replied Mabel. 'You see, I've never taken much interest in politics up to this. . . . I only want what's best for Ireland, and it's so hard to know . . . It seems a shame to throw Redmond over after all he's done . . .'

She spoke tentatively and with hesitation, blushing a little, and Bernard listened patiently.

'From my knowledge of Irish history,' said he, 'I'm convinced that the only safe course is not to trust England. We've never trusted her yet without being let down, and I don't believe she's mended her ways.'

'I have the same feeling myself,' said Mabel, 'but Jack says women have no business meddling in politics. He says they follow their hearts rather than their heads.'

Bernard laughed loudly at this.

'Really,' he said, 'even though he is your brother, I must say Jack's a donkey. Is he thinking of joining the Army, by the way?'

'Oh, yes. He's applied for a commission already.'

Bernard found Mabel an interesting companion. They walked on, discussing a variety of subjects, quite oblivious of the crowd. At the remote end of the Green they came upon a little knot of people gathered round a tiny motor-car from which Brian Mallow was delivering a passionate harangue.

'Let's listen to him,' said Mabel, and they pressed forward towards the car.

'They may talk about German atrocities,' Mallow was saying, 'but *we* know of atrocities nearer home. What about the pitch-caps and half-hangings of 'Ninety-Eight? What about Bachelor's Walk only the other day? Victims of that atrocity are lying in the Dublin hospitals at this very minute. They may talk about small nationalities, but let us tell them that kindness to small nations might begin at home. They can set Ireland free without

plunging into any European war. And as for broken treaties, what right have they to complain of broken treaties who have the Treaty of Limerick, and the Renunciation Act of '82, and the Home Rule Act of the day before yesterday to their credit? Oh, Irishmen, don't be blind trusting fools yet again after your long history of broken faith. England is a liar, England is a tyrant, England is a hypocrite, England is your enemy!

At this moment a squad of police came pushing its way through the crowd. Mallow, seeing that escape was hopeless, cried out:

'Oh, you can seize and imprison and murder me if you like. But the truth you can never kill. Irishmen are used to persecution . . .'

There was a murmur from the crowd as the orator was dragged roughly from his place. True, Ireland had decided to join in the war, but the tradition of seven centuries will not vanish in a month, and from the moment that England laid her hands upon an Irishman he ceased to be a factionist and became a patriot and a martyr. As Bernard saw the glittering helmets of the police recede in the distance he felt that the tide had already turned. Brian Mallow, pig-headed, stupid and sincere, had beaten Imperialism.

'I jolly well hope he'll be shot,' said the voice of Jack from behind. 'That kind of fellow almost makes one ashamed to be Irish.'

'Well, hurry up and get naturalised English,' snapped Bernard, and hurried away with Mabel.

'That *shows* how the English look on us,' said Mabel.

Bernard looked at her, admiring her flushed cheeks and flashing eyes.

'I'm glad you don't agree with Jack,' he said.

A moment later Molly overtook them.

'It's nine o'clock,' she said. 'We must be getting home.'

'You can get a tram at the Pillar,' said Bernard. 'I'll see you that far.'

He covered the distance as slowly as he could, which was not very slow owing to the necessity of keeping ahead of the others. At the tram he held her hand in his for quite five seconds. It made no resistance. As the tram moved away, she kept looking back at him, smiling. He savoured the pretty memory all the way home, and nurtured her picture in his imagination.

7

'WELL, if the English aren't the bloody limit!' said McGurk. 'What do you think of this?'

He took up his newspaper and read:

'Oh, the Irish love a fight,
Says the Shan Van Vocht,
If the cause be wrong or right,
Says the Shan Van Vocht.
But their hearts most bravely glow
And they deal their hardest blow
When their foe is freedom's foe,
Says the Shan Van Vocht.'

That's out of an English Unionist paper,' he said. 'Hell roast them!'

'I could forgive Redmond almost everything else,' said Bernard, 'but I can't forgive him for letting us in for that kind of thing. The English papers seem to be crammed with these "loyalistic" parodies. I suppose it flatters some people.'

'Not it!' said McGurk. 'It'll sicken them. It's the best thing that could happen. Listen to this now:

God save our noble King!
Says the Shan Van Vocht.
Let dissensions all take wing,
Says the Shan Van Vocht.
Hibernia bends the knee
To Britannia bold and free,
And hurrah for loyalty!
Says the Shan Van Vocht.'

'No more, for heaven's sake,' said Bernard. 'Who the blazes does the author think the Shan Van Vocht is?'

Enthusiastic Englishmen, with that magnificent incapacity to see any point of view but their own which distinguishes their race, were at this time indulging in the above kind of nauseating patronage of Ireland by the ream and the volume. The true reason and nature of Ireland's advocacy of the Allied cause they were incapable of appreciating, and it would have offended them had they discovered it. England's real feelings towards Ireland were not long in manifesting themselves.

'Every man', said a Volunteer officer to his company on the occasion of the Split, 'who conscientiously believes that this is Ireland's war and that he is fighting for Ireland in fighting the Germans, should hasten to don the khaki. We, however, who do not hold that view will remain Irish Volunteers.' He was sentenced to three months imprisonment for 'prejudicing recruitment'.

One day Bernard and Stephen attended a recruiting meeting in a village in the North County Dublin. There was a platform decorated with green flags, Union Jacks, and the French and Belgian flags, in the street, and a band was playing Irish and British airs alternately. As the two young men entered the village it had just finished the 'Felons of Our Land' and it began immediately on 'Rule, Britannia'.

'Who called us a logical people?' said Stephen.

The speakers ascended the platform and the population began to gather around. The chairman was a retired Colonel (to judge from his appearance), and the principal speakers were a young subaltern in uniform, a Member of Parliament, and the President of the local branch of the United Irish League. The subaltern led off with a few formal remarks about the justice of the war and the duty of every British citizen to fight for his King and country. He was listened to with cold attention. Then came the M.P. He ranted in the approved style about gallant little Belgium and France, the friend of Ireland, and the rights of small nationalities. He was lavishly applauded. Then arose the local light.

'Since England has given us Home Rule,' he declared, 'it's only fair we should help her in her own hour of trouble . . .'

But the chairman quickly called him to order.

'I can't allow political speeches,' he said with some asperity.

The speaker scratched his head, clearly puzzled as to how to proceed. The only valid reason for Irishmen to go to the front being taken away he could not think of any other. He floundered for a minute, and then a mischievous look came into his eye.

'If the Germans come to Ireland,' he said, 'they'd treat us like the English did in 'Ninety-Eight . . . or worse maybe.'

'Hear! Hear!' yelled Bernard in delight.

Purple with rage the chairman bounded from his seat and stalked off the platform. There was a cheer from the crowd, and the band struck up the tune of 'Who Fears to Speak of 'Ninety-Eight?'

Bernard laughed heartily as he and Stephen strolled away.

'That kind of thing is worth tons of our own propaganda,' he said.

He and Stephen and Hector and O'Dwyer had spent the last few weeks in a feverish rush of writing, each putting the Volunteer case in his own characteristic way. Stephen in cold lucid language appealed to pure reason; Bernard wrote passionately about historic analogies; Hector revealed the workings of European diplomacy; and O'Dwyer wrote scathing verses. But all their wit and effort went for naught, for nobody but those who already agreed with them ever read their papers.

It was not long before the enemy struck back. Irish Volunteers were deported from one end of the country to the other, or confined to certain districts. Thus one prominent local leader was banished from his home in Kerry and assigned the northern half of County Wicklow for his future habitat; Crowley was confined to a radius of fifty miles around Ballylangan; another man was forbidden

to approach to within ten miles of any coast ; and finally Stephen received an order confining him to the city and suburbs of Dublin.

'Will you obey it?' asked Bernard.

'Until it becomes inconvenient,' said Stephen. 'I've no desire for imprisonment, but I won't submit if I don't want to.'

Then the newspapers which supported them were attacked. There were three of these : Sinn Fein, organ of the relics of the political party of that name ; Irish Freedom, a Separatist monthly ; and Ireland, a daily paper recently established to propagate the opinions of the Volunteers. One morning a force of police and military arrived at the offices of each of these organs. An entry was forced ; all copies of the papers were seized upon and carried away ; the printing machinery was dismantled, and, in one case, smashed ; and further publication was prohibited. The only paper to survive the storm was the Irish Volunteer, which, being entirely devoted to technical military articles, furnished no handle that its enemies could lay hold of as an excuse for suppression.

'Opening of hostilities on the Irish front,' announced McGurk. 'British troops occupied several Irish positions this morning. There were no losses but honour.'

There were two or three arrests for writings and speeches at about the same time, and Brian Mallow, coming up for trial, received three months imprisonment.

'What will they say of this at Ashbury?' thought Bernard. He had recently received a copy of the Ashbury Chronicle, which announced the deaths in action of several Old Ashburians, among whom were Bernard's old enemies Sherringham and Tomkins. Tomkins was described as 'a gentle good-humoured boy, with a deep devotion to St. Aloysius', and Sherringham was 'a model of all that an English Catholic gentleman should be'.

'He looks better in uniform than in my memory,' mused Bernard, surveying the accompanying photograph.

8

'THIS suit positively sings your praises as a valet, Swathythe. How do I look?'

'Very well indeed, sir.'

'There are only two kinds of people in the world, Swathythe. Those who wear their best clothes on Sunday, and those who don't.'

'Yes, sir.'

'That was a very snobbish remark on my part, Swathythe.'

'Yes, sir.'

'But very profound all the same, Swathythe.'

'Yes, sir.'

'I think, however, one may safely stretch a point when taking a young lady out to tea for the first time.'

'No doubt of it, sir.'

Exceptionally spruce and very pleased with himself, Bernard set out for the rendezvous. It had not taken him long to fall in quasi-love with Mabel, her prettiness, attractive conversation, and evident liking for himself making him a very willing victim. Of passion he had none as yet—but what young man will refuse the companionship of a pretty girl when it can be had for the asking? We like the love that comes easy, and laughing love runs smoother than *grand passion*.

She ran smiling to meet him at the railway station and they took tickets for Howth. At first they said little; just sat in opposite corners and smiled at each other. They could not look at each other without breaking out into beaming smiles. It was a dull cold day, and Bernard feeling a nip even through his heavy frieze overcoat, wondered how she kept from shivering in her thin tweed jacket, eked out with a small and shabby fur. He noticed a chilblain on one finger that peeped through a hole in her glove, and as he thought of those chilly little hands busy typewriting in the rawness of the early mornings when he was only just rising from bed, he cursed the world's economic system fiercely in his heart.

'If mother only knew what I was up to!' exclaimed Mabel happily.

'Is she very strict?'

'She thinks we ought to stay at home to keep her company. We'd be always dancing attendance on her if she had her way. Susan gives in to her and never gets a breath of fresh air in consequence. I always have to make up some unpleasant excuse if I want to get away. If she thought I was going to enjoy myself there'd be ructions.'

'The appalling selfishness of parents!' declaimed Bernard. He told her about O'Dwyer's casting forth.

'Mother made Susan promise not to get married during her lifetime. She was a fool to do it, I think, but then . . . Susan . . .'

Bernard laughed as she hesitated.

'Go on,' he urged.

'Oh, nothing,' she said.

At Howth Station they took a tram to the summit, from the top of which they had a fine view of the harbour, Ireland's Eye and Lambay, all seemingly asleep in the grey light of the December afternoon. Bernard told her about the gun-running, omitting, however, all reference to Milady and to the part Mabel's own simulacrum had played in the drama. He had not yet finished his narrative when they came to a cottage with the inviting signboard:

TEA AND HOT SCONES.

They went inside, and over steaming hot cakes and toast and black currant jam she listened eagerly to the conclusion of the tale: the storm, the landing, and the battle of Clontarf. Tea over, they sat talking over a hundred different subjects, Bernard smoking his pipe, she with a cigarette balanced between her dainty lips. She could chatter interestingly enough, and she had an amusing gift of repartee, but Bernard was a little disappointed at her attitude towards the things of which he thought most highly. She thought Socialism 'unpractical' and was

obviously bored by his attempts to prove it otherwise. She was not interested in Utopian cities. She did not care about poetry. Most of the great novelists she thought 'dry', though her taste in literature was neither cheap nor vicious. Her favourite writers were mediocrities, and she had no enthusiasms and no standards of merit. She just 'liked' a book, and thought it 'nice'—or otherwise. It was the same with the other arts. She liked Landseer's pictures, and Middleharnis Avenue, and the Fighting Temeraire. She thought Lohengrin 'very nice' and preferred Figaro to 'any of those musical comedies'; and she could talk of Sullivan in the same breath with Mozart and Beethoven.

It did not take Bernard long to find out all this, and then he resigned himself to the inevitable and allowed her to chatter in her own inimitable way: which was quite sufficient to charm away his disappointment. She was quick to see, too, where his main interest lay, and it was not long before she started to question him on politics.

'Tell me,' she said, 'could Ireland really manage to get on if she was independent? Every one I know says we couldn't do without England's money.'

'What rot!' said Bernard. 'So far from our getting any money from England, she gets it from us. Norway and Sweden and Denmark and Belgium and Bulgaria and a few other small nations have all revenues in or about the same as ours: some a little more, some a little less. And on that they run kings and courts and armies and navies and diplomatic services and mercantile marines, and all the rest of it. So far from not being able to manage without England, I don't see how we're going to escape ruination unless we get rid of her at once.'

'I'm so glad to know that,' said Mabel. 'I shan't be sat upon in argument again.'

Evening fell, and, wandering out under the stars, they walked slowly down the hill. They spoke little, and when they did their voices were strangely hushed. . . . She shivered slightly, and apprehensively he caught her arm.

'You're cold?' he said.

'Only slightly,' she assured him. With her upper arm she imprisoned his hand against her side. He slipped his arm right through and held hers close. United in warm intimacy they strode down the hill keeping step together. Her eyes shone in the darkness.

Quite frankly their hands dwelt upon the farewell handclasp as he left her at her door.

'She's mine!' he said to himself that evening, and not even a fleeting vision of a certain avenue of cedars could disturb his satisfaction.

9

WITHIN a week of the declaration of war Sandy applied for a commission in the British Army, and Eugene was not long in following his example. Sandy's action was only to be expected, for he was a gay thoughtless youth who took no interest in politics and leaped at this chance of change and adventure. But Bernard took it upon himself to remonstrate with Eugene.

'It's no use, Bernard,' replied Eugene. 'Only your biassed frame of mind prevents you seeing the justice of this war. Freedom, Civilisation and Christianity are at stake, and my conscience tells me I must go to their defence.'

'I like your self-righteousness,' said Bernard angrily. 'You religious people seem to think no one has a conscience but yourselves. Biassed frame of mind, indeed! I've as much care for Freedom and Civilisation as you have. That's why I'm in the Irish Volunteers.'

'Don't let us quarrel over it, anyway,' said Eugene, and Bernard, looking at his honest, good-humoured and perturbed countenance, and thinking of dreadful possibilities, relented. He criticised no more, and said:

'Well, good luck, old man.'

About the same time he received a letter from Wil-loughby, who was in training at Salisbury Plain.

'I think you will agree', it ran, 'that England is fighting for a just cause this time. Believe me, Bernard, we didn't want this war. It is Germany's doing entirely, and when that monstrous war-machine is smashed you will rejoice with us that war has been banished from the earth . . .

'Religion, morality, all the amenities of civilisation as we know it, are at stake. The free man of the English and French ideal is at issue with the trained machine of the German system . . .

'I knew that in such a cause Ireland would not be backward. Her action in this crisis has won her many friends. Even my brother Frank has become a Home Ruler . . .

'I expect I'll meet you one of these days on a field in France . . .'

10

SOLDIERS marching to battle. . . . Bernard stood at the foot of Grafton Street to watch them. First came the band, playing a stirring martial air that set the heart beating and made the feet want to go a-marching. Next came the fightingmen, khaki-clad figures carrying rifles, heavy laden with packs, great-coats, trench tools, and mess-tins. A thousand men . . . two thousand. One day's casualty list. . . . They'll bury as many to-morrow. Every day a mass of men like these will be blotted out of life, ever to be replaced by fresh drafts from home.

'Morituros vos saluto,' muttered Bernard.

But these doomed faces are cheerful. Boyish faces, most of them . . . Irish faces. Sons of the soil of Ireland marching to die for—what? Famine and war and emigration have drained her of her sons for centuries. The flower of her manhood is gone beyond recall. She is a nation bled almost white. . . . Yet forth they go as their kind have ever gone, believing that the motherland requires it.

'Two thousand Irishmen lost to Ireland,' says Bernard, and bitterly curses those responsible for the wastage.

The column passes on : the band ceases : the men strike

up the well-known air of 'Tipperary'. The commonplace hackneyed melody, sung by voices soon to be silenced for ever, mingles with and is drowned by the hum of traffic. Unexalted melancholy takes possession of the listener.

II

CHRISTMAS came : the first Christmas of the war, and the last before the food-shortage. But it brought no peace or good-will. Owing to the uncompromising attitude of his father, Bernard was not invited to share the family dinner and was looking forward to eating it in solitary state under the servile patronage of Swathythe when he received an invitation from Stephen to spend the week with him at Glencoole. Bernard accepted gladly, and it was arranged that they should motor out on the night of Christmas Eve.

He spent the afternoon with Mabel. He met her at three o'clock, and they strolled about the streets together in the ever-thickening crowd. There was no sign of war about the city that evening. The streets were brightly lit, the shop windows gaily adorned and blazing with light ; the restaurants were packed with chattering people, and the air of universal cheerfulness associated with Christmas was in nowise diminished. The war had not yet brought its hardships.

Bernard and Mabel mingled with the crowd of shoppers, parcel-laden, wrapped and muffled, breathing steam into the frosty air.

'I love jostling with a good crowd,' said Bernard.

'So do I,' replied Mabel.

They went to a book-shop where he bought her a volume of Mangan's poems, and then she shyly presented him with a tie-pin which she had kept concealed in her hand-bag up to this. After that they went to Mitchell's and after a long wait secured a rather scrambled tea. Bernard's every sense was acute to seize its own particular pleasure. He enjoyed the crimson-shaded lights, and the cheerful glow of the red berries amid the black holly-

leaves of the decorations. He enjoyed the stupefying clamour of many voices with its accompaniment of clattering cups, mixed as it was with the alternate crescendo and diminuendo of the street-noises as the doors swung open and closed again. The sense of being at one with all humanity that always seized upon him when in a crowd thrilled through his being now. . . . The maid bustled up with the tea: delicate fragrance of China: warmer of the hearts of men. He watched Mabel pouring it out, holding the pot gracefully as only a girl knows how. The world seemed a good place in those few minutes.

'Hurray for living!' he said, looking into Mabel's eyes, and she responded with a laugh . . .

Stephen arrived at Harcourt Street that night at the time appointed, and they set out at once in Bernard's little car. They rushed through the sleeping villages of Tere-nure and Rathfarnham and out along the slushy roads through the cold night air towards the mountains. As they climbed towards the high ground they felt the nip of frost, and the surface of the road hardened, and glittered under the lamplight of the car. Up and up they panted, then slid down the dark glenside, crossed the bottom, and up again.

'By the way,' said Stephen, 'don't talk politics to my father. He's a bit queer on the subject. He's an old Fenian and got badly let down by some of his friends, so he's been sour about it ever since. . . . He looks on politics much as your friend Fergus Moore does, but he's bitterer. . . . Whoa! Here we are.'

Bernard pulled up as they reached a cottage gate. Stephen leaned across him and tootled the horn before dismounting, whereupon an old man came rushing out of the cottage and embraced Stephen with an effusiveness that rather embarrassed Bernard.

'Come in! Come in!' cried Michael Ward, and as Bernard came blinking into the light of the sitting-room the first thing that caught his eye was a large photograph of his dead uncle Christopher over the mantelpiece.

Before he could make any comment, however, he was hustled upstairs to a low-ceilinged, plainly-furnished bedroom, while the old man ran off to hasten supper. As he performed his ablutions Bernard shouted across to Stephen's room that the photograph in the sitting-room was of an uncle of his and asked for an explanation.

Stephen came in, towelling his wet face and hair.

'Your uncle?' he said. 'That's a coincidence. He and my father were mixed up in one of the later Fenian plots, years ago. They had some mad plan to seize Downing Street when the Cabinet were in session, and hold them as hostages till the British cleared out of Ireland. I don't know how it was to have worked, but they were betrayed by a confederate.'

'The old, old story,' said Bernard.

'Remember what I told you, though,' said Stephen. 'No politics to my father.'

There was a steaming dish of bacon and eggs with tea and potato-cakes on the table when they came downstairs. Michael Ward was keenly interested to learn that Bernard was Chris Reilly's nephew. Shaking his hand with renewed warmth he said:

'Sure he was talking to me about you the last day he was here . . . it must be fifteen years ago.'

Bernard and Stephen fell to on the appetising supper, and Michael Ward sat and watched them.

'Have you reformed the world yet, Stephen?' he grunted after some moments' silence.

'We've made a beginning,' said Stephen quietly. 'How's the farm going?'

'Well enough, Stephen. But I wish I had you back, my boy.'

When the meal was over they sat and talked for a couple of hours. Bernard brought his uncle's name forward several times in the hope of hearing some of his past history, for his mother knew nothing of the political side of Christopher's life, and was disinclined to talk about what she considered the discreditable end to it. But old

Ward, though ready to speak in terms of enthusiasm about his friend's qualities, was very reticent about his history, and Bernard soon dropped the subject.

As they went upstairs to bed that night Bernard said to Stephen :

' I say. You know you've broken bounds ? '

' I know,' said Stephen. ' And it's not the first time, either. I risk it now and again.'

12

BERNARD began for the first time to know Stephen fully during that visit. He had been inclined to underrate him before, thinking that his intense occupation with the things of the moment was a sign of narrowness. Now from close acquaintance he could see that Stephen's outlook was as wide as his own, while he had a power of concentration on the matter in hand and a grip of detail in which Bernard was woefully lacking.

' Going up the glen to-day ? ' asked Michael Ward one morning as they set out from the cottage. ' It isn't what it used to be,' he said sadly. ' Most of my woods have been cut down—gone to make masts for British ships most likely. Devil sink them.'

' Father's crazy about trees,' said Stephen as they climbed the far slope of the glen. ' He's right too. I'm afraid it looks as if our children will be born into a treeless island. Look at that.'

They had reached the site of the wood in which Michael Ward and Christopher Reilly had walked fifteen years ago. Newly cleared, it was now a melancholy spectacle, with its raw-topped stumps, its litter of chips, and a few twisted or otherwise valueless trees standing forlorn amid the devastation.

' I think a clearing is one of the saddest sights there is,' said Bernard. ' To think that this is going on all over the country. And how irreparable it is. If we got our independence to-morrow we couldn't re-afforest it fully in our lifetime.'

'It's the first item on my reconstruction programme,' said Stephen.

They turned back and surveyed the valley behind them.

'What a pretentious bridge that is,' remarked Bernard. 'It would be big enough for the Shannon.'

'Funny you noticed that,' said Stephen. 'Your uncle made the same remark to me years ago when I was a boy.' And he told Bernard all about Chris's visit.

It was a soft, moist winter's day, with a tinge of grey over everything. Heavy grey clouds hung in the sky with a pearly shimmer on them in the region of the sun. The bracken and frochan were dank and heavy and the turf was black and sodden. They passed a cottage, an ill-built, miserable affair. The walls had not been white-washed for months, and they were splotched and mouldy. The unhealthy-looking roof of rotting thatch was caved in. Ruinous outhouses had been dropped about it anyhow. There was a large dunghill close to the doorway, whose brown stinking drainage puddled the yard and the adjacent roadway.

'Habitation of a citizen of the British Empire!' said Stephen. 'The son of the house has gone to fight for civilisation, etcetera, when he'd be much better employed in making this little spot fit for a civilised man to live in. . . . Good morning, Mr. Dolan, how are things?'

This was addressed to an old man smoking a foul clay pipe who appeared at the half-door.

'Ah, sure they might be better, glory be to God. An' how's yourself?'

'Couldn't be better, thanks. Any news of Barney?'

'He's not at the front yet, thank God. But he soon will be. These is terrible times, Mr. Stephen.'

'Terrible,' said Stephen.

'Will we be seein' Home Rule soon at all, do ye think?'

'We will not, Mr. Dolan, and that's my honest opinion.'

'Glory be to God, an' what are all the boys goin' to the war for?'

'God knows, Mr. Dolan.'

''Tis a terrible thing us to be losing our young men and no showin' for it.'

'It is that, Mr. Dolan, and you can thank our leaders for it.'

'Sure I felt that all along, but musha, what can you do?'

'You're a Sinn Feiner, Mr. Dolan,' said Stephen.

'I am not,' said the old man angrily.

Stephen hastily changed the subject.

'What's wrong with your hens?' he asked.

'I think it's the cholera they've got.'

'How did they manage to get that?'

'Faith, I dunno . . . unless it's from pickin' in the dung-heap there.'

'Why don't you rail it in then?'

'Sure it mightn't be that at all.'

'Well, we'll be going on. Good-bye, Dolan.'

'Good-bye, Misther Stephen.'

'See that,' said Stephen to Bernard as they passed on.

'No Imperial thinking there. The heart of the people is sound at bottom, even if loyalty to their leaders leads them astray superficially.'

The road swung out on to the open bog.

'These bogs are playing the devil with our national character,' said Stephen. 'They enervate the whole atmosphere. That's why we're what we are: a lazy, inefficient people. We think everything worth doing, and nothing worth doing well. Look at that man with his hens. And he's not the only fool like that in Ireland. Nearly every cottage in the country has its dunghill at the front door, and its drainage going to waste and being a nuisance.'

'How little sense of beauty they have,' said Bernard.

'Those awful outhouses! And the makeshifts they have everywhere for gates: bits of old bedsteads and the like.'

'Due to history,' said Stephen. 'In the old days your rent was put up if you had a geranium in your window, so the habit of the poor mouth grew up and sticks to them still.'

'How very uncouth in their habits our people are,' said Bernard. 'What a pity they don't adopt the continental habit of wearing blouses at their work. How gross their family life is when you come to think of it, with the men coming home in their dirty working clothes. We'll need to restore civilisation in this country when we've got our freedom.'

Stephen told Bernard about all his reconstructive projects: the improvement of agriculture, the construction of a mercantile marine, the development of fisheries; the completion of the canal system begun by the Irish Parliament of 1782 and cut short by the Union; the utilisation of the neglected natural resources of the country, and so forth; and finally a complete reorganisation of education. Bernard, if the truth must be told, did not listen very attentively. The image of Mabel was disconcertingly prominent in his thoughts; it hovered before him in the daytime and came to him in his dreams at night. He dwelt upon the image with pleasure when it came, and even conjured it up deliberately in idle moments.

And she had written to him. In his pocket was a letter he had received that morning. She was going to a dance at the Gresham on New Year's Eve, she said. Would he be back in time for it? Inly he swore that he would, and was even now casting about for excuses to shorten his stay at Glencole.

'Then the army in a free Ireland', went on Stephen, 'wouldn't be an unproductive service like in other countries. I'd employ the soldiers on national work—reclaiming of bogs, afforestation, and what not. I wouldn't keep them in barracks either: they'd live in specially built military villages with their wives and children—the villages to be modelled more or less on ancient Sparta. . . . Suppose I wanted to reclaim this

bog here, for example. I'd run up a village quickly on that firm patch over there, and camp a regiment there till the work was finished. By this means we could keep up a larger standing army than we could otherwise afford. And we'd need it too, with the world the way it is.'

They got on to the question of education for a while. Stephen insisted that they must get back to the old Greek and Irish idea, music and gymnastics.

'Modern education', he said, 'teaches too many facts (and too many lies also) and makes no attempt to get people to think. That's why men are so easily imposed upon. That's why this war's going on to-day. . . . Lack of thought, incapacity for deduction, that's what does it.'

Bernard was more concerned with organisation than with the curriculum. He revealed to Stephen the horrors of the Public School system as he had known it.

'Let's have no big schools,' he said. 'Boys' schools should be divided into three classes: Primary, for those under ten, secondary for those from eleven to fourteen, and tertiary for those from fifteen to seventeen. Let there be plenty of widely-distributed primary and secondary schools, and let none of them be boarding-schools. The tertiary can be boarding or day as you like, but young boys become savages if they're separated from their mothers and sisters.'

Thus disjointedly and at haphazard as they wandered about the neighbourhood of Glencoolie they discussed their plans and projects. Sweeping projects they were: broad in outline, but lacking in detail: rather absurd, some of them, but all honest and disinterested: young men's plans. . . . And always at the very height of their enthusiasm they would be pulled up by the melancholy reflection that the first step, the very essential to making any attempt to realise their dreams, was yet unaccomplished. The shadow of the occupation still lay over everything; and their own countrymen were

still hostile to them and seemingly content to rest in its obscurity.

New Year's Eve approached, and Bernard felt his longing for Mabel growing irresistible. To dance with her would be joy supreme. To spend a whole evening, perhaps, in her company . . . His hopes were ecstatic.

'Look here, old chap,' he said to Stephen, 'I'm afraid I must leave to-morrow. There's a patient I can't put off . . .'

13

THE ball-room was ablaze with lights and garlands, the air throbbed with music, and the floor was slippery as ice. Bernard had come early, and prowled about with impatience gnawing at his heart, looking out for Mabel's arrival. Girls he knew looked in his direction expecting to be asked for dances, but he pretended not to see them. He had two empty programmes in the pocket of his piqué waistcoat.

Mabel was late.

'That cursèd dawdling brother of hers!' muttered Bernard savagely to himself.

The first dance was well under way when she appeared, a dainty fairy-like figure clad in white net with a pink waistband, the light gleaming in her hair.

'I thought you were never coming,' he said. 'Here's a programme for you,' and he handed her the fellow of his own.

'Where are they to be had?' asked Jack, whereat Bernard gave him directions and they were rid of him.

'Well, how many may I have?' asked Bernard.

'How many do you want?' she replied.

'I daren't ask for that many,' he said.

'They get nothing who don't dare,' said she.

'God help me!' said he.

'Be brave,' said she.

'But I want such a lot . . .

'Here's Jack coming back.'

'I want them all,' he said desperately.

'That's a large order,' she said, and his face fell.

'That's my maximum demand,' he said. 'You can make your deductions from it.'

'Well, I've promised Jack two, and I must keep six for duty dances. . . . You can have the rest.'

With trembling fingers he marked off the dances on both programmes.

'How am I to remember who X is?' she asked.

The air was suddenly rent by the opening chords of a wild ragtime tune, and in a minute he was swinging her over the polished floor. She danced well: too well. She seemed to have no volition of her own, and melting into his arms responded automatically to every movement of his. The ragtime strain with its fierce dissonances and breathless syncopation surged through him, stirring his blood and thrilling his nerves with a vivifying current of electricity. Wild imaginings passed through his brain, and all that was primitive in him leaped to the surface. He abandoned himself to the sheer joy of dancing. His limbs seemed tireless. He felt as if he could go on like that for ever.

And then abruptly the dance came to an end and Mabel was fanning herself and praising the floor. The next dance was promised to Jack, so Bernard retired to soothe his impatience with a cigarette in the dressing-room. Here he was in no way surprised to meet Molloy, who was an habitu  of the Gresham.

'Hello!' said Bernard. 'I thought you were at the Front.'

'I haven't time,' said Molloy. 'I'm frightfully busy at present. I've three or four of these sedition cases coming up shortly. . . . I'm defending the blighters too, though personally I'd like to see them all dumped in the Liffey. . . . I say, I saw you dancing with a damn pretty girl just now. You might give me an intro? . . .'

Languid waltz and vivid one-step alternating, the

evening sped by. Bernard and Mabel sat out most of the second part of the programme, and talked. They talked about everything—and themselves: but chiefly about themselves. He told her things that he had never told anyone else. He told her about the nursery Babylon and his imaginary island. She told him about her home life and her dreary work. They had become confidants . . .

‘Which do you like best, the waltz or the one-step?’ she asked suddenly.

‘The one-step, I think,’ replied Bernard. ‘I like the frank savagery of it. It puts the devil into you: rips the wrappings of civilisation off you and turns the ball-room into a battle-field where you carry off your bride like a primitive skin-clad man.’

‘Hm. I prefer the waltz. It makes you fall asleep on life and dream of operas and scenes in books.’

They were silent awhile, and then Mabel said:

‘What a lovely night!’

‘I’ve never had such a night before,’ said Bernard.

‘Nor I.’

‘“On such a night”’, Bernard quoted, ‘“Troilus methinks . . .”’

‘Try a new one,’ said Mabel.

‘Hm, let’s see. . . On such a night . . . On such a night . . . I know:

‘On such a night
Tristan methinks, with cheeks incarnadined
And beating heart, first looked into the eyes
Of Mark’s intended in the spacious halls
Of Chapelizod.’

‘Good,’ said Mabel. ‘Now let me try . . .

‘On such a night
Giulietta in a mirror caught
The soul of Hoffman.’

' On such a night
 Cyrano's nose did blush amid the verse
 Wafted towards Roxane's window.'

' On such a night
 Stood Tessa weeping by the Grand Canal,
 And uttered messages to birds awing
 For Barataria.'

' On such a night
 Guiseppe lilted like a love-sick boy
 Of sparkling eyes to Marco.'

' On such a night I feel like having an ice. Come down and get me one.'

' Some poet, aren't you?' said Bernard on the way down.

' Oh, blank verse is easy enough,' replied Mabel. ' I've always thought Shakespeare was overrated.'

' Don't spoil it all,' said Bernard.

They went to the ball-room and had another dance : a waltz to the tune of ' Come Back to Erin '. When it was over they tacitly returned to their former nook. They had so much to say that dancing seemed an irritating interruption . . .

An hour went by thus ; and then Bernard said :

' We must preserve that poem of ours. Let's write it down before we forget it.'

He started to scribble on the back of his programme, she looking over his shoulder the while. Intoxicating presence ! It distracted his memory so that she had to prompt him frequently. Their heads were very close together, and a strand of her hair tickled him. Then, when the task was done, Mabel wanted to dance again.

' It must be nearly the last dance,' she said, and they rose from their shelter to go downstairs. As they faced each other a wave of passion swept over Bernard. He found himself stammering uncontrollably.

' Mabel . . .' he said, and stopped, tongue-tied.

She looked up at him timidly.

'Dear!' he ventured.

She seemed to shrink from him for a second, and then she was in his arms and submitting languorously to his kisses.

The last waltz saw them not.

14

HE awoke next morning to find Swathythe by his bedside.

'It can't be ten yet, Swathythe,' said Bernard sleepily.

'No, sir, but . . .'

'Well, go away and don't disturb me. Didn't I tell you not to call me till ten?'

'Yes, sir, but I thought . . .'

'You'd no business to think, Swathythe.'

'Mr. Ward has been arrested, sir. I thought . . .'

Wide awake at once Bernard sprang out of bed. Swathythe respectfully handed him a newspaper.

CHAPTER XIV

AN AMATEUR ARMY

I

MRS. HARVEY was somewhat taken aback when Bernard and Mabel came to tell her of their engagement. Mabel, the beauty of the family, was expected to make a match which would restore their fallen fortunes; she knew it, and so had kept her affair with Bernard a secret. The revelation was therefore an unpleasant surprise to Mrs. Harvey, but she recovered her equanimity in time to avoid betraying herself.

'You're a rash pair of children,' she said. 'Well, God bless you. May you be happy.' And she expressed a desire to have a chat with Bernard.

He called on her a few days later when Mabel was away at her work, and in a short time she was pretty thoroughly acquainted with his financial position.

'And now', she said, 'I've one piece of motherly advice for you. You take far too much interest in politics. Steer clear of it, or you'll never get on in your profession.'

'If Washington had taken that advice America wouldn't now be free,' said Bernard.

'Perhaps,' said Mrs. Harvey serenely. 'But Washington wasn't a suitor for my daughter.' Which bowled Bernard over completely.

Mrs. Harvey was less pleased than ever with the prospect of the marriage, not for her daughter's sake, but for her own. Bernard and Mabel could as a matter of fact have married quite comfortably by the end of another year, but that would not have satisfied Mrs. Harvey's

requirements at all. She was tired (and no wonder) of her present toilsome life, and wished to become a lady of leisure once more. Her daughters therefore would have to look for husbands who would be wealthy enough to compensate her handsomely for the loss of their earnings, and as Bernard was not rich, nor, owing to his infatuation with a very lost cause in politics, ever likely to be so, he was a very undesirable son-in-law from Mrs. Harvey's point of view. Moreover, there was a certain social stigma associated with a party whose adherents so frequently found themselves in jail (where Bernard might be landed any day himself) and as Mrs. Harvey's insatiable ambition was to regain that social status which she had lost, her chagrin at her daughter's choice can well be imagined. She was not, however, so foolish as to oppose it openly. Mabel, she knew, was not a girl of particularly strong character, but she was proud and could be far more easily led than driven, more potently influenced by ridicule than by force. For the present therefore Mrs. Harvey bided her time, and, while outwardly she blessed the engagement, she set herself to the discovery of a more desirable rival, contenting herself meanwhile with stray disparaging remarks about Bernard—his seriousness, his untidiness, and so on—with occasional reflections on the comforts of wealth, fervent hopes that Bernard would attain it, and despondent prophecies that this was very unlikely.

This policy Mabel treated at first with indifference, but gradually she became uneasy and communicated her fears to Bernard. He, however, only laughed, and said her mother was over-anxious about her happiness.

'Cheer up,' he said. 'The spring is coming: you can feel it in the air. I'll work like a nigger now, and then in the summer, perhaps . . . Meanwhile we have our Saturdays and Sundays and our evenings together, so don't be downhearted. . . . And, dear, who knows but Ireland may be free by our wedding-day. The tide is turning already.'

The anger and despair and bitter laughter that had tortured Bernard through the winter had not been ousted from his soul by love : requited love, however, now distracted him, and simultaneously hope began to revive at sight of the already changing attitude of the people. Hostility towards the Volunteers was still strong, and still widely spread, but it was no longer uncompromising, and it was narrowing in scope. Even those who strongly disagreed with them recognised that they had a case and that it could not be controverted by mere abuse. . . . They were seldom called traitors now, though names like 'factionists' and 'cranks' were still flung at them.

These were spring days and it was good to live and love. He took Mabel for long walks : out to Howth ; up the Three Rocks ; through the Glen of the Downs. One breezy sunny day they climbed to the Hell-Fire Club. They raced each other up the grassy gorse-clad slope of Mount Pelier, and arriving breathless at the top were nearly blown to pieces by the wind. The gusts hurtled and shrieked round the rough stone walls of the naked ruin and in and out of its bleak chambers. Bernard tore off his cap and let the wind ruffle his hair and rattle his unbuttoned rain-coat.

'Isn't it glorious' he said, joyously inhaling the exhilarating fluid.

'I'm so cold,' said Mabel, and drew him into the lee of the building, pulling his arm round her for comfort. They seemed lapped in a magic silence now after the turmoil outside.

'What a *sight* I am,' exclaimed Mabel, adjusting her hair by the help of a pocket-mirror.

'You look your best untidy,' said he.

'Go away !' she laughed and added : 'You're a perfect *sketch* yourself.'

'What ho for a hot cup of tea?' said Bernard, and they ran down the sheltered side of the hill hand in hand.

'If anyone *saw* us,' remonstrated Mabel. . . .

They walked along the Velvet Strand another day from

Portmarnock to Malahide, a great deserted stretch of beach at that season.

'What a dull spot' said Mabel.

'Is it bathing-machines and nursery-maids you'd like to see?' asked Bernard.

'I don't like this loneliness,' she said, holding his arm closer.

They stood listening to the thud and jingle of the breaking and retreating waves, while the wind whistled in the bent grass on the sand dunes behind them. Sky and sea were grey and mournful. The air was scented with brine and seaweed. They let the wind sweep them at a run along the hard crinkled sand, crunching sea-shells under their feet.

They reached the road winding above the rocks towards Malahide.

'Don't you love that sound?' said Bernard, stopping to listen to the sighing hum of the wind in the telegraph-wires, mixed now with the plashing sound of the waves chopping among the rocks.

'What wild weird things you take pleasure in!' said Mabel.

'You're not wild and weird, are you?' asked Bernard.

'I soon will be if I associate much with you.'

'Well, if you're afraid . . .'

'Silly!' said Mabel.

Sometimes they had not time for walks like these and contented themselves with a stroll in Stephen's Green, calm oasis in the noisy city, or they would walk out to the Phoenix Park, or along the Canal side, or suburban avenues, or even the less frequented city streets.

'The glorious dust!' says Bernard as they emerge blinking from a cloud of it, a swarm of sharp specks that prick their skin as it drives before the blast and passes on with a rasp of withered leaves slithering along the pavement.

'Horrid stuff!' says Mabel. 'I'm half blinded.'

'A peck of March dust is worth a ton of tonics.'

'Thank you. I can dispense with both.'

'You don't like anything I like.'

'You like all sorts of queer things better than me.'

'Mabel!'

'Yes, you do.'

'You're cruel, dear.'

She laughs, and immediately repents.

'Don't mind me, old boy. I never mean half what I say . . .'

'Jack,' said Mrs. Harvey to her son that same day, 'next time you're in town on leave I wish you'd bring up one of your friends with you. . . . Some nice young officer with money, you know. . . . Brothers ought to do these things for their sisters.'

2

MEANWHILE Stephen was in jail.

He took the whole thing in his habitual philosophic way: nothing ever seemed to disturb the equanimity of this taciturn young mountaineer. While he was awaiting trial his father came to see him (it was the old man's first visit to the city for more than quarter of a century) and shed tears in the visitor's cage, for which his son sternly rebuked him. At the court-martial Stephen made no defence: he maintained a dignified silence throughout the whole procedure, which apparently concerned him not in the slightest, nor did he seem to hear the sentence of three months' imprisonment which was passed on him. Mentally he was resolving that those months should not be wasted.

So when he was locked in his cell he lost no time repining over the inevitable. After a brief survey of the narrow bare apartment, he took up the Bible which lay on the shelf near the door and read, most of it for the first time, the Old Testament.

'Imperialism skilfully mixed with religion,' was his comment as, after reading as far as Joshua, he stretched

himself on his plank bed for the night. 'Well, well. They say there's nothing new under the sun.'

In spite of the hardness of his couch he slept soundly.

In the morning he awoke to the monotonous regularity of prison life. He took the successive events as they came and made the best of them. Breakfast was a coarse unappetising meal consisting of sour bread and milkless unsweetened cocoa. Skilly and potatoes were the variants in other meals: meagre unsavoury sustenance, but he devoured it healthily and complained only of its insufficiency. In his hour of exercise he trod the prison yard vigorously, taking great breaths of air, and planting his feet down hard and firmly. He was set to the task of chopping wood, and he chopped skilfully, taking pleasure in the work. He cleaned his cell with the zest one gives to a work of art. He burnished his tin mug till it shone like silver. In the exercise yard he gathered dandelion leaves to flavour his dinner. . . . By such mitigations he made life tolerable.

For an hour in the mornings, when the day was fine, the sun shining through his window painted a golden square on the opposite wall, and Stephen used to place himself so as to intercept the beam that traversed the cell. By standing on his stool he could plunge head and shoulders into the life-giving ray, made to seem almost substantial by the dust particles that danced within it, and breathe in warmth and nourishment. . . .

Sunday Mass was a respite amid rigour. Assisting at the holy sacrifice he could forget he was a captive in the sublimity of the occasion, in the feeling that his spirit was in communion with all the worshippers attending the same ceremony at the same time all over the world. Wondrous rite common to all men, friends and foes, bond and free! Sacrifice offered perpetually in the same manner and in the same tongue by warring and allied peoples; in prisons and palaces, in chapel and cathedral, on ships at sea, on rude altars in the open air under savage skies. Intimate consolation of the single soul; potent unifier of mankind.

' If our International doctrinaires could be induced to come to Mass . . . ' he reflected, musing for the thousandth time on how the Reformation had wrecked the common heritage of Europe.

He had plenty of time for thought in the long hours he spent locked in his cell. He revised his whole philosophy and found it unaltered. He was filled with exultation at realising how hard the universal battle between light and darkness was being fought. His faith was confirmed.

He read also. The prison library was a poor one, but he extracted value from it. On the second day of his captivity the librarian going the rounds with his basket of books tossed a volume into the cell. It was a very much soiled and battered Third School Reader published by an English educational firm. Disappointed though he was, Stephen started to read it. The first lesson was an essay on the ant, which was more concerned to point a moral than to be accurate in natural history. This was followed by a story about a boy, a nobleman and a cow brought together to illustrate the profitableness of honesty as a business policy. Then came the highly edifying story of the painter who found in the same person at different ages the models for his pictures Innocence and Guilt. Four tales had for their themes different phases of England's career of world conquest, and Freedom was patronised by the stories of two men who had fought against conquest by countries other than England: Hofer and Kosciusko. Two poems, 'Excelsior' and 'Ye Mariners of England', together with the most priggish of old Æsop's fables, completed the collection.

The book was a revelation to Stephen. Here was the very source of British Imperialism: commercial morality ('Be good and you shall prosper'); the natural deduction therefrom ('We prosper, therefore we are good'); and that sublime assurance which sets aside as perverse the views of other people about their private concerns when those views fail to recognise that the highest morality is to aim directly at promoting England's prosperity . . .

He remembered that Bernard had once told him that the average Englishman really believes that to be governed by England is freedom, and more.

'Why,' he thought, 'the Irish lie is bad enough, but it's a pleasant harmless lie that hurts no one but ourselves, and it's a white shining truth beside the English lie.'

He began to speculate upon the war.

'Perhaps on every side the truth is fighting with the lie : the French and English truth fighting the German lie ; the German truth fighting the French and English lies . . .

'But it achieves nothing but material destruction . . .

'No. Metaphysical half-truths won't carry us very far. . . . Secret diplomacy is only too evidently the cause.

'The whole thing is wasted effort. There's no national truth at stake at all . . .

'Why not set the universal truth to tackle the ubiquitous lie? . . . More metaphysics! . . .'

He began to feel that the conquest was not for Ireland an unmixed evil.

'If we'd never been conquered we'd now be a great Power . . . with foreign possessions . . . a slice of Africa perhaps, and some Pacific Islands. . . . Bearers of the white man's burden—and curses. We'd be thinking on lines like *this* . . .'

He flung the Third School Reader from him.

'It's better as it is. When we're free we'll be a small nation like Switzerland, Bulgaria, or Norway . . . sensible onlookers at the European tragi-comedy . . . a people in good training, not bloated degenerate giants like the great Powers . . .'

The next book they gave him was Reade's Foul Play, but Stephen cared nothing for novels, so he asked to have it changed, and they gave him a School History of England. After that he was given a very delapidated Hamlet, and now he was happy. True the version had been barbarously bowdlerised by a Protestant clergyman in order to make it 'fit for the home circle'. Not only was

it purged of all grossness, but even such words as 'damned' and 'bloody' were replaced by softer epithets: Horatio swore that he would 'cross' the ghost 'though it slay' him, and the speech in which Hamlet unpacked his heart with words and fell a-cursing like a very drab could not have brought the blush of shame to the cheek of modesty. Still it was Hamlet all the same, that wonderful poem, ever familiar, yet ever startling those who think they have plumbed its depths with some fresh undiscovered beauty or subtlety. Stephen's taste favoured rant, probably because his own manner was the reverse, and he spouted to the echoing walls of his cell things like:

And thus o'ersized with coagulate gore,
With eyes like carbuncles, the hellish Pyrrhus
Old grandsire Priam seeks,

and:

Let them throw
Millions of acres on us, till our ground,
Singeing his pate against the burning zone,
Make Ossa like a wart.

He fell to thinking, ever and again, over the question of the punishment and prevention of crime.

'What good could jailing do anybody?' he asked himself. 'Can spending twenty-three hours of the day locked up by yourself and getting bad and insufficient food improve anyone's character, let alone a weak one? . . . But a comfortable jail would be no deterrent. . . . Nonsense. In a properly-run state loss of liberty would be enough punishment and deterrent for anybody. It's poverty makes jailbirds. . . . What sort of prisons shall we have under the Republic?'

The problem occupied him for days.

'No good,' he said at last. 'Atmosphere isn't suited to constructive thinking. . . . Prisons should improve men, anyhow, not waste them. . . .'

The weeks went by and the months. The more frequent appearance of his ray of sunshine told Stephen

that it was spring in the world outside. Nature was awakening from her sleep ; the armies of men were making renewed preparations for slaughter ; and for all his stoicism Stephen's blood throbbed impatiently for freedom. The last weeks before his release seemed interminable.

3

THE Volunteers were a nation in miniature. They had their Parliament and Executive ; their Exchequer and Postal System ; Industries, a Labour Exchange, and an Insurance Society ; newspapers ; a women's organisation ; boy scouts ; a secret service even. They were a nation at war, ever on the alert : a unanimous nation with a single purpose : a disciplined democracy : a nation of citizen soldiers.

Bernard was now in a position to materialise some of the dreams of his childhood. At a re-election of officers he displaced Brohoon as captain of his company and set to work vigorously to drill, organise and arm his men on more efficient lines than that officer had followed. Their numbers had risen again : new members had joined and old ones were slipping back to their allegiance. The average attendance was now about seventy. Less than half of these had rifles, but arms were being steadily and surreptitiously brought into the country, and nearly every week Bernard was able to produce a rifle to be ballotted for and paid for in instalments. . . . What sacrifices this payment must have involved for many. Some of the men were heroically generous : unskilled labourers with ragged coats and not enough to eat, he knew, must jealously hoard every penny to pay the weekly instalment for the rifle which was, in every sense, their dearest possession ; and even the prosperous ones, the clerks and mechanics, must have had to dock themselves of many luxuries. . . . Brohoon was a man of slovenly habits and no disciplinarian, and Bernard found his hardest task in smartening up the men and teaching them a military gait and carriage—the more so as he had neither himself by nature. He

was at his best in the field, where he carried out hundreds of experiments as to the best methods of using and economising his forces. (He would lie awake at night thinking out problems: how to block such and such a road with a force consisting of thirty-six riflemen, fifteen men with shotguns, and twenty-two men with pikes and revolvers: and so on.) He reorganised the company from top to bottom: into three sections he put his rifle- and gun-men, equally divided each in each; and into the the fourth section the unarmed men (to be armed in sudden emergency with pikes and revolvers). He instituted a mobilisation scheme by which the whole company could be assembled in forty minutes.

The drill-night for the company was Thursday, and on Saturday afternoons they used to attend the general battalion drill. Occasionally on Sundays there would be a field-day for the whole regiment: to Bernard a terrible sacrifice, since otherwise the day would be spent with Mabel. Mabel too used to resent his absence on these occasions.

'You like this horrid volunteering better than me' she would say.

'My darling, how unfair you are. If you only knew how I long to be with you. But a soldier isn't his own master, you know.'

'You could easily get off if you liked.'

'But it wouldn't be right, dear, especially for an officer.'

'It isn't right to desert your girl, is it?'

'My dear, aren't men leaving their girls for their country's sake all over the world to-day.'

'That's different.'

'Don't say a silly thing like that, dear. It's come to be the most annoying phrase in the English language for me.'

'Why? . . . But what matter? Bernard, look at the sky. It'll be lovely at Howth to-morrow.'

'It's no use, dear.'

'Oh well, go then!'

They always ended thus, and the sacrifice was rendered all the harder for Bernard.

Came the field-day. The defending side would march away first : to the Dublin Mountains or to Cuala. The attackers would follow in due course, and when the pre-arranged ground was reached there would be a scrambling amateurish battle. You would see straggling skirmishing-lines blundering across the hedge-intersected fields or amongst the boulders and quarry-holes of the hill-sides : fierce duels between opposing scouts : whole companies wandering about hopelessly at sea : charges in column on the road : stout old Hugo McGurk forcing his way through a hedge : a volley of hand-claps (to represent firing) : Umpleby fussing about with a map trying to find the way out of a morass in which he had impounded his company : Hector O'Flaherty storming about as umpire : then a final rush by the attackers to end the battle, and fraternisation by the troops of both sides over sandwiches and ginger-beer . . .

Then the march home, tired and dirty, in the evening. Oh the brave music of marching feet ! Physical exhilaration of braced shoulders and legs rhythmically swinging ! Surge of primal instincts in peace-tamed hearts ! Two thousand feet moving in unison : tramp-tramp on hard frozen roads ; splash-plash on muddy ones. O'Dwyer spins by on a bicycle. 'Easy time those fellows on the staff get,' mutters Bernard. Tramp-tramp. 'Suppose we were really marching on Dublin.' Splash-plash. 'Shall we ever, I wonder ?' Tramp-tramp-tramp. 'Are these infernal miles Irish or English ?' Someone behind strikes up a song.

'Deep in Canadian woods we've met,
From one bright Island flown . .

Rings out the chorus :

'Ireland, boys, hurray !

Hurray !

Ireland, boys, hurray !

We'll toast old Ireland, dear old Ireland,

Ireland, boys, hurray !'

'What sadness there is in that story about the two regiments on the Rapidan . . . slaughtering each other next day for a cause that mattered to none of them. They became soldiers in the hope of some day fighting for Ireland, and the poor devils had to fight each other instead . . . Eternal waste!' . . . Tramp-tramp. . . . A new strain swells forth :

'So-oldiers are we, whose lives are pledged to Ireland,
Some have come from a land beyond the wave.
Sworn to be free . . .'

A motor whizzes by, drowning the words with its whirr : a load of fur-wrapped superciliousness : 'Disloyal swine !' you fancy them saying. Tramp-tramp-tramp.

'Steady, boys, and step together.
Steady, boys, and step together.'

'Brave boys : a column of sturdy manhood. Ridicule and abuse haven't moved them from their purpose. They've worked and toiled for the cause through it all. Great stuff ! Gallant souls !' . . . A pair of laughing lovers passes by on the sidewalk. 'How much pleasure do these men get out of life ? And they sacrifice that little for this.' Plash-plash. 'All over Europe armies are marching like this' . . .

'Let Erin remember the days of old
Ere her faithless sons betrayed her,
When Malachi wore the collar of gold
Which he won from her proud invader.'

'Emmet would wish to have seen this day. "Oh to be at the head of an army marching to that air!" he said. And here we march to-day. . . . ' Tramp-tramp . . . Lights ahead : the outskirts of the city : traffic and chattering people. The 'Soldier's Song' swells forth again and dies away :

'To-night we'll man the Bearnna-Baoghail
In Erin's cause come woe or weal.
'Mid cannon's roar and rifle's peal
We'll chant a soldier's song.'

Clatter of boot-soles on cobbles. On through the city

‘March to attention!’

The column marches in silence with sloped arms amid crowds that either heed not or stare and scoff. . . .

The Volunteers had their own social life too. The different companies and battalions used to give concerts and ceilidhes; the Boy Scouts gave theirs; the Gaelic League gave more. Bernard became a habitué of the ceilidhes. He loved the rollicking swing of the old Irish dances; the melancholy of the songs; and the irresistible gaiety of the dance-music. He induced Mabel to come with him once, but never again. She thought the company ‘low’ (it certainly was not genteel) and the dances were too rough and strenuous for her. The master of ceremonies was too odiously familiar with her, she thought. He was a shock-headed youth, toothless from canine to canine, wearing an untidy saffron kilt which revealed a pair of very dirty knees; and in his good-natured eagerness to instruct Mabel in the intricacies of the dance he handled her (with those grubby paws of his) far more than she liked—far more than Bernard liked too, for that matter. . . . So Mabel went to no more ceilidhes, and Bernard in consequence was prevented from attending as many as he would have wished.

They were gay functions, those ceilidhes: skirling pipes and laughing fiddle and merry dances: wailing songs and fierce recitations; babble of Irish everywhere. Someone would come up to Bernard and say:

‘*Cionnus taoi, a Bhéarnard?*’

‘*Táim go maith, go raibh maith agat. Cionnus taoi féin?*’

‘*Go maith. Cionnus ar thaitn an Aonach leat?*’

‘*Middling. Is better Sráid Grafton é.*’

‘*Mhaise, greadadh chugat, is mor-chúiseach ataoi le do chuid Gaedhealach briste!*’

‘*Cad is brigh le sin? Ní'l acht cúpla focla Gaedhealacha agam.*’

' *A, tá go léir. Is mór an Gaedheal a bheidh tú go socair.*'

And the conversation would continue in English.

Every one came to those ceilidhes. Staid professors and scholars with European reputations looked on from the background: grave dames in Irish costume; little shop-girls in white muslin; a stray man in evening dress; Gaelic Leaguers in saffron kilts; Indian law-students in their brilliant native costume; Volunteers in their grey-green uniforms: a motley pattern they made as they threaded their ways in and out of the mazes of the Rinne Fada or Ballai Luimnigh. Here you would see McGurk dancing bravely in spite of his girth; there Umpleby hovering near a celebrity: here Brohoon strutting around like a peacock; there Austin Mallow gazing rapt into space . . .

One night Stephen and another man, just released from jail, were brought in by a crowd of admirers—Stephen obviously against his will. The dancers—it was during an interval—rose and cheered. The other man smirked and bowed, but Stephen scowled angrily. He came over afterwards and sat by Bernard.

'You're out early,' said Bernard.

'You get a remission for good behaviour.'

'Is jail a very frightful experience?'

'No.'

'Isn't it rather boring, then?'

'No. I learned a lot.'

'Well, I suppose that's something gained. . . . Personally I'd rather dispense with it.'

Stephen looked round superciliously on the scene of gaiety.

'Such a way of spending an evening!' he said.

'A damn good way,' replied Bernard. 'You're a terrible anchorite, Stephen. You've nothing human in you.'

'To see our Volunteers capering about like that! Ugh!'

'They're none the worse soldiers for it. . . . Red blood

would be a political asset to you, Stephen. You'll never achieve anything if you can't allow for human nature.'

'Seven centuries' oppression should have hardened us.'

'Thank God it hasn't,' answered Bernard. . . .

Bernard had transplanted himself bodily from one stratum of society into another. He saw no more of the Gunby Rourkes and Heuston-Harringtons and Bonegrafts and other denizens of the Square, and became acquainted with life on a totally different scale and governed by totally different conditions. In the Volunteers there were men of many grades, social and financial, but there was no sharp dividing line of snobbery between them: caste was unknown to them: their spirit was democratic, inborn and unconscious.

First there were the civil servants and clerks: prosperous, most of them, unless they married. A single young man can live very comfortably in lodgings, dress well, possess books, and have a fair amount of enjoyment on his pay of anything from twenty-five to sixty shillings a week; but marriage means children and a house. One of Bernard's lieutenants on whom he occasionally called was a man of thirty-five, married, with six children. He lived on the north side of the city in one of a row of exactly similar two-storied red-brick villas. There was a railing in front with a gate, on which was the name 'Emain Macha' (the houses beside it were called 'The Beeches' and 'Roseville'). Inside the railing was a grass-plot four feet square, with a miserable euonymus shrub in the centre and some wilted London pride in a parched flower-bed. A diminutive asphalted pathway led to the hall door, reached by ascending one step of granite. The tiny hall was so packed with unnecessary furniture that the door could only be opened half-way by the lady of the house, who would come down with sleeves rolled up and smelling of Sunlight soap, apologising that this was her washing-day. Poor bothered worn-out young woman! She was crushed with the burden of making ends meet, keeping her house clean, keeping her husband comfortable, and bearing

and rearing children. She had long ceased to worry about her appearance, but she had evidently been pretty once. (Bernard wondered did her husband still love her: was there time for romance in their scrambled lives?) She would show him into the sitting-room, a musty apartment but little larger than the hall and most uncomfortably congested with gimcrack furniture. There he would sit talking over a meagre fire and a pipe with his lieutenant, a big man with a hearty laugh who seemed not at all stifled by his cramping surroundings. Upstairs they would hear the squealing of the children while their mother, unceasing in toil, put them to bed. A piano would jangle in the house next door and a gramophone screech in the one opposite.

'Room! room!' Bernard would say to himself. 'This eternal huddling! Street upon street of these infernal villas: soul-strangling cages: man's sacrifice of comfort to gentility. . . . Oh damn, damn, damn the whole system!'

The frank unpretentious bareness and carpetlessness of the houses of the lower grade—the labourers and artisans—offended him less. They were less stuffy, and so were their inhabitants. They made no pretence to gentility at all; roared with laughter when amused; spat on the floor; and did not use pocket-handkerchiefs. Their uproarious evenings were a pleasure he did not indulge in often.

These two grades had a good deal of discomfort and not a little hardship in their lives, but there were Volunteers of a lower grade still: the class that exists on the hunger line: the class to which the war meant not dearer food but less food: not the substitution of margarine for butter, but the abandonment of margarine and the diminishing of bread. Life for them was a perpetual struggle and a losing one; they had little room for ideas, but their inspiration was a dumb instinctive patriotism. Their one sorrow was their inability to arm themselves. They would have starved themselves to do it, but they were already

starving. Sometimes they tried desperate methods: a gaunt hungry ragged member of Bernard's company turned up on parade one day with a modern Lee-Enfield rifle for which he had waylaid one of his Britannic Majesty's soldiers in a lonesome place. He established a valuable precedent.

One of Bernard's section-commanders was of this class, another was a grocer's assistant, and the remaining two were clerks. One of his lieutenants was a mechanic, the other a civil servant. They met at his flat occasionally to discuss the business and progress of the company, and the lieutenants sometimes came in for a friendly talk. Swathythe used to sniff aristocratically at these visitors, waiting on whom he deemed beneath him. He approached Bernard once on the subject.

'If you'll allow me to say so, sir,' he said after some tactful humming and hawing, 'I think it's a pity for a young gentleman like you to associate with such riff-raff. They'll just use you for their own ends, if you don't mind me saying so. Some of these fellows as come 'ere never brush their 'air, sir. They spit on the carpet, sir: I've awful work after 'em; they don't know 'ow to be'ave in a gentleman's 'ouse, sir. You ought to stick to your own class, Mr. Lascelles, wot knows your ways and you know theirs, for mark my words, sir, these people will just use you and chuck you aside when they done with you. . . . I 'ope you'll excuse me speaking so freely, sir.'

'You haven't spoken a bit freely, Swathythe,' replied Bernard. 'You've spoken like the slave you are.' . . .

It was about this time that there came to live in the flat above Bernard's a man called Malone: a stern-looking grizzled Irish-American on the verge of fifty years of age. He came early to see Bernard and almost at once demanded point-blank:

'Does this Volunteer movement mean business?'

Bernard assured him that it did, but Malone did not appear satisfied.

'Are you going to fight?' he asked.

'Under certain conditions,' replied Bernard.

'See here,' said Malone, 'I'd better tell you right away what sort of a man I am. I was born in Tipperary of quiet decent folk who paid their rent regularly and took no part in politics. When I was about six years old our landlord discovered that cattle paid better than human beings, so we were flung out on the roadside and our home pulled down. We had to emigrate, of course, but my father wasn't the sort of man to take tyranny lying down, and a few days before we started he shot the landlord dead : and, to be as brief as possible, he was caught and hanged for it. My poor mother and I made for America, where she had a brother who had promised to help us, and in the coffin-ship we crossed in my mother died. . . . Well, my uncle was a single man and doing well, and he stood by me. I won't bore you with details of my life more than to say that I made good and became pretty well off. But I was never contented. Way down I always felt that I wanted to be even with the people who killed my mother and father, and I'd a kind of objection to being driven out of my country. My uncle, however, was always telling me to stay where I was and not bother about the old country. He said it wasn't worth living in so long as it was ruled by the English, and the English could only be driven out by war, and the country wasn't strong enough to fight : every time she fought she was beaten. I read some Irish history then, and came to the conclusion he was right. But about that time the Parnell movement began to look like winning out, and, thinking that perhaps there might be something in Constitutionalism after all, I came over here and lent a hand. But you know what happened : nothing but failure : and I went back to America disgusted. . . . Well, after that I stuck to my business for a while. Then, when the trouble between England and the Boers began, I came over here again to see if the people were game for a rising. But not they. The country was just about dead, and there were no arms in it, anyway. However I got a chance to get my own back on England,

for I struck up with some fellows who were getting up a brigade to fight for the Boers and I joined them.'

'Was there a man called Christopher Reilly among them?'

'Yes. Damn good stuff he was, too. He was killed in action afterwards. Did you know him?'

'He was my uncle.'

'Then you're sure to be the right stuff. As soon as I heard the Volunteers had declared against England I came right over to join in the fight. When is it to be?'

Bernard tried to explain the policy of the Volunteers, and Malone was obviously disappointed with it.

'What's the good of shilly-shally?' he said. 'If we don't fight now we'll never get such a chance again. European wars are rare birds, my lad.'

They argued long and hotly, but Malone was impervious to reason. He was no politician: just a plain honest man of one idea; and while Bernard was exasperated by his stolidity he could not but admire him.

His creed was very simple.

'Our own right arm and the help of God,' he said, 'will see us through. Fight whenever you can. What matter if you lose? If you fight often enough you're bound to win in the end.'

4

THE fairest part of the Irish year is that season when spring is melting into summer, when the lilac, laburnum, and hawthorn bloom triumphant over the fallen cherry blossom; when the foliage of beech and lime and elm and sycamore is fresh and viridescent; when the sunlight is still silvery and the breezes still cooling; the ideal season for lovers. Bernard and Mabel took full advantage of it. They spent most of their Sundays amid the purple heather of Howth, or scrambling amongst the rocks of the Scalp, or sailing about the shimmering Bay, and in the evenings they watched the decreescent moon of May waning in the

eastern sky, and at her going looked for the rising sickle of June in the West. In the nights of her absence they gazed upon the stars, making new groupings and constellations of their own : Mabella and Bernardus and Johannes Taurus Collapsus—a romantic occupation.

They began to know each other, and to question. Bernard was something of a puzzle to Mabel. His seriousness ; the long political lectures he used to give her ; his sudden bursts of anger over some act of English brutality or hypocrisy ; his fierce enthusiasms for beautiful things—the plashing of a brook, the smell of damp woods, a stanza of poetry, what not—all his impersonal emotions : these things amazed and disconcerted her. She could not understand why, if he loved her, he would never desert a Volunteer duty for the sake of her company. She resented his tendency to sermonise. . . . And then there were the things she loved in him : the laughter and sadness in his eyes ; the play of the wind and sunbeams in his hair ; the gesture of his hand and thrust of his chin in argument ; the way he held his pipe in his strong white teeth ; his smile—mostly in the eyes, with just a twitch of the lip ; the queer impetuous things he said ; and then the tenderness of his embrace.

And Bernard puzzled over Mabel too : her flippancy, her easy acceptances, her desire for mere happiness, her lack of interest in ideas, her blindness and deafness to the things he thought beautiful, her insistence on the personal equation in all things. He could not understand her unreadiness to sacrifice his company occasionally to the cause in which they both believed. He resented her tendency to turn everything into a joke. He would begin to ask himself if he really loved her and then a glance at her face would make him forget everything else. He loved her airy grace and the yielding slimness of her waist and the wonder of her eyes and the scent of her hair. He loved the queer little things she said, and the soft touch of her hands, the warm tenderness of her lips, and her trustful surrender of herself to his embrace.

They loved and talked of love and made love to each other and built castles in the air and were happy . . .

They passed an organgrinder in the street one day.

'What waste of human material!' quoth Bernard. 'What use is a system that leaves hundreds of men, many of promising material, trying to grind out a living in that useless way?'

'Most people are poor through their own fault,' proclaims Mabel.

Bernard has run up against that argument with infuriating frequency, so he starts on a new tack (Shavian, of course).

'But take a baby just born into the world. Why should he be handicapped in the battle of life right at the start? How can he ever win his way if his parents are too poor to feed or educate him properly? He never gets a chance.'

'His parents shouldn't marry if they can't afford children,' says Mabel primly (innocent little Malthusian), and against this rampart Bernard's arguments storm in vain.

'Bernard, I'm afraid you're getting indelicate,' she says when he goes too far.

Reluctantly after a time Bernard realised the impossibility of carrying Mabel with him in his social ideas. She was one of those people who consider Christ's statement of fact about the poor being always with us as a complete argument against all social reformers. The first time she used it against him he felt a desperate clutch of disappointment at his heart, and a fleeting memory of Janet Morecambe crossed his mind; but the next moment Mabel had said:

'Don't let's quarrel over horrid things, dear,' and put an arm round him and kissed him. She was irresistible then . . .

One brilliant day they took a well-stocked picnic-basket and went by motor-boat to Ireland's Eye. Through bracken shoulder-high they trudged to the topmost point

of the island. Half-way up they had to stop and kiss each other, and then just as he had released her he had to pull her back to him and kiss her again.

'Greedy boy!' she cried, and ran from him laughing.

Breathless they reached the top and stood upon the rocky pinnacle. Other picnic parties were landing on the beach: there were parties scattered all over the island, the smoke from whose fires curled up in thin wisps here and there, faintly perfuming the air.

'Look, dear,' says Bernard, hand sweeping the horizon, 'we came skimming round the Bailey there, just where that purple patch is, then we let her run before the wind right into the harbour. . . . Got in exactly to time just as we'd arranged a month before. Not bad, eh?'

'You're some boy, aren't you?'

'You'd say that if you knew *all* the secrets of that stunt.'

'What secrets?'

'*Tu ne quaesieris; scire nefas.*'

'What's all that about?'

'Curiosity, thy name is girl.'

'I suppose you like to be thought an enigma? Well, keep your old secrets. *I don't care!*'

'Oh, what a gorgeous day! On such a day Deirdre methinks——'

'Here, open that basket, and make yourself useful. I'm hungry.'

They chose a mossy hollow for their meal. All around them insects buzzed and hummed: sea-gulls wheeled screaming overhead: puffins scuttled through the air, and, darting down into the sea, climbed cliffwards with silvery fish in their pink parrot-like beaks. The sun drew fragrant odours from the baking turf and the dead and living bracken and heather. Bernard and Mabel munched chicken and chocolate.

'Why can't we always be together, mo chroidhe? When shall we be married?'

'I wonder.'

'Why not now?'

'How *could* we, dear?'

'Why not? I have money.'

'Not enough to marry on, I'm afraid.'

'We could marry on a ten pound note.'

'Yes. And be miserable and uncomfortable ever after.'

'You talk as if I was a pauper,' protested Bernard.

'One must be sensible, dear.'

'Many people have married on less than I've got.'

'And you may be sure they've regretted it.'

'What a little bundle of common sense it is!'

'I'd need to be, with a big lump of romance like you.'

'But, dear, wouldn't you *like* to be married soon?'

'Oh, I suppose so, but I don't want to be scraping and saving. I've had enough of it. . . . How goes the practice, dear?'

'Not so badly. Nine patients on the roll. A new one yesterday.'

'What was wrong with him?'

'Hay-fever.'

'Why don't your friends get real bad things that you could charge heavily for? We'll never get married on dyspepsia and hay-fever.'

'O, every little helps.'

'We've been engaged six months—half a year.'

'Tired of it yet?'

'Dear! How *could* you!'

'My darling!'

Silence for a while.

'Dear, will you promise not to be angry if I tell you something?'

'What is it?'

'But first you must promise not to be angry.'

'Well, I won't be unless you deserve it.'

'I've been appointed an organiser in the country.'

'Is that all? Why should that make me angry?'

'Well, you see, it means no more Saturdays together.'

'Oh, Bernard! How *could* you?'

'Dear, I couldn't help it. Some of our country corps are falling to pieces for lack of instructors and I have to do my share to buck things up.'

'But think of me, dear.'

'Indeed I do. If it wasn't for you I'd give my Sundays too.'

'Oh, give them all if you like. Don't mind *me*.'

'Darling, I wish you'd be reasonable . . .'

'I wish you'd be kinder.'

Deadlock. Presently Mabel whimpers :

'And only just now you were wondering when we could be married. How can we ever be married if you neglect your practice, running all over the country?'

'You make things very hard for me, dear.'

The joy of the day is clouded, but in the end there is reconciliation with kisses . . .

Another day.

A recruiting march through the streets of the city. A pipers' band in kilts, with green streamers from their pipes : a mighty flag of rebel green : the band is skirling out 'The Wearing of the Green'. To gain recruits for the British Army everything is done to appeal to the national spirit which the very presence of that army oppresses and derides. The colours of England are never to be seen upon the recruiting platforms nowadays : the very recruiting-posters and hand-bills smack of 'Ninety-Eight : vile hypocrisy of England. What would Tone say to see his name used and his words misrepresented in order to delude his countrymen into the army of the oppressor? But to hear that air : 'They're hanging men and women for the wearing of the green'——

'Good Lord!' exclaimed Bernard. 'They've no sense of decency.'

'And look at that,' he said, pointing to a recruiting-poster which represented a body of troops marching past the old Houses of Parliament over which flew the green flag with the crownless harp. 'The abandoned beasts!

If our people don't hate the swine after that they never will. The damned, damned hypocrites !'

'How seriously you do take things !' said Mabel. 'Don't worry your poor old head over nothing.'

'Nothing !' exclaimed Bernard. He was thinking of the brave boys marching away to their death in response to appeals written by cynical old politicians with their tongues in their cheeks : marching to fulfil their side of a treaty whose breach by the other side was a foregone conclusion. 'O world of knaves and fools !' he thought. 'How long shall the tragic farce go on ? . . . And if I were to tell the fools what I thought of the knaves, the fools would laugh me to scorn and the knaves would jail or kill me.'

'Where shall we go for tea to-day ?' asks Mabel.

'Eh ? Oh, tea ? . . . I don't know. Wherever you like.'

'Let's try the Princess for a change then.'

5

CROWLEY was out attending to a case when Bernard arrived at his house at Ballylangan, but he had left orders as to his reception, and the housekeeper installed him comfortably in the sitting-room with tea and papers. He picked up a large volume which lay open on a table : it was Max Nordau's *Degeneration*. He began to read at the opened pages, which contained the slashing attack on Rossetti and the mystics.

'This man talks sense,' thought Bernard. 'He says everything I've been thinking about friend Mallow and his gang . . . Footling round with the number Seven and the rest of it. By Jove, he has all the stigmata.'

Nordau becoming heavy after a time, he went searching among the pile of periodicals. The mauve cover of Manannan caught his eye at once.

'Hello ! Wonder what old Crowley indulges in this for. Thinks it a sort of duty, I suppose. I wouldn't waste sixpence on it.'

He turned the leaves idly. There was a pompous little article on 'The Art of Austin Mallow', by Cyril Umpleby—mostly syrup; a very inaccurate account of the Howth gun-running—it might almost be called an Umplebiad—by Austin Mallow ('Quid pro quo,' muttered Bernard); an article called 'Jail Days', by Brian Mallow; and two poems: one a thrush-and-rosebud song by Theodosia, the other an obscure lucubration called 'The Lord hath Arisen', by Austin.

'Seven flames aflare in the blood-red sky,
The pallid earth shudders, then leaps on high.'

read Bernard.

'Old Nordau, I wish you weren't quite so voluminous, or I'd publish you as a penny pamphlet. You're a tonic, Herr Professor,' he said.

Crowley's voice sounded in the hall, and the door opened.

'Hello, old man, so glad to see you. What's that tosh you're reading? Lord, I'm tired. Let me get these boots off. . . . Just been introducing a new subject into the sun-kissed Empire: future citizen of the Republic, let's hope: he didn't seem a bit keen on entering the Empire, anyhow. . . . Stands the Castle where it did?'

'More or less, though Gussie seems to regard us more in sorrow than in anger. . . . The Party's still gratefully kissing John Bull's boots.'

'Well—so long as it's only his boots. . . .'

'It's not doing them any good with the people, though. The cranks and soreheads are markedly on the increase in town.'

'Is that so? I wish I could say the same for this place.'

'How are things here?'

'Pretty rotten, I'm afraid. There's about a dozen sound men in Ballylangan and a couple of score in the surrounding district. There's one good sign, though. The National Volunteers are falling to pieces, and only meet once in a way for a resolution-passing stunt.'

'It's the same everywhere. In some places companies are coming over to us holus-bolus.'

'So I believe. Rosaleen's beginning to see through her seducer.'

'About time. Can we begin work soon?'

'Yes. I've ordered a parade in a central spot for eight to-night. We'll buzz over after dinner.'

'The war goes well, doesn't it.'

'Yes. The Russians have gone back so far that they'll have to publish new war-maps. . . . By the way, did you see Redmond's speech about the maps of Ireland?'

'I never bother wading through that sort of muck.'

'This was a treat. He says that every German soldier going into battle has a map of Ireland in his pocket with the farm he's going to get marked on it. Now, a map that size would make some bundle. It would take a man twenty-five feet high to carry it, I reckon, so you needn't wonder now how the Germans are able to beat the world. They're a nation of Supermen.'

'But aren't we a green people? I suppose the audience swallowed it all right?'

'To the last foot of it.'

Dinner was served presently, and Crowley made inquiries about his friends in town. He seemed to chafe against his secluded life as a dispensary doctor.

'And how's our old friend Fergus Moore?' he asked at the end of the list.

'Still on the same old tack. I met him the other day in Grafton Street for the first time for some months, and he began cursing the Party and grousing at us for splitting with them in the same breath. To do him justice, though, I don't think he was sober. He's always been too fond of high living, has Fergus, and it's played the devil with his intellect.'

'It's a pity,' said Crowley. 'The fellow has brains, and he's merely wasting them.'

'There's a hell of a lot of people with brains and no guts in this country,' Bernard observed. 'But he's the worst

case I know. Why the devil can't he see how futile his position is ?'

'No use wondering. Let him go hang. We must make up our minds to cut such losses.'

Crowley prided himself on his taste in cigars, and his housekeeper made excellent coffee. When they had just settled down to the enjoyment of both Bernard glanced casually at his watch.

'Great Scott!' he cried. 'Eight o'clock.'

'No hurry,' said Crowley calmly.

'Isn't the parade at eight ?'

'My dear Bernard, don't you know the national failing ? In Dublin eight o'clock means half-past, and in the country it means half-past nine.'

'Not in my command,' said Bernard. 'In my company in Dublin the men have to be in the hall five minutes before the fall-in or we send them away.'

'You'll find it hard to break the countrymen into that.'

'It was hard to break the Dublin men in at first. But I gave them a stiff lecture on discipline once : told them how we lost the battle of New Ross : it had a great effect. Nobody's ever late now.'

'Well, nobody'll be in time to-night, anyway, so you needn't waste that J. S. Murias.'

Shortly before nine Crowley got out his motor and they drove over to the meeting-place, the field of a friendly farmer some five miles away. About twenty men were already assembled when they arrived, and half a dozen more straggled in during the next quarter of an hour. Under the cold light of the moon Bernard drilled them : a weird and romantic experience. Upon how many such assemblies had that disc looked down through the long history of Ireland's passion ? Fenians, Confederates, United Irishmen—all had drilled and marched in turn under her gentle light. She had watched the tide of hope and despair generation after generation, and was still watching—for what ? The ghosts of 'Ninety-Eight and

'Forty-Eight and 'Sixty-Seven seemed to be abroad that night.

In the shadow of a hedge a policeman stood taking notes.

6

THE silvery sun of early summer had deepened to burnished gold: the air currents were hot and sluggish: the foliage of the trees was darkened and bedraggled. It was August. Bernard was in Cloughaneely again, alone this time. He wanted to learn Irish properly, and was living in a cottage with a couple of old peasants who knew nothing else. He was trying to re-Gaelicise himself thoroughly in every way: to shake off the last remnants of Britishism that still tinged his ways of thought and drifted in his Huguenot blood. He set out to study the people. He had long conversations (dull in matter, most of them, and full of linguistic difficulties; for the Irish of Donegal is a harsher flatter language than one learns in the Gaelic League in Dublin) with his fear-tighe and bean-na-tighe. He would stand and chat with people on the roadside; he talked with the shopkeepers and with the kelp-burners on the beach. He admired the quiet dignity of all these people: they had neither the subservience of the English rustic nor the effusive familiarity of the Dublin demos. Their manners had the grace of simple charity untainted by pretentiousness or servility. They were the children of the dispossessed Gael, and they seemed to know it.

Yet there was a certain worldliness in some of them that disappointed Bernard. Frequently he would meet someone who would express surprise that one like him should come there to learn a language for which they could see no use, and when, in his halting Irish, he would try to explain his motives they would only laugh at him. He found little sympathy for the purity and ardour of his national ideas either: he saw none of the fiery political enthusiasm of Dublin: Volunteering was dead in the county. There

was an apathetic patience about the people that galled him and roused him to indignation that could find no expression in his broken Irish. As for the war, their attitude of detachment from it was sublime. Even in Dublin that conflict was beginning to take a back place in people's thoughts : in the country generally it was a thing of small importance : here in the Gaelteacht it was treated with complete indifference.

'Ireland is a neutral country if ever there was one,' Bernard reflected. 'And our politicians are telling the world we're heart and soul with the Allies. . . . I wish old Willoughby was here.'

Willoughby was then at the front, in the trenches before Ypres, whence he frequently wrote to Bernard. He had ceased to mention Ireland in these letters. With the best will in the world he was unable to see Bernard's point of view, and, knowing Bernard as he did, and being satisfied that he was pursuing the course he considered right, he had decided to drop the subject. He insisted, however, on the righteousness of Britain's case in the war, and Bernard, not caring for the ungrateful task of decrying the cause for which his friend was risking his life, received these pleadings in silence. . . .

During his second fortnight at Cloughaneely, Mabel arrived on the scene. She came with another girl from her office, an enthusiastic Gael, who had often urged her to learn Irish, and was under the impression that she was now taking the trip for that purpose. Miss Mulligan (so she was called) was none too pleased to be told at the last minute that her friend's fiancé was at Cloughaneely, foreseeing in consequence many afternoons when she would be abandoned to her own company. Mabel, however, paid no attention to her ill-humour.

'You can go and learn your old Irish,' she said in reply to certain forebodings expressed by the disappointed one. 'I'm out for a holiday.'

She put an end to Bernard's studies, linguistic and psychological, immediately on her arrival, but he had

grown to be so lonely without her that he did not mind. Mabel abandoned her friend altogether to her own devices and spent nearly the whole of each day with Bernard.

'What *would* mother say if she knew?' she exclaimed.

'We're engaged, aren't we?' said Bernard.

'Yes, but she's so proper. She's always telling me not to see too much of you. I think she thinks we might get tired of each other.'

'As if we could!'

'As if we could!'

Kisses.

'I've been having a *dreadful* time since you left,' went on Mabel. 'Jack's always bringing up officer friends from the Curragh, and I have to entertain them. . . . Such frightful bores as they are!'

'Why do you have to entertain them? Couldn't Molly or Susan do it?'

'Mother insists that *I* must. She says a doctor's wife must get used to entertaining people. . . . Have you any more patients yet?'

'A few.'

'Why isn't there a plague of some sort?'

'Modern sanitation's too good, I'm afraid.'

'Well, I don't see how we're going to get married without it.'

'Life is long, my dear.'

'But youth isn't. I'll be *passée* in another ten years.'

'Not for me, darling.'

'So you think now. But wait——'

'Don't you trust me, dear?'

'Men are all the same.'

'Hm. What do you know about men, miss?'

'I've learnt a lot these last few weeks.'

'How?'

'Those Curragh officers.'

'Damn them!'

'Are you jealous?'

'Have I need to be?'

'Ah! That's the question.'

'Mabel! Have I?'

'No, dear. Don't be silly. I hate them . . .'

'What'll Miss Mulligan be doing without you all this time?'

'Oh, bother Miss Mulligan! . . . Are you comfortable in that cottage, dear?'

'Tolerably. But it's rat-haunted. I don't mind confessing I'm afraid of rats. . . . Beastly things.'

'I don't mind rats a bit, but I'm terrified of mice.'

'That's silly. They're so tiny.'

'Exactly. That's why.'

'Rats are repulsive things, and when I was a boy I read a story of a man who was eaten alive by them, so I've had a horror of them ever since. . . . I can tell you it gives me the creeps to hear them scampering about the floor at night.'

'Silly old boy! . . . What a lovely sunset! . . .'

Miss Mulligan made great progress in Irish that fortnight, for she scarcely saw anything of Mabel. The lovers enjoyed each other's society undiluted day after day. They cycled together to the foot of Errigal, to Dunlewy Lake, to Magheroarty: they climbed Muckish: they sailed to Inishbofin. This was perhaps the happiest part of their courtship: the period of questioning was over and they had come to the period of acceptance. The things in which they were in accord seemed infinitely more important than the things in which they were incompatible, and the sweetness of kisses compensated for the bitterness of misunderstanding. They had a kind of romantic tolerance for each other which is an infinitely better basis for marriage than romantic illusion, but unfortunately in their case, while it was Mabel's deficiencies that Bernard tolerated, her tolerance was for his virtues. Still for the present they were very happy, for no coming events cast their shadows over the bogland of Tirconnell.

'Sandy and Jack must be in action by this time,' said

Bernard one evening as they wandered by the seashore. 'I'm glad they've gone to the Dardanelles. It seems more hopeful, somehow, than that shambles in Flanders. Don't you think so?'

Mabel agreed.

'Poor old Eugene is due for France in a few weeks,' Bernard added apprehensively.

There was a green and gold sunset behind the Bloody Foreland. The unchanging sea beat on the desolate shore exactly as it had done when first he had walked there with Felim O'Dwyer. The little heaps of seaweed sent up their violet smoke just as before. At one of them three women were holding an animated conversation. Bernard stopped to listen to the music of the Irish tongue.

'This is the real Ireland,' he said to Mabel as they moved away.

'It's a dull place,' replied Mabel; then, seeing a shadow pass over his face, she added: 'But not when you're here, darling.'

7

INSATIABLY the world went on slaughtering its sons; reckless sterilising butchery. An empty earth was the prospect anticipated by those who dared to think.

Bernard still used to receive the Ashbury Chronicle, which showed an ever-lengthening Roll of Honour. Of his own contemporaries, Sedgwick, his one-time football captain, had been killed at Ypres; Reppington and Lashworthy at Neuve Chapelle; and his friend Murray, crying, 'Ireland for ever!' at the head of his company of Liverpool Irish, fell riddled with machine-gun bullets on the slag-heaps of Loos.

When Bernard returned to town towards the end of August, Suvla Bay had been fought and won, and that strip of sun-baked beach had cost the quenching of laughter in thousands of Irish homes. Half the people he knew were in mourning. He found his mother pale

and anxious, every day expecting one of those fatal telegrams . . .

It was Sir Eugene who received it when it did come, and he went and told her the news.

'Wounded!' she cried, and gave a great sigh of relief. 'Thank God,' she said fervently; for to be wounded in the Great War was the best chance of life.

8

STEPHEN and Hector sat one evening in the smoking-room of the Hotel Neptune.

'I'd like to know your opinion of Austin Mallow,' said Hector. 'Is he a knave or a fool?'

'There's a little of both in every man,' replied Stephen. 'What particular knavery or folly do you suspect in Mallow?'

'Well, I was over at his place the other day and he began to talk in an offhand way about rebellions and things. He asked me what I thought of the chances of a rebellion nowadays. "Nil," said I. He asked me would I be against a rebellion. "Sure thing," said I. "A rebellion without some chances of success would be a mug's game." "It all depends on what you mean by success or failure," says he. "Was Robert Emmet a failure?" "A fiasco," said I. "Then you think his military failure was enough to condemn his action?" says he. "No," says I. "But before you undertake a rebellion you must have good grounds to hope for military success. Perhaps he had them," says I, "and perhaps he hadn't. I don't know." "Then," says he, "you don't think a moral success any compensation for a military failure?" "I'm a soldier, not a philosopher," says I. "And you think there's no chance for a rising now?" says he. "Not a scrap," says I. "Don't you think," says he, "that if we fired the spark in Dublin the whole country would blaze up like a powder-magazine?" "Well," says I, "if you *will* talk in metaphors, the country isn't a powder-magazine. It's a wet bog. Besides, if the country did

rise, what would be the use? There aren't ten thousand rifles in the place. An insurrection without foreign help would be squelched in a week." "I doubt it," says he. Now is that man as big a fool as I think him? You're on the Executive and see more of him than I do. What do you think?

'I must have a talk with him myself,' said Stephen.

A few days later he got into conversation with Austin at the end of a meeting of the Executive and, after accompanying him part of the way home, was invited to come the whole way and have a cup of tea. This was served not in the sitting-room but in Austin's own sanctum, a small room at the top of the house, the principal article of whose furniture was a roll-top desk littered with sheets of paper on which were scribbled the beginnings and rough-drafts of poems, and with the manuscripts of contributors to *Manannan*. Amateurish water-colours and crayon-sketches—evidently Austin's own—covered the walls, and there were some weird symbolic designs in oils on the panels of the door. Austin lit the fire which was set in the grate, changed his coat for the Japanese gown he had worn on Stephen's former visit, and poured out the tea, which Theodosia brought in, with a yellowish bony hand that trembled with the effort of lifting the pot.

'How's the war going these days?' he said. 'I seldom read the newspapers.'

'Much the same. I think it's fairly evident now that the Germans aren't going to win a military victory.'

'Do you really think so?'

'I'm certain of it. The best we can hope for now is a draw.'

'That'll be as bad for us as a British victory.'

'Nothing of the kind. It might even prove better than a German victory: I distrust all Great Powers. It looks as if the big nations will go on fighting to exhaustion point, and then comes our chance to wring good terms out of England.'

'But we don't want terms. It's independence now or

never. I've talked to several of the Executive about it, and they've mostly agreed that now is the time to strike.'

'But why?'

'Isn't England fighting the strongest enemy she's ever had or ever likely to have? You don't get European wars more than once in a century. If physical force is ever to justify itself it must be now when the enemy is at his weakest.'

'But he isn't at his weakest. So far from weakening England the war strengthens her. Her armies are five times as large as they were in peace time and she wouldn't miss the number that would be required to flatten us in a month. What forces have we? Twenty thousand men at the most, and less than two-thirds of them armed; and we haven't ammunition to last three days hard fighting. My dear Mallow, we haven't the ghost of a chance.'

'I don't believe our chance is as poor as you think, but in any case I hold that the fight itself is the thing. If we fail, we fail, but at least it can be said that we tried. We've been too long without bloodshed and in consequence the national spirit is decaying and giving way to Imperialism. We must redeem the people by sacrifice.'

'Don't you worry about the people. The present Imperial tint is only skin-deep, and it's wearing off already. Conditions aren't nearly so desperate as to need desperate remedies. If the people were really beginning to think imperially, to regard themselves as British, to regard the Union Jack as their flag, to talk of the British fleet and army as theirs, then perhaps a blood-sacrifice might be required to redeem them. But they aren't doing anything of the kind. They're getting less pro-British every day. The young men are coming into the Volunteers. The Volunteers are rapidly becoming a formidable weapon: they're steadily arming and drilling and learning to shoot: they're a fine disciplined force of the best material you could get anywhere. If we only keep on as we're going, when the war ends we'll be able to put up a stiff demand to England, well backed with bayonets and with a united

people behind us. To go into rebellion simply means the smash up of our movement and a fresh disarmament of the country, and giving the English a closer grip on us than ever. That might possibly produce a nation of ardent patriots, but I think our armed handful more useful. . . . Besides, the country doesn't want a rebellion, and a minority must assume infallibility before it can presume to commit the remainder.'

Austin Mallow was silent a moment.

'Yes,' he said at length, 'I quite see the force of your arguments. I admit that they're convincing, and I can find no answer to them. But still, I *feel* that I'm right.'

'Great Scott!' cried Stephen. 'Do you mean to say that you'd plunge us into rebellion in face of arguments you admit to be convincing, just because of some vague feeling that it might be a good thing?'

'How could I plunge you into anything against your will?' said Austin. 'I'm merely expressing my own feeling.'

'Were you?' thought Stephen, and drank some tea. He watched Mallow while he did so and noticed that his yellowish face was working with some strange excitement. His last words were evidently an attempt to lull the suspicions which he felt he had roused in Stephen, but his self-control was insufficient to make them convincing. Stephen could see that Austin was literally bursting with revelations and in a state to blurt out anything. He accordingly put on an air of obtuseness and said:

'However we may speculate in theory, the whole notion of a rebellion in these unromantic days is rather laughable, isn't it?'

Austin looking at Stephen saw only a commonplace sceptic lounging in an arm-chair, and felt that he might safely give vent to the revelations which were tearing him. Stephen looking up under lowered lids saw Austin rise, contorted like the Delphian priestess.

'Fool!' cried Austin. 'You think your cool reasoning can dispose of anything. But there are things above

reason. I've seen you laugh over my poetry: I know you laugh at me and at all poets. But we poets are often prophets: I'm a prophet.'

'Yes,' replied Stephen. 'I dare say. It must be jolly useful. What time is it?'

He had learnt as much as he wanted, and he took an early leave.

'Mallow', he said to Hector afterwards, 'is such a fool that his folly is quite as mischievous as conscious double-dealing. He needs watching. What can you do with a man who is *convinced* that he's wrong and yet *feels* that he's right?'

9

'THINGS are bucking up here under your regime,' said Crowley. 'Twenty new recruits this week, and we got sixty odd during September.'

'That's all very well,' said Bernard, 'but I can't understand why we don't do even better.'

'National purity of the Gael, my boy. He's afraid to look on Freedom in naked beauty, and likes her to be decently clothed.'

There was a heavy rat-tat at the hall-door at this moment, and presently the housekeeper came in and in an agitated voice announced that a policeman wanted to speak to Mr. Lascelles.

'Unsolicited testimonial to your organising abilities, Bernard,' said Crowley. 'Slip out by the window there and buzz off in the car. I'll blarney them for a bit.'

'I don't believe they want to arrest me', said Bernard, 'or they'd have come right in without ceremony. 'How many are there, did you say?'

'Only one, sir,' said the housekeeper. 'He's got a letter in his hand I think he wants to give you.'

'Well, show the blighter in,' said Crowley, cocking a revolver which he took from a drawer and placed in his pocket in case of necessity.

The woman withdrew and ushered in a bashfully blush-

ing young constable, who, avoiding Crowley's scornful glance, handed a long official envelope to Bernard, saying :

' Me ordhers is to deliver this into your hands.'

' Thank you,' said Bernard. ' I'm much obliged.'

The constable shuffled shyly with his feet for a moment and then awkwardly stalked out.

' Rather an unimposing instrument of tyranny,' said Crowley. ' What have we here ?'

Bernard opened the envelope and they read the enclosed document, which said that whereas Bernard Lascelles, physician, had in sundry ways promoted disaffection among His Majesty's subjects and been guilty of acts prejudicial to recruitment for His Majesty's forces in and about the town-land of Ballylangan, the competent military authorities, under the powers conferred on them by the Defence of the Realm Act, hereby ordered the said Bernard Lascelles, physician, to quit the following area, namely Ireland, within ten days of the receipt of the order, failure to obey which would involve severe penalty.

' New motto for the Party,' said Bernard. ' " Ireland an area . . . *An Area Once Again.*" What ?'

' This looks bad for you, old man,' said Crowley. ' What'll you do ?'

' Consult Headquarters when I go back to town. We've half a dozen other organisers on the road, and they'll probably all be in the same boat. . . . I wonder which is the more unpleasant life, dodging arrest or going to jail.'

' Not much to choose between them, I fancy.'

' I'm damned if I leave my country, anyway, for any blasted English general,' said Bernard . . .

When he arrived at Headquarters next day he found two other organisers who had received similar orders awaiting the decision of the Executive, which was in session upstairs, as to their course of action. Presently Umpleby, who had been organising in the south, came in.

' What ? You too ?' cried Bernard.

Umpleby ruefully produced the familiar envelope.

'I'll write to every paper in the country to denounce this tyranny,' he said.

'Will you!' said Bernard. 'Not if the Executive knows it. You'll obey orders, my son, and that won't be one of them.'

'But the world should know of this. We must have publicity, Lascelles. Never in the whole history of the tyranny of big nations over small ones, not even in 'Ninety-Eight, do we hear of such high-handed, barbarous, unrelenting . . .'

He was interrupted by the entry of Stephen, who came to communicate the decision of the Executive. The order was to be completely disregarded and organising carried on as usual.

'What about informing the Press?' asked Umpleby.

'That will be done officially,' replied Stephen.

Bernard went home in pensive mood. He felt no heroic exultation in suffering for the cause. He dreaded the prospect of jail. He suffered in advance in his imagination the discomforts, the coarseness, the vile food, the loneliness of prison life. . . . And what would Mabel say? . . .

'Bah! Let's forget it,' he said, shaking himself. 'I've ten days' freedom, anyhow. I'll make the most of them.'

'Swathythe,' he said when he reached home, 'I suppose you are aware that I'm an enemy to your country?'

'Yes, sir,' said Swathythe.

'You don't object, Swathythe?'

'No, sir.'

'It isn't against your conscience to serve me?'

'No conscience, sir. Can't afford such luxuries.' }

'Sometimes, Swathythe, you talk like Lord Goring's valet in *An Ideal Husband*.'

'Yes, sir. I always strive to model myself upon him.'

'H'm! Well, look here, Swathythe, I'm going to entrust some of my affairs to you. I've had the honour of engaging the attention of the military authorities of your

Imperial country, and the possibilities are that I shall find myself in jail very shortly.'

'I beg your pardon, sir?'

'I say, I may find myself in jail, Swathythe.'

'I'm afraid that puts a different complexion on the case, sir.'

'I thought you'd no conscience, Swathythe?'

'Quite true, sir. But I've my prospects to consider. It wouldn't do me no good, sir, to have served a gentleman as 'ad been in jail, sir—if you'll excuse me, sir.'

'Don't mention it, Swathythe. So I can't rely on you?'

'No, sir. And if you anticipate an early arrest, sir, I should be much obliged if you would make it convenient to dispense with my services as soon as possible.'

'Certainly, Swathythe. You can take yourself to the devil at once if you like. Only you'll get no wages in lieu of notice.'

'Perfectly satisfied, sir,' said Swathythe, and withdrew obsequiously.

'What will life be without Swathythe?' cried Bernard. 'Oh, Ireland, you expect too much of your sons.'

Then Mabel had to be told. She fairly broke down and cried when she heard the news, and Bernard, after some clumsy and unavailing attempts to console her, stood by helplessly waiting for the storm to subside. It was at her own home that this happened, but fortunately Mrs. Harvey was out.

'Everything seems against us,' sobbed Mabel. 'I don't believe we'll ever be married. . . . Where will you go to? How long will you have to stay away?'

'I'm not going anywhere.'

'What are you going to do then?'

'I'm just going to sit tight.'

'But . . .?'

Bernard explained. He might be forcibly deported: he might be imprisoned: he would know for certain in a few days. Mabel's grief burst forth afresh.

'Oh, Bernard, how could you! What will mother say?'

'Dash your mother,' said Bernard irritably. 'You don't think I *like* going to prison, do you?'

She was repentant in a moment.

'Don't mind me, dear. I'm horrid and selfish, I know. But oh, how I'll miss you Bernard!'

'Never mind. It can't be for ever, and we'll have a good time these next ten days, won't we?'

She smiled through her tears . . .

They made the most of his ten days' freedom. October was drawing to a close, damp and chilly, but they contrived to have at least one good walk together, and they went to many theatres and picture-houses.

'How does your mother take it?' Bernard asked once.

'She hasn't said a word,' replied Mabel.

Bernard whistled and said:

'That's ominous . . .'

He produced two pink pieces of cardboard from his pocket.

'What about a last dance together?' he said. 'Thursday may be my last day of freedom—or my last day in Ireland. Let's make it a pleasant one . . .'

'Oh, my dear!' cried Mabel. 'Why, why, why do things like this happen? . . . Is it all a nightmare?' . . .

Malone read the deportation order with grim satisfaction.

'Perhaps you'll admit now', he said, 'that the time has come to fight.'

'I don't,' said Bernard.

'Are you going to wait until all the leaders are jailed or deported, then? If you don't fight now you're disgraced.'

'We're a military movement,' said Bernard, 'and we take our orders from our officers without criticism. We're the first disciplined movement Ireland ever had.'

'I'd think more of a movement that wanted to fight,' said Malone.

ON a raw morning at the beginning of November Bernard and O'Dwyer saw Eugene off from Westland Row Station bound for the Western Front. They stood on the platform together, but they could say little. Bernard and O'Dwyer hated the cause in which he was going to fight, but Eugene was going in all good faith to fight, as he thought, for Ireland: so there was little to say.

They stamped their feet on the platform and clapped their gloved hands and exclaimed frequently:

'By Jove, it's cold!'

'Queer situation!' said O'Dwyer. 'Two Sinn Feiners seeing off a British officer. It would make an Englishman stare.'

'I suppose Englishmen think Sinn Feiners have horns and a tail,' said Bernard.

'I hope we Irish soldiers will patch up that eternal quarrel,' said Eugene. 'Bernard, I hope you aren't in for too bad a time. I hate to think of you in a prison cell in weather like this.'

'Or any weather,' laughed Bernard. 'Win a V.C. and they might reprieve me on the strength of it.'

'Not much chance of that, I'm afraid. I'm not built of very soldierly stuff.'

Indeed it was hard to imagine those mild blue eyes lit with the spirit of battle, or those soft and gentle hands dealing out death. War and Eugene seemed things incompatible.

'What a decent kindly fellow Eugene is,' thought Bernard, and regretted the smallness of their intercourse together. 'Has my neglect hurt him?' he wondered. 'How unkindly I've sometimes spoken to him,' he reflected bitterly. 'I've never concealed my thinking him a fool: and he's no fool.' He made great resolves for the future: he and Eugene were to be friends, and more than friends.

Eugene got into the railway carriage and stood leaning out of the window. The train began to move slowly.

' Good-bye, old man. Good luck ! ' said O'Dwyer.

' Good luck,' said Eugene, smiling in that grave way of his.

Bernard could say nothing on account of a choking lump in his throat. He stood gazing after Eugene's face, still lit with its kindly smile until something blurred his vision.

II

THERE was no joy in ragtime nor solace in waltzing for Bernard and Mabel when the tenth night came. Their souls were tremulous with the imminence of parting and they wanted to be alone together. Early in the evening they left the ball-room and retired to that nook where nearly a year ago they had told their love. They could say little, but sat hand in hand, whispering to one another now and again some tender phrase.

' You'll think of me in prison sometimes, dear ? '

' Sometimes, did you say ? My darling, I'll think of nothing else . . . And you ? '

' I couldn't think of you more than I do already. All day at my work you're never out of my thoughts. It's a wonder I don't type your name into the letters.'

' My dearest ! '

' And can I write to you ? '

' Not for a month . . . What a long month that will be.'

' How short these ten days have been ! '

' That month will seem like a thousand such days.'

' Perhaps they won't put you in prison. Mightn't they deport you ? '

' They might.'

' Well, if they do, I'll come over the sea and marry you.'

' Will you really ? '

' Yes.'

He kissed her then, but he did not tell her that he felt sure that prison would be his fate.

' Time seems long when you look forward,' he said, ' but

time past seems very short. We've been engaged ten months, and they've gone by like three.'

'Like a week,' said Mabel.

'There must be great days in store for Ireland. They seem a long way ahead now, but when they come we'll look back on these times and laugh. . . . What shall I be in the Republic?'

'Foreign Secretary.'

'Ah, you'd like to be holding brilliant receptions, wouldn't you? But I'd rather be Minister for Education or head of some department for town-planning.'

'How dull.'

'You'd be the chief guest at all the school prize-days in the country, or you could give grand dinners to the town-planning experts.'

'I'd rather entertain the foreign ambassadors.'

'You can go to the foreign secretary's wife's receptions. That'll be that little girl who was dancing with Felim O'Dwyer to-night.'

'What nonsense we're talking . . . Bernard, Ireland will never be free.'

'She will. And in our lifetime too, with luck.'

'It sounds so impossible. How long have we been under England?'

'Nearly seven hundred and fifty years.'

'And you still hope?'

'England was four hundred years under the Romans and people still hoped, and the end of it came at last. The Roman Empire is dead and gone, and England still lives.'

Discussion had made them temporarily forget the coming separation. Then suddenly Mabel remembered it again, and threw herself weeping into his arms.

'Our last night together,' she cried. 'My dear, can nothing be done?'

He held her and comforted her and talked more nonsense to her and made her forget again. The evening sped by, and they went downstairs and danced the last waltz to-

gether. The tune was 'Come Back to Erin', a favourite finale, to which they had danced scores of times in happier days. Now the old melody seemed brimful of all the tears ever shed in Ireland, yet with something of hope arising through it. Bernard's mood was almost exultant, and Mabel, looking up at him with tear-dimmed eyes, wondered at the expression of his face . . .

As Bernard was getting into his overcoat in the dressing-room, Molloy accosted him.

'Having a last dissipation?' he said. 'I hear that two of your colleagues were arrested this evening. One of them is a client of mine too: Umpleby.'

'We're making no defence, of course,' said Bernard.

'You'll get it all the harder for that.'

'Well, "'tis but in vain for soldiers to complain," you know. How are things with you?'

Just then O'Dwyer rushed up to Bernard and said:

'You're done, old man. Three policemen and a taxi at the door.'

'Damnation!' said Bernard. 'My G man's better than I knew. I thought I'd given him the slip.'

'Will you try and dodge them?'

'Not worth it. May as well take what's coming first as last. . . . I say, will you look after Mabel and see her home?'

O'Dwyer having promised, they went out, and found Mabel waiting in the hall. She took the news quietly and they went to the lounge together to wait for the crowd to disappear. In spite of O'Dwyer's presence she held Bernard's hand tight till the end.

Taxis hooted and whips cracked without, and the laughing throng melted away. Bernard, Mabel and O'Dwyer arose and went out. Two taxis stood by the kerb. One was that which Bernard had engaged to take Mabel home: three policemen stood by the other. One of these came forward, but stopped when Bernard said:

'It's all right. I know what you want. I'll be with you in a minute.'

He took both Mabel's hands in his and said :

'Well, au revoir, my darling.'

Instantly she threw her arms round his neck and they kissed : a long kiss : feast of desire that knows no surfeit and grows greater the more it feeds : joy ever soaring yet reaching no culmination ; yearning and satisfaction, bliss and woe, dominance and surrender, despair and triumph all compounded. Into that moment they strove to pack all the rapture of the stolen months to come. Still unsatisfied their lips reluctantly sundered. Then abruptly Bernard caught her to him again and kissed her fiercely and swiftly once. He pushed her from him after that and entered the taxi without looking back.

The policemen got in clumsily beside him.

12

'I SEE that young Bernard Lascelles has been sent to prison,' said Lady Mallaby Morchoe to Mrs. Gunby Rourke in the costume department at Switzer's.

'Really!' said Mrs. Gunby Rourke. 'Well, I'm not surprised. He's a bad lot altogether. Poor Sir Eugene!'

'What makes you think him a bad lot?' asked Lady Mallaby Morchoe.

'I'm afraid I've been indiscreet. Isn't it enough that he's been sent to prison?'

'Oh, that's for something political. What else has he done?'

'Well, between ourselves, I saw him at Antwerp some time ago in the company of a very shady-looking woman indeed.'

'Probably some German agent.'

'I shouldn't be surprised . . .'

'Have you heard about Sir Eugene Lascelles' son?' said Mrs. Bonegraft to Lady Mallaby Morchoe at the counter in Mitchell's.

'Yes. I'm sorry for his father and mother,' said Lady Mallaby Morchoe.

'I wonder what he's done?' said Mrs. Bonegraft.

Lady Mallaby Morchoe assumed a mystifying expression.

'A dark business,' she said. 'German intrigues have something to say to it, and I believe there's a woman at the bottom of it.'

'Dear me!' said Mrs. Bonegraft. 'What sort of woman?'

'A notorious adventuress, I hear, and probably in German pay. He was seen all over Antwerp with her.'

'Dear, dear!' said Mrs. Bonegraft. 'I always thought him such a nice young man.'

'Oh, I don't mind a young man sowing his wild oats, but he shouldn't betray his country in doing it . . .'

'We should take care that we don't give our young men too much liberty,' said Mrs. Bonegraft to Mrs. Metcalfe in the cooling-room of a Turkish bath. 'There's young Bernard Lascelles, as nice a young man as you could wish for, gone sowing his wild oats and disgracing himself and his family.'

'What has he done?' asked Mrs. Metcalfe.

'Oh, don't ask me. It's too awful a story. German spies and wicked women and all sorts of terrible things . . . There's some dreadful woman he associates with in Antwerp, his mistress I suppose . . .'

So the story went from mouth to mouth, and, as in the whispering game that changes 'Julius Cæsar was stabbed by Brutus' to 'The cat's in the kitchen', it reached Mrs. Moffat in a very much altered form, and a very spicy one too; and Mrs. Moffat handed it on to Mrs. Harvey.

'My poor Mabel!' said Mrs. Harvey, and dabbed a handkerchief to her eye. Her eyes were large and luminous and her lachrymal glands were very readily stimulated. 'My poor Mabel!' she repeated. 'My innocent child!'

But she congratulated herself on the acquisition of a weapon for which she had neither hoped nor sought.

CHAPTER XV

GATHERING CLOUDS

I

AS a military expert,' said Stephen to Hector O'Flaherty, 'what did you think of the manoeuvres yesterday?'

O'Flaherty smiled reminiscently and said:

'Kind of hide-and-peek stunt, wasn't it? When it was all over the Green Field-Marshal came up to me and said: "Well, umpire, who's won?" "Search me," said I. "If I'd some vague notion what the two armies were aiming at, and a sort of general idea where the blazes they'd all got to, a decision might be hazarded. But as it is . . ." He didn't like that a bit, sir.'

'He wouldn't.'

'I wonder what the hell they thought they were up to. There were about nine hundred men engaged, and they covered an area twice the size of the battle-field of Waterloo. I guess either line could have been broken by a determined billy-goat. . . . I was sorry for the rank and file. They seemed completely at sea. . . . As for the generals, it made me laugh to hear them issue their orders. You'd have thought they were Hindenburgs directing army-groups.'

'Yes. There's a kind of megalomania afflicting some of our leaders: the intoxicating effect of power, I suppose. Those two generals of yesterday would think nothing now of tackling the British Army in the field.'

'I wouldn't put it past them.'

'I'm worried about some of our Executive, that's a

fact. The old unanimity has been going from us during the last few months, and a party seems to be segregating itself from the rest of us. This party is made up of the men whose judgment and ability I've most reason to distrust: men without a sense of proportion, and some of them mentally unbalanced. . . .

'Now, if you take a movement like ours, a military revolutionary and partly secret organisation, and put at the head of it three or four men who are fools enough to think it a match for a regular army, a couple of plotters who are above being frank with their colleagues, and an unhealthy fanatic like Mallow who preaches a doctrine of blood-sacrifice—where do you think you're heading to?'

'It looks bad,' said Hector. 'But I doubt if they've the guts to do anything.'

At this moment Felim O'Dwyer entered the smoking-room wearing a look of unusual gravity.

'I've something important to tell you fellows,' he said. 'Let's go somewhere where we won't be disturbed.'

'My bedroom,' suggested Stephen, and they adjourned there at once.

'I'll begin right at the beginning,' said O'Dwyer, pacing up and down the room, while Stephen sat on the bed and Hector on a chair. 'I met Austin Mallow casually at Headquarters to-day, and he asked me to come out and lunch with him. I was rather surprised at this, because we're not particularly friendly, and then I came to the conclusion he was going to ask me about the author of that poem of mine: "A Vision in the Void of Night", you know; so I began to cast about for excuses for his non-appearance. However, Mallow said very little all through the meal: it was at the Dolphin: a good square four-course lunch, with a bottle of Burgundy. Then at the end, over coffee and cigars, he looked me straight in the face with those piercing eyes of his and said: "What do you think of the way things are going?" At once I remembered the interview he'd had with you, Stephen, so

I looked as stupid as I could and said: "What do you mean?" Then he began to talk quietly about the present policy. Did I think the arrangement to fight from our houses in case of an attempt to disarm us a good one? Didn't I think we were taking the arrest of Lascelles, Umpleby and the others rather tamely? Weren't the men getting impatient of inaction? And so on. I said very little, but gave sympathetic grunts from time to time. Then he began to get more definite, and asked me whether we were likely to get a better chance of striking than the present. I became duller still, and he became so exasperated that he gave away far more than he intended. I got nothing consecutive out of him, but by piecing things together I deduce this in brief: that there's a party on the Executive who mean to strike a blow as soon as possible; that they're in alliance with the Liberty Hall crowd; and that the date is to be about Christmas.'

'By gad, Stephen, you had sound dope,' said Hector.

'Wait though,' said O'Dwyer. 'When I'd got as much as I wanted out of him I told him I didn't approve of an insurrection, and that I was sure the majority of the Volunteers were the same. "You're wrong there," says he, "for I'm in a position to know. I must insist, however, that you regard all I've said to you as strictly confidential," which was rather like tightening the strings after you'd let the cat out of the bag. So I've come straight over here, and that's that.'

He took a chair and lit a cigarette.

'This is serious,' said Hector. 'Gad, they must be bigger fools than I thought them. An insurrection in mid-winter! Why, the weather would be enough to quell it. The English needn't fire a shot.'

'This has got to be stopped,' said Stephen. 'I'll see the sane members of the Executive after the meeting this evening and tell them your story, O'Dwyer.'

'The Insurgent Chieftains will probably try and capture the Executive at the elections next week,' remarked Hector.

'I should say, certainly,' replied Stephen. 'They wouldn't stick at a coup, but they'd like the sanction of majority rule if they could get it. . . . We must put up a ticket of sane men and canvass the country before the Convention meets. The organisers will make good canvassers and any I know are our way of thinking.'

'I'll be on the country myself, next week,' said O'Dwyer. 'I've taken on Lascelles' district.'

'Good,' said Stephen. 'The question now is: who shall we put on the ticket? There are—let's see: yes—six safe men on the Executive already. We'll put them up again and add three others. Plump for those and we get a clear majority. . . . Would you stand, O'Flaherty?'

'I don't mind,' said Hector.

'And you, O'Dwyer?'

'I'd find it easier canvassing for a ticket I wasn't on,' said O'Dwyer.

'Well, the whole crowd will have to be consulted, anyhow.' He looked at his watch, and said: 'Five o'clock. I must be off to Headquarters.'

2

BERNARD made no attempt to take his imprisonment philosophically. He chafed and fretted at his confinement, found the solitude intolerable, and could not stomach the food. Moreover he was not, like those born to Nationalism, inured to English injustice: he could not take it as a matter of course, and he lashed himself into fury by thinking of it.

When the cell door first slammed behind him he stood for a moment surveying the narrow space in which for the next four months he was to spend twenty-three hours out of every twenty-four. The cold bare walls and floor, the small barred window, the plank bed made a harsh and chilly prospect. Though the place was perfectly clean, in his imagination it was dirtied by all the foul people who had inhabited it. Suddenly his eye fell on a

book lying on a shelf near the door. He hastened to pick it up, found that it was a Bible, and threw it down again. A fit of fierce impatience seized him, and he began striding about the cell, striking his heels on the floor, head bent and hands in pockets.

By and by supper was brought to him, consisting of the usual milkless, sugarless cocoa and sour bread, but he could not bring himself to touch it, and went hungry to bed. To bed, but not to sleep, for the hardness of the plank, the pangs of hunger, and the searching cold of the November night combined to keep him awake interminable hours. Blessed oblivion came to him shortly before morning, to be rudely broken into ere it had begun to refresh him, and he rose and dressed himself, eyelids heavily drooping and teeth chattering the while, in the bleak light of a winter's dawn. They brought him skilly for breakfast, and hunger drove him to swallow the unappetising mess, but he could not retain it. Sick and miserable he sat for two hours with his head in his hands until he was cramped and numb with the cold. Then he was taken out to the exercise-yard and, along with a score of other poor creatures, set to chopping wood. Umpleby from a far corner of the yard grinned sympathy to him, and in consequence was roughly spoken to by the warder. Shivering with cold Bernard chopped and chopped, which warmed him somewhat, though it sorely blistered his hands. Then farewell to the sky and back to the cell again. . . . The librarian going his rounds tossed a book on his table. It was a Third School Reader, and Bernard flung it from him in disgust.

He fell to thinking of Mabel, and realised that for a day and a night she had scarcely entered his thoughts.

'Dear little girl, what made me forget her? Is she thinking of me now? Is she working, I wonder? No. She's gone out to lunch: a bun and a glass of milk at the D.B.C. What would she think if she knew I'd forgotten her? . . . It was too cold to think. . . . Lord, I'm hungry! What would I like now? Mutton cutlets

and potato chips, crisp and brown and piping hot. And a glass of foaming beer. . . . Damn it, I am hungry.'

Dinner came: soup and potatoes. He drank a little of the greasy slop and dissected out the healthy part of a worm-bored potato. It served but to whet his appetite. He devoured the second potato ravenously, skin, worm-holes, and all.

'Are there no better books in the prison than this?' he asked a warder, holding up the School Reader.

The warder took pity on him; said it was hard on 'the likes of him' to be in a place like that, and gave him Daniel Deronda, which had been rejected by the burglar in the neighbouring cell . . .

The days went by ever so slowly. Bernard had none of Stephen's stoicism, and patience was not in him. Moreover he was in love. So he fretted and fumed, and could not even settle down to the enjoyment of George Eliot's masterpiece. He would pace his cell backwards and forwards for hours on end, or he would sit still, lost in dreams of food, or Mabel. Sometimes a bar of sunlight would shine through his window on to the opposite wall and he would stare at it gloomily, fancying that it mocked his helplessness.

Mass brought him no consolation. Since his joining the Volunteers his religious development had been at a standstill. He had been too much occupied with immediate things to worry about the subject. At one time (a remote time it seemed now) his contempt for the loose mentality of the freethinkers he had met had inclined him to return to the Church, but her doctrines had no grip on his intellect, and he had soon relapsed into unbelief. For a while he had drifted in mere indifference. Then the magnificent music of one of Bach's Masses on a Christmas Day had recalled him again, to fall away once more after an argument over the question of eternal punishment. Thus he had wavered all these latter years, pulled one way by his emotions, the other by his intellect, and never satisfied whichever way he went. The

sacrifice of the Mass, therefore, had little inspiration for him when shorn of pomp and music, and the effect of the little ceremony in the bare gloomy prison chapel was, if anything, depressing. He was no longer able even to pray . . .

Poor Bernard was fond of the good things of life, and he was accustomed to getting them too. For all his hunger he could not stomach skilly, and the prison bread gave him indigestion. Day by day he grew thinner and weaker. He came soon to think of nothing else but food and to dream of it when he slept. The common empyreumatic dishes conjured themselves up tantalisingly before his vision. In his imagination he saw the rich brown of grills, heard the sizzling of frying-pans, smelt the savour of rashers. He would dream of feasts, and always some of the guests would be late, so that he would have to wait, hungrily eyeing the victuals. Then the late ones would arrive; he would draw out his chair to sit down; and in that instant he would awake.

Naturally of a nervous temperament, ill nourishment made him nervy. A horror of loneliness and confinement came upon him: a revival of the horror he had once endured as a small boy when a nurse had shut him up in a linen-press as a punishment for some naughtiness or other. A hysterical fear that he might be forgotten and left in his prison for ever took possession of him. He imagined himself caught here like a rat in a trap when the prison might be on fire above. He felt forsaken by all the world . . .

After a seeming eternity he realised that only ten days had passed—a twelfth part of his sentence.

'All that I've been through already over again,' he groaned, 'and again and again eleven times!'

Weeks went by, and the time came for Mabel's first letter to arrive. In the back of his Bible was the scoring made by some poor wretch of the days of his captivity (two years he had had) and Bernard used it at second hand to count the days up to the arrival of his letter.

It came at last, a short and colourless note, and a day late at that.

Dear Bernard,—

I hope you are quite well and not too lonely. It must be dreadful to be locked up in a cell this cold weather . . .

So it began, and after a few items of not very interesting news it wound up, without any expression of affection, with her initials.

Bernard was disappointed and puzzled and then hit upon an explanation.

'Silly little dear,' he said, 'she was shy of the governor seeing what she'd write.'

He wrote her a love letter, cramming all his feelings and a thousand endearments by writing microscopically into the official sheet of notepaper. At the end he wrote: '*Don't be shy of the governor. He's only a machine.*'

• Christmas Eve came. He remembered the last one so happily spent with Mabel. In his imagination he saw the glittering shop windows and the jostling crowds in Grafton Street, and heard the tinkling of tea-cups.

3

FELIM O'DWYER sat idly poking the fire in the bed-sitting-room which he inhabited in a little house on the South Circular Road. By daylight it was a horrible enough apartment, with its dingy yellow wallpaper, its faded threadbare carpet; its blackened ceiling; with its enormous battered double bed, its rickety washstand, and tawdry dust-soaked mantel-hangings; and with its grimy window looking out on a dreary yard and the back of another house. But at night with the blind drawn and the lamp lit it looked cosy enough, and O'Dwyer had added to the furniture a couple of wicker arm-chairs and a bookcase, and had covered the table with a red baize cloth.

He ceased toying with the poker and took a little notebook from one of his pockets and a pencil from another.

He chewed at the latter for about a minute and then scribbled the following lines :

It's very true, dear, that eyes of blue, dear,
And brown eyes too, dear, have charmed my sight.
But your eyes of grey, dear, my heart have made, dear,
Very much afraid, dear, that it's killed outright.

He paused here and muttered :

'Now, if I go on with that I'll probably spoil it and make it comic.'

He read the verse over to himself with approval.

'It would fit on a post-card,' he said.

He read it again.

'What an ass I am' he said.

Felim O'Dwyer was in love . . .

There was a knock at the hall-door and someone was admitted. Then the handle of his own door was turned. Swiftly he pocketed his notebook as Hector O'Flaherty and Hugo McGurk entered.

'Hello, boys! Come right in.' O'Dwyer poked up the fire to a blaze and produced cigarettes. 'What are you doing in town, Hugo?'

'Working for my final,' said McGurk.

'Lazy devil! I heard you'd got stuck again in autumn.'

'Arrah, what harm? Sure I'm young yet.'

'How are things in your part of the country, by the way?'

'Looking up a bit. They've only got two recruits for the Army in the last three months, and they corner-boys that enlisted when they were drunk. There was a recruiting meeting hissed only the other day. McGovern, the local gombeen-man, was speaking: small nationalities, Catholic Belgium, and all the rest of it: fierce ráiméis. "What would the Germans do if they came to Ballylennon?" says he. "They'd take the land off ye," says he. "They'd batten on your flesh and blood," says he. Then a fellow in the crowd called out: "Sure ye wouldn't

let 'em thresspass on *your* presairves, McGovern." You should have seen McGovern's face at that : it was a treat. He couldn't get another word in for the racket.'

'The country's coming to its senses at last,' said Hector.

'How are things going on the new Executive?' asked O'Dwyer.

'That Executive', said Hector, 'gives one furiously to think, as the French say. The party with sound dope has the majority, but the other crowd don't seem to mind. I'm sure there's things going on behind the scenes, and I don't like it. No, sir. As you know, we faced them right at the beginning with the question of fight or no fight. McNeill put the thing to us fair and square in a statement that just put the whole case against insurrection in a nutshell. I watched their faces during the reading, and what did I see there? Conviction? Not on your life. Sheer downright obstinacy. There was a sneer on Mallow's face that I could have booted him for, and Barrett was posing for a bust of Robert Emmet. When the statement was over the bold heroes got up each in turn and heartily endorsed every word of it. What more could be said? And yet it's as plain as a pikestaff that their minds are made up, and I'm as sure as death that they're working underground.'

'I'll tell you a little tale', said McGurk, 'that'll tack on to that. The other day I dropped in at Rathgar Road to have a crack with Brian Mallow. He didn't seem extra pleased to see me, and he took me up to Austin's study at the top of the house instead of the sitting-room. I was surprised, of course, but I said nothing. Anyhow, we smoked and talked for a while—a couple of hours, maybe—when brother Austin sticks his head in at the door and tells Brian he wants him for a few minutes. Brian goes out, calling to me to wait a bit and he'd be back. Well, I waited for maybe quarter of an hour, and then I remembered I'd an appointment that I'd be late for if I didn't go at once. I got up and went downstairs, and then I thought I'd look into the sitting-room and tell Brian I

was off, if he was there. Well, I opened the door, and what do you think I saw? A meeting of anarchists it looked like. There was me bould Austin sitting at one end of the table looking as cute as a leprechaun: you know the eyes of him: and Barrett and all the rest of the heroes sitting in conclave. I tell you, Hector, I got a look from the pote that fairly froze me blood, so I just banged that door and buzzed off. . . . Now, sirree, what do you think of that adventure?’

‘Hm. It looks bad, sonny.’

‘Damn it,’ said O’Dwyer, ‘it’s clear as daylight what they’re up to; only what have we to go on? What can we do? If we faced them with it they’d only give renewed assurances, I suppose.’

‘Exactly,’ said Hector. ‘They’ve answered our suspicions twice that way already.’

‘Confound it,’ said O’Dwyer. ‘These fellows call themselves democrats. What do they think elections are for if they disregard their verdict? What would they say if *we* were the minority and tried to stick *them* in the back?’

‘They used to talk about the corruption of the U.I.L.,’ said McGurk, ‘and the way the Hibs. rig elections, but sure these fellows out-do them altogether. And whatever you may say about the U.I.L. they never gambled with men’s lives.’

‘It’s an absolute betrayal of the men,’ said Hector. ‘We’ve taught them discipline for their own undoing.’

‘But what can we *do*?’ exclaimed O’Dwyer.

‘We ought to recall the Convention,’ said Hector, ‘and put the case to them fair and square. I know what that would mean. The delegates are a sensible crowd, and even those who didn’t vote for our ticket don’t want any insurrection dope. The lunacy of the movement, I’m glad to say, is confined to the Executive.’

‘Is that going to be done?’

‘I’m afraid not. I put it up to our crowd, but they didn’t think it would work—not yet, anyway. You see,

we've nothing but guess-work and suspicion to go on, and Barrett's word is as good as ours.'

'And meanwhile?'

'Meanwhile', said Hector, 'we must keep our eyes and ears wider open than ever.'

4

A WORRIED Chancellor of the British Exchequer, faced with a war-bill of some five million pounds a day, cast his eye around for economies which would help him to make ends meet, and laid hands upon the grant for the teaching of the Irish language in the schools of Ireland, thereby securing the continuance of the war for some ten or eleven minutes. The Party deputed to look after Ireland's interests in the Imperial Parliament let the robbery pass without protest, whereupon the Volunteers took the matter up, convened a public meeting in Dublin, and stepped out of the seclusion into which they had seemingly lapsed for more than a year. The Volunteers themselves were a little surprised at the size and tone of the audience which mustered at their call. The Round Room of the Mansion House was packed to the doors; the Parliamentary speakers were treated as men of no account, while the Volunteers were heartily cheered; and references to the Bill on the Statute Book, Small Nations, and the Sanctity of Treaties were invariably greeted with sarcastic laughter.

'Sure the bloody ould Empire's bust, anyhow!' shouted an interrupter in the middle of one speech.

'Begob!' said McGurk to O'Dwyer, 'we're out of the wilderness at last.'

But it was the Conscription danger that really re-established the Volunteers as a force in politics. The 'free gift' not having proved adequate to England's needs, it had been resolved to end the farce of pretending that the Irish were a free people, and to levy a forced contribution. While the Party hesitated as to a course of action, the Volunteers once more summoned the people

of Dublin to the Mansion House. The numbers of the previous meeting were doubled: a second room had to be requisitioned, and even that was inadequate. There was no superfluous reasoning or argument in the speeches: simply a reiteration of the plain statement that Irishmen did not recognise the right of the British Parliament to conscript them, and the straightforward unmistakable resolution carried by acclamation: '*We will not have Conscription.*' In their effort to serve two masters the Party leaders at Westminster made a woeful spectacle of themselves: they professed to regard the whole question as one of expediency, not of principle, and protested that Ireland was ready to accept the measure if it were proved necessary to the winning of the war—which nobody, not even themselves, believed. Their attempt to get the credit for the defeat of the measure failed lamentably, for the Irish people had once more come to realise that unyielding patriotism is a more potent argument with England than fine spun reasoning, and to regard the Irish Volunteers as the saviours of the nation.

'We've turned the corner now,' said Stephen to Hector. 'It's only a question of time before the whole people comes over to us.'

'If only our own crowd would keep their heads,' muttered Hector.

The season of spring must have an enlivening effect upon the minds of men. The spring of 1915 had seen public opinion begin to veer round in favour of the Volunteers: by the spring of 1916 a widespread feeling of respect was gradually expanding into unqualified approval. They were still a minority; still even a small minority; but they were no longer an insignificant minority. And their influence was out of all proportion to their numbers, for they were vigorous, earnest, honest, intelligent, and fearless, and, to all appearance, unanimous. Neutrals openly professed admiration for them, and many supporters of the Party looked on them with favour.

They seized an early opportunity of testing the popular

sentiment. Fresh public meetings were held to protest against the persecution of Bernard, Umpleby, and the other organisers, and roars of approval greeted the announcement that for every organiser arrested two more had been sent on the road.

'So the more they arrest,' said the speaker, 'the more they'll have to arrest. . . . Now, who stands for Ireland? Who tells England that her jails have never stifled the soul of Ireland and never will?'

The popular imagination was caught, for, though the old traditions of nationalism had lapsed, they had not died. Scores of young men rushed to enrol themselves in the Volunteers.

St. Patrick's Day gave an opportunity for an organised display of strength. A review and march-past of the Dublin Regiment were held in College Green at midday, all traffic being forcibly suspended for the occasion. On the very spot where the Volunteers who had won the independent Parliament of 1782 had held their famous review, the building that had housed that Parliament saw their descendants marshalled in the same cause. The spectacle of this well-armed, disciplined, green-uniformed army was one to appeal to the heart of the populace. Here was an Irish army: an army pledged to fight for Ireland alone and owing no allegiance but to Ireland; an army that had drilled and armed in face of discouragement and persecution; an army that had flung the gauntlet in the face of the hereditary foe by announcing that any attempt to disarm it would be resisted to the death. A gallant army and a gay army: these men had seen through the lies that had deceived the rest of the nation for so long; they had used the enemy's catchwords as a gibe against him; they had turned England's war aims into a joke; their witticisms were on every lip; they took the enemy's persecution with a laugh and went to jail jesting. And deep down in every heart was a feeling that since they were persecuted they must be in the right.

'The man in the gap!' shouted a spectator as Eoin MacNeill passed along the lines, and the epithet was enthusiastically applauded.

A war-office motor-car attempted to pass through the cordon during the course of the review. McGurk, who was in command of this particular section, stepped in front of it.

'Go back,' he said. 'You're violating Irish neutrality.'

A choleric Colonel in the back of the car angrily demanded a passage, saying he was engaged on work of national importance.

'Show me your passport signed by Eoin MacNeill,' said McGurk.

The Colonel ordered the chauffeur to proceed, but McGurk levelled a rifle at him, whereupon the Colonel cursed his impudence roundly, but deemed it prudent to retreat.

'Some demonstration of power,' remarked Hector, who had witnessed the scene, to Stephen.

'If we can only keep our lunatics in control,' said Stephen, 'we'll have all Ireland with us in six months.'

5

BERNARD'S second month in jail dragged itself slowly by. Once more he counted the days till the arrival of Mabel's letter. Once more it was a day late: two days: three. Then came a note briefer and colder than the previous one.

'So much for women's promises,' said Bernard, and wrote to her in similar vein, though not so briefly.

'What on earth is she up to?' he asked himself. 'Wish I'd insisted on her taking the visits.' The visiting time being in the midst of her working hours it had been arranged that his monthly letter should be from her and his visit from his mother.

The latter came punctual to the hour and babbled news to him. Sandy was on his way home from the Dardanelles, poor boy, terribly wounded. He had been buried by a high explosive shell and his legs had been so badly

crushed that it was doubtful if they could be saved. They had not heard from Eugene for a week. Alice had become a V.A.D. Sir Eugene would not allow Bernard's name to be mentioned in his presence. She crammed an astonishing amount of information into the allotted quarter of an hour.

So his second month ended and a third stretched itself before him. Prolonged malnutrition, added to mental worry, was beginning to have an effect on Bernard. There was a kind of fever in his veins. He slept worse and worse. After a while he could scarcely distinguish day from night, so vivid were his dreams, so semblable to nightmare his waking thoughts. In his starved condition he saw all the causes he believed in with a glorious clarity, all so right, so absolutely true, that it seemed impossible that the world should not also see them so if it would but try. Against him was a colossal stupidity, a monstrous unreason, a perverse inconsistency, with which, sleeping and waking, his fevered mind waged constant war. By day, alone in his cell, with nothing else to do but think, he held imaginary conversations with all his enemies, vanquishing them triumphantly, yet leaving them unconvinced. In his dreams, as he writhed half awake on his plank bed, fantastic caricatures of them mocked him with maddening parodies of their accustomed arguments. Argument, argument, argument! Oh, I must end this, he would resolve, turning over for the hundredth time, and desperately striving to think of something else—anything else that might distract him—but in vain.

He tackled the Redmondites:

'According to your present theory, any Diehard Unionist is a more patriotic Irishman than we Volunteers; Teddy Conroy and Fred Heuston-Harrington are true men, and Stephen and I are traitors. In fact you ought to reverse your view of history. Tone was wrong and Clare right, and the Battle of Kinsale was won, not lost. But you wouldn't dare follow your idea to its logical conclusion, or you'd have to drop it at once.'

No answer.

'What could they answer without stultifying themselves? Well, why not stultify yourselves and practise humility?'

Again no answer.

'If this were really a war for democracy and small nationalities, would the English Tories be the loudest in supporting it? . . .

'Suppose one of these Tories took this democracy and small nationalities business seriously, and opposed the war on the strength of it?' He amused himself with the thought of Tracy-Sidbotham undergoing imprisonment for an anti-recruiting speech based on these principles.

He wrestled with equal vigour with Christians and anti-Christians.

'You Christians believe Christ to be God, and his words to be divine commands. He commanded you not to be solicitous for the morrow, and to seek only the kingdom of God and his glory. Why then, when anyone pleads for an economic system not based on the motive of profit, do you call him an unpractical dreamer?'

'He commanded you to love your neighbour as yourself. Why then are you horrified at the idea of paying him as yourself?'

'He commanded you to forgive the sinner seventy times seven times; but you jail a man for years for stealing a few stones . . .'

The multifold inconsistencies of the orthodox tortured his mind more than all other problems. But the agnostics also haunted him.

'You claim to be sophisticated and to have no illusions,' he said to the wraiths of the Heuston-Harrington circle, 'and yet you believe that this war is being fought for pure principle. You claim to be broad-minded, yet you never read our side of the controversy; and you call us narrow-minded, though we read far more of your propaganda than our own. You call the Catholic Church the enemy of freedom; you call her persecution of

heretics an attack on freedom of thought and her Index an attack on freedom of speech and writing. Yet you support the British Government in its persecution of Irishmen, its censorship of their papers and its prohibitions of their meetings.

“Ah, that’s different,” I hear you say. Fools!

‘You think it tame and cowardly of Catholics to take the word of the Church for the truths of religion, yet you’d have us take the word of English politicians for the truth of the war. You scorn us for submitting to the laws of the Church, yet you’d have us submit to conscription by the English Parliament. Talk of freedom! You don’t know the meaning of the word.’

Thus the eternal wrangle went on. Argument, argument, day and night. Sometimes he would awake from such a dream in a veritable fever, and adjure himself: ‘You *must* stop arguing. Stop it, stop it, stop it, or you’ll go mad,’ and he would rise from his hard bed and pace his cell in a vain endeavour to cool his seething brain.

At other times the seeming hopelessness of all the causes he supported overwhelmed him in black despondency. His young visions had been so bright, so obviously desirable, yet nobody wanted them to materialise, and all the powers of law and order, with the full approval of all decent people, combined to crush them as if they were something odious and vile. In such moments he lost all faith in human reason. What fools men were! Ready to shed their blood in torrents over diplomatists’ quarrels, yet too sluggish even to imagine the little effort needed to make the world beautiful and happy.

‘Voice and pen are proved weaklings. We must have bloody noses and cracked crowns. When is the universal Revolution coming? Will France lead it? . . . Or Russia? . . . Why not Ireland? We are the only people who ever rose for an idea. It took hunger to make even France rise. . . . But we’re too small. Who’d follow us? Snobbishness still rules the world.

'One thing is certain. The present system is smashing itself. It cannot last for ever: it cannot last our time. . . . Will it smash the world in the process? Or will the people arise from the wreckage?'

In the intervals of this chaotic cerebration, he would return, ever and again, to wondering at Mabel's reticence. It could not possibly be due to mere shyness, he told himself. Could she have ceased to care? He refused to contemplate the thought. Her tears at leaving him, the warmth of her last kiss forbade it. But why? Why? Why? He had so looked forward to those letters. He had hoped for some of her little jokes, for endearments that he could have read over and over again, so sweetening many a weary hour. Was she destitute of imagination that she could not think of this? Did it not occur to her that her letters would be his only gleam of sunshine? And oh the coldness of those brief notes of hers, too disappointing to bear a second reading. Why? Why? Why?

She had become a part of himself and separation was gradually getting unbearable. He ached for the sight of her, hungered to touch her; and in a fever of longing the third month went by. His desire mounted higher and higher as the day for the next letter approached. It brought nothing. He waited grimly while three more days went by. The fourth brought a post-card hoping that he was very well.

6

By the end of March Ireland was beginning to awake. Recruits were pouring into the Volunteers, whole companies of Redmondite Volunteers were transferring their allegiance, country corps that had been dormant since the split were reviving, and the activity of 1913 recommenced. Recruiting meetings for the British Army found it increasingly harder to get a hearing, frequently they had to be cancelled for lack of an audience, and the number of recruits obtained was negligible.

But, while externally the position of the Volunteers became every day more secure, internally their affairs were growing more and more unsatisfactory.

'I feel as if we're sitting on a volcano,' said Stephen to O'Dwyer. 'Barrett's crowd have given us the most definite assurance possible that they don't intend to rebel, but I simply don't believe them. Mallow asked me the other day under what circumstances I'd go into rebellion. I told him that without the help of fifty thousand foreign soldiers and as many more rifles extra the thing would be suicide and disastrous to the country. "I quite agree with you," says he, but his eye couldn't deceive me. They're up to a deep game, I'm sure.'

'Why not recall the Convention?'

'I've put that to our crowd a hundred times, but they keep shirking the idea. They say we've no case to put before it, and that if we had we'd only cause a split. Well, I'd risk it, but they won't.'

'A split would be better than a rebellion, anyway.'

'They're hoping against hope that there'll be no rebellion.'

'They may give up hope,' said O'Dwyer. 'Unless we take immediate action the rebellion will be upon us before we know where we are.'

'Hello! Have you struck on a new plot?'

'No. But look at this.'

He took from his pocket a folded periodical and handed it to Stephen. It was a copy of that month's *Manannan*.

'Page four,' said O'Dwyer.

'Where have I seen this before?' mused Stephen, and read out:

'IGNIS IMMORTALIS.

Seven spears in the day of light
 Shall avenge with might our blood and tears.
 Seven seers shall in death indict
 The blast and blight of the bitter years.

It sounds familiar, somehow.'

'Mallow read it to us two years ago when we called at his house with Lascelles.'

'I remember.'

'That's a swan-song for you.'

'What does it all mean?'

'I'll explain to you. I know the tricks of the trade. The "seven spears" and the "seven seers" are the seven tricksters. The "day of light" means the day of the insurrection. The rest is obvious. And I think the fact that he composed the thing two years ago and only publishes it now means that the bust-up is close at hand.'

'Hm. Somewhat fantastic.'

'Life is more fantastic than poetry. I'll stake my neck on this. Read the second verse.'

Stephen resumed:

'Seven victims upon the altar
Shall sing a psalter of faith renewed.
The flame rekindled no more shall falter
Nor word-wise palter the multitude.'

Double Dutch to me,' he said.

'It means that they don't hope for success, but mean the whole thing as a blood-sacrifice to restore the national spirit.'

'What's wrong with the national spirit? It's coming along fine as far as I can see.'

'Poetical impatience, my boy. They like the thing done dramatically.'

'Well, Mallow and Co. are welcome to make a blood-sacrifice of themselves if they like, but I object to their playing the game on me. I'll be no bleeding corpse in a slaughtered heap for Barrett to die on.'

'Nor I. And it's a rank betrayal of the men too. They trusted us to lead them to some sort of success, not to make sanguinary object-lessons of them.'

'This'll give the English just the chance they want, to grind us back into the mud we're barely rising from.'

They could crush a rebellion in a month, dragoon the whole country, and apply conscription good and hard.'

'Good God!' said O'Dwyer. 'A hundred more years of slavery. The blind idiots!'

'After this,' said Stephen, 'you'll probably begin to share my distrust of poets and poetry.'

'I've more than poetry to go on,' replied O'Dwyer. 'I was down at Ballylangan yesterday and Crowley showed me a document he'd just received from Headquarters—contingent orders in the event of military action being decided on.'

'No such orders have been issued from Headquarters.'

'I thought as much. These were signed "*Austin Mallow, By Order of the Executive.*"'

'Positive evidence at last. Get me a copy of that and I'll face them with it on Wednesday.'

'The impudence of them!' said O'Dwyer. 'Who knows but we'll find our own names some day fixed to an order for insurrection? I must write to Crowley.'

7

WHEN Bernard emerged from jail he was in such a state of pent-up passion and curiosity that he would have rushed instantly to Mabel's house had not his mother met him at the gate in a taxi and taken him home with her.

'What'll the governor say?' he asked, after he had been given a long hug and kiss.

'He won't see you. He says you've disgraced his name for ever.'

'For ever is a long time,' said Bernard.

'My darling boy, how thin you've got!' His mother took him by the chin and looked at him anxiously.

'I could do with a feed. How's Sandy?'

Sorrow darkened his mother's face.

'Oh, the poor boy! Crippled for life. Just think of it. Both his legs. He'll never walk again.' And she burst into tears.

When they reached Merrion Square, Bernard found Sandy lying on a sofa by the back drawing-room window, with the sunlight falling on him, a ghost of his former self.

'A nice crock, amn't I?' he said, with a wry smile.

Bernard could not trust himself to speak, but pressed his brother's hand.

'Oh, damn the whole world' he said presently.

A moment later a meal was brought in. Lady Lascelles, by some instinct, had provided exactly what Bernard wanted. There was a huge dish of bacon and eggs and sausages, steaming hot, together with coffee, toast, muffins, and jam, and in a couple of seconds he was stuffing himself ravenously.

'By gad, you can put a meal away' said Sandy admiringly. 'Did they starve you, old chap?'

'Damn nearly,' said Bernard, his mouth full. 'This kind of meal has haunted my dreams for months.'

When his hunger was satisfied he filled and lit his pipe.

'How goes the war for truth and freedom and Christianity?' he asked presently.

'Oh, dry up,' said Sandy. 'I didn't go out for the sob-stuff. I went out for fun. Like a damned fool. And see what I've got for it. I'll never be any use for anything any more.'

'They say that modern artificial limbs are almost as good as your own,' Bernard suggested.

'Not when you've got to wear a pair of them. Good God, what a damn fool I've been. To have to spend the whole of my life like this. Fifty years, perhaps. Or sixty. Or seventy. You'll never wear out if you don't move about. It's enough to drive a man mad. I wake sometimes in the night and the first thing I remember is that I've lost my legs.'

'There are thousands in the same fix,' said Bernard. 'We're manufacturing cripples every minute of the day. But don't think of it, old chap. The years must come, and one must make the best of them.'

'Cold comfort,' said Sandy. 'However, I've only

myself to blame. By the way, if you've quite finished feeding, the mater wants to see you in her room.'

'What for?'

'Go and see.'

He went upstairs and found his mother in her room. She had changed into a black dress.

'I've something to tell you, Bernard,' she began, but Bernard had already guessed what it was.

'Eugene?' he said, and she nodded.

'Dead?'

'He was killed in a trench-raid soon after Christmas. . . . I thought it better not to tell you in prison . . .'

Bernard was neither shocked nor very much grieved, for the news was only to be expected and he and Eugene had never been very intimate. He suffered, however, what was perhaps a more trying emotion: remorse. As on the day when they had parted, he realised poignantly how snappish and unkind he had often been to his brother, and how impatient of his harmless shortcomings. Poor Eugene, what a gentle, kindly fellow he was: how soft and woman-like the touch of his hand: how serene and winsome his smile. It was a cruel fate that sent him who had never spoken an unkind word, who had never given pain to man or beast, who should have been a loving husband and father, out to that bloody shambles in Flanders. What unmitigated horror must the war have held for this sensitive soul. Bernard could picture the last cruel scene: the surprise attack by night: the grey-coated raiders pouring into the trench: the short sharp struggle; Eugene, wincing from violence and hesitating to strike, ripped with a bayonet and left to die in agony. And now all that he had known of his brother lay rotting in a nameless grave. For what? . . .

Dry-eyed, but with his soul plunged in gloom, Bernard took an early leave of his mother and Sandy, and hastened to his flat in Harcourt Street. He found there a heap of letters, including three from Willoughby and one from Eugene written the day before his death: a gay yet wistful

document the reading of which brought tears to Bernard's eyes. He almost fancied he could hear the dead voice speaking the written words . . .

In due course he went to meet Mabel at the office where she worked, but having waited fruitlessly for ten minutes after all the other girls had passed out he hurried over to her home, puzzled and apprehensive. The maid-of-all-work admitted him.

'Is Miss Mabel in?'

'No, sir.'

'Mrs. Harvey, then?'

'Yes, sir.'

She showed him into the sitting-room, where he had to wait five infuriating minutes before Mrs. Harvey deigned to come down. The moment she appeared he blurted out:

'Where's Mabel?'

Exasperatingly placid, Mrs. Harvey deposited her jelly-like bulk in an arm-chair, serenely arranging the sit of her dress before replying.

'I didn't quite catch your remark,' she said in a casual tone. 'Would you mind closing the door?'

Bernard slammed it with a movement of his foot, and demanded again:

'Where's Mabel?'

'I'm not sure that it isn't an impertinent question, but she's gone out for a walk,—with her fiancé.'

'With her *what*?'

'Her fiancé.'

'But I'm her fiancé.'

'Nonsense, my dear boy. That engagement wasn't serious. A mere boy-and-girl affair I always regarded it. It was clearly understood that she was at liberty to change her mind if someone who could support a wife made her an offer.'

'I never understood that. I was perfectly serious.'

'If you were, I'm afraid I saw no sign of it. A young man who is really in earnest works hard at his profession

and doesn't waste time over politics and such-like nonsense. I remember giving you some such advice myself when you first came to ask my approval. Well, you were too high and mighty to listen, and must needs go gallivanting round the country organising sedition and landing yourself in prison. I don't think that shows much consideration for my daughter.'

Bernard heard this speech with amazement. He had not yet fully realised the situation.

'You—you're not fair to me,' he stammered.

Mrs. Harvey shrugged her shoulders.

'I have my daughter's interests to consider,' she said.

'You've set her against me,' cried Bernard angrily.

'I don't believe she'd have given me up of her own accord. She never said a word about it in her letters.'

'No doubt she thought you had enough to worry you already.'

'Well, I won't believe she's ceased to care for me till I've heard it from her own lips.'

'You may believe it or not as you like. She's to be married in a fortnight.'

Bernard was completely staggered.

'Married?' he gasped.

'Yes. They're to be married very quietly,' said Mrs. Harvey imperturbably. 'Captain Musgrave's leave is nearly over and he has to return to India . . .'

'Captain Musgrave?' said Bernard.

'My future son-in-law. A charming man, Bernard, and very well off. A member of a good old English family. Probably you know him? He was educated at Ashbury.'

A horrible recollection shot through Bernard's mind: a scene of his first days at school that had been indelibly printed in his memory.

'Stanley Musgrave?' he asked.

'Yes.'

'My God!' exclaimed Bernard.

'I beg your pardon?' said Mrs. Harvey.

'Nothing,' said Bernard.

'Have you any further questions?' said Mrs. Harvey.

Bernard turned and left the room. In the hall he nearly collided with Molly.

'Hello, Bernard' she cried. Then she saw his face. 'I say, I'm sorry about Mabel,' she said. 'It's jolly rotten of her. However, I'd forget it if I were you. If you saw the thing she's chosen the shock to your vanity would cure your heartache.'

Bernard found himself unable to answer. Molly pressed his hand sympathetically and let him out without further speech.

Heedless of his direction he strode rapidly through the streets, his mind a chaos of wonder, jealousy, anger, grief, and humiliation. A shower of rain fell presently, but he scarcely heeded it. Not till he was drenched through did he think of turning home. It was nearly dawn before he slept.

8

HE wrote to Mabel insisting on seeing her once alone. She complied, appointing an hour and a certain place in Stephen's Green. They exchanged not a word when they met, and Bernard led the way to a secluded seat. They sat down and remained silent for a few minutes, Bernard drawing lines in the gravel with his walking-stick, and Mabel fidgeting with her glove. All around them were the signs of another spring: budding trees, chirping birds, ducks quacking on the pond, the sun blazing out at intervals when the clouds permitted . . .

'What's the meaning of it all?' said Bernard at length.

She could not answer for a while. The reasons that had urged her seemed now so small and mean. Of course her mother was at the bottom of it. Bernard had been only a week in jail when she had begun to drop stray morsels of Mrs. Moffat's revelations in Mabel's way. A little later Mrs. Moffat herself was brought on the scene. Mabel had flounced out of the room at the first word, but the germ of doubt had found its entry. Mrs. Harvey's

subtle methods of work after that defy analysis. She hinted that Bernard's preoccupation with politics spoke badly for his affections; she repeated her forebodings about his financial prospects; she dwelt on the social stigma involved in imprisonment. She did it all so lightly and casually that no purpose could be discerned behind it . . . Then Captain Musgrave began to appear more frequently. He had been introduced to Mrs. Harvey some time before by a friend of former days, and had been one of those stray guests whose entertainment had fallen to Mabel, of which she had complained to Bernard on a bygone day in Cloughaneely. It was at this stage that her first letter to Bernard became due, and, in jealous anger against the past she suspected, she wrote the brief cold note which had so puzzled him. His answering love-letter mollified her feelings but slightly, and she allowed herself, half out of a desire to be revenged on Bernard, half out of natural coquetry, to enjoy Musgrave's advances and even faintly to reciprocate. At this point her mother slipped in a hint of Musgrave's wealth and position, and one day, with that conscious tact which is the height of tactlessness, withdrew from the sitting-room in the very middle of afternoon tea in order to leave them alone together. Subsequently the Captain was allowed to take the whole family to the theatre; Mabel was given the seat next to him; and in the interval Mrs. Harvey's ever-ready tact sent them out alone to the buffet for coffee. Mabel was in such an undecided frame of mind at the end of another month that she scribbled off an even shorter note than the previous one to Bernard, and then took offence at his reply. She began to look kindly on Musgrave now: in her innocence of men and the world (she had, of course, like all Catholic girls, been educated at a convent) she mistook for love and kindness what was only half-veiled sensuality, and favourably compared his considerate devotion with Bernard's off-hand comradeship. Bernard had sometimes found it necessary to control his honest passion with an enforced frigidity that

made innocent Mabel doubt his ardour : Musgrave having never in his life controlled his desires, was actuated by no straining spirit made violent by repression, but exuded a kind of sensual benevolence that looked for stimulation. Mabel began to look to him as a lover with pleasurable anticipation. He proposed to her in the middle of the third month, and, after consulting with her mother, she accepted him the following day. Mrs. Harvey valued the engagement-ring at a hundred and fifty pounds . . .

And now Mabel had to explain all this to Bernard. She could not bring herself to mention Mrs. Moffat's scandalous stories : looking at his face she found she could not believe them any longer, and her modesty would not have permitted her to discuss such a subject in any case. She put her excuse before him brokenly :

'I thought perhaps . . . you didn't seem to love me as much as at first . . . I thought you were getting tired of me . . .'

'Mabel, how could you imagine such a thing? Did I give any sign of it?'

'You—you wouldn't work at your profession . . . You didn't seem in any hurry to get married . . . You went on with your writing and drilling while I was slaving away in that horrid old office . . . Bernard, you don't know how tired I was of that work . . . so dull and monotonous . . . never any fresh air . . . hardly any holidays . . . a long scramble . . . I couldn't have borne it any longer, Bernard. I looked to you to take me out of it, and I hoped for such happiness with you. And you didn't seem to care, so long as you had your politics . . . And then my home, Bernard. The perpetual saving and scraping . . . the counting of pennies . . . the three of us sleeping in one stuffy little room so as to have more space for lodgers . . . Mother always at us for extravagance if we bought ourselves chocolates or kept the light on at night to read . . . It was bad enough before the war, but now—Bernard, I couldn't bear it any more. It was killing me . . . Don't think too badly of me, dear. I

. . . I felt I was wearing out. You wouldn't be able to marry me for another two years perhaps . . . And you mightn't have cared for me then . . .'

She paused. Bernard remained silent, savagely digging at the ground with the end of his stick. A sparrow chirped monotonously in the plane-tree overhead.

'So it comes to this,' said Bernard hoarsely, 'that you've sold yourself . . . Sold yourself. And without the excuse of necessity for which less fortunate women sell themselves. You've sold yourself for luxuries: for theatres and satin dresses. . . . My God, aren't your body and soul more value to you than that? . . . And to throw me aside who love you for a beast like Musgrave!'

'Don't say that,' said Mabel. 'He's very kind.'

'Kind!' Horrible pictures passed before Bernard's mind. So Musgrave was kind? He could imagine the form his kindness took, and shuddered. In that moment the divinity slipped away from Mabel before his eyes, and she became as something soiled. He had never realised before that women are human: that good women have passions like good men. The thought of his Mabel, his innocent joyous Mabel, yielding to a sensual impulse horrified him.

There was a long and painful silence. They had ceased even to fidget, and looked into one another's eyes.

'Well,' said Bernard at length, 'I suppose there's nothing more to be said.'

Mabel tried to speak, but the words refused to come. Bernard rose.

'Good-bye,' he jerked out; hesitated a moment; then turned on his heel and strode away down the path . . .

Mabel remained in motionless reverie for the best part of an hour, and then wearily walked home.

Bernard would not have had her now if he could: she was spoilt for him for ever by the kiss of Musgrave.

'The thought of it! Ugh! The swine! The sensual lecherous beast! He holds her with those flabby groping

hands of his and kisses her—my God!—kisses her with that abominable mouth. Oh, the pollution of it! A nymph yielding to a satyr!

In his madness he passed his own door unheeding and walked half the way to Dolphin's Barn.

'Vampire!' he cried in his heart. 'Why couldn't he leave my little girl alone and stick to his harlots and pleasure-girls? Flogging a jaded appetite, I suppose.'

Immersed all his life in ideas he knew but little of humanity: did not know that licentiousness hankers after innocence . . . Discovering where he was he turned back and made for home. He passed it once more before entering.

He poured out some whisky. Then:

'No. That's a fool's game,' he said. 'Only drink when you're happy, or you spoil both yourself and the drink.'

The morning paper was on the table and he picked it up. Idly turning the pages his eye fell on a heading in the correspondence column:

THE HORROR OF JAILS.

Letter from Mr. Cyril Umpleby.

In the most fluent journalese Mr. Umpleby dissertated on the soul agony he had endured in the inartistic surroundings of Mountjoy. It was a heartrending picture, and it made Bernard laugh.

'Vain little beast,' he said, and read the whole newspaper through, advertisements and all, forgetting Mabel in the process.

But he hungered for her still. He sought exhaustion in long walks, and so secured sleep, but she haunted his dreams. He dreamed once that the Musgrave episode had been a dream, and that on emerging from jail he beheld Mabel waiting for him at the gate. She smiled at him as she had been wont to do; he advanced to take her in his arms; but in the midst of the ineffable joy of her kiss he awoke, his sorrow and disappointment all the more intensi-

fied . . . He could take no food, though his sorely tried body clamoured for it. He could barely summon up the energy to dress himself in the morning ; he put on whatever came handy and let his hair go wild ; one night after a long walk he flung himself down on the outside of his bed and fell asleep in his clothes. He became utterly careless of life.

He shirked meeting his friends. On several occasions O'Dwyer, Hector, and Stephen called, but they always found him from home. Stephen left a note once saying that he wished to speak to him about some new developments in the political situation, but Bernard paid no attention. On another occasion they met in the street, but Bernard was distraught, and after a few commonplaces they separated.

'I met Lascelles to-day,' said Stephen to Hector. 'He was looking ghastly. I never imagined jail could have such an effect on a man.'

'It's more than jail that's playing the deuce with Bernard,' said Hector. 'Haven't you heard that he was shook by that girl he was engaged to?'

'Surely that wouldn't do it!' said Stephen.

Passers-by in the street used to stare at Bernard's pale hollow cheeks and blazing eyes. He came near to a breakdown, but then Nature reasserted herself and sheer hunger drove him to eat. He began to mend physically after that, but it was a long time before his melancholy grew any less. From the midst of his own gloom he looked forth distastefully on the movements of a spring-enlivened world.

He had a last glimpse of Mabel two days before her marriage. He had gone for a stroll by himself in the Phoenix Park and was walking along a narrow unfrequented path, admiring the budding trees and bitterly wishing for one to share his admiration, when she came round a corner beside a khaki-clad figure. Bernard's heart stopped still for a moment and then began beating furiously. Mabel's face went first white and then red.

Bernard looked at his rival. Musgrave at thirty was, in appearance at any rate, an improvement on Musgrave at seventeen. Military training had eliminated some of the grossness of his figure, straightened his back, and smartened his slouching gait. He wore a moustache, which to some extent disguised the sensuality of the lips that had slobbered at Bernard in the dark lobby thirteen years before. He smiled sheepishly at Bernard, whom he evidently recognised. Bernard mechanically raised his hat. Musgrave saluted. They passed each other by and went out of each other's lives . . .

Next day he received a letter from Janet Morecambe. She had recently heard of his arrest, and she wrote to congratulate him on having found himself at last and to express a hope that his confinement had done him no harm. Bernard sat staring at the letter and then violently apostrophised himself :

' You damned fool ! You shallow sensual idiot ! You might have had her for the asking and you rejected her. You deserve everything you've got.'

He read the letter through over and over again, and then carefully placed it in his breast pocket.

9

' BAFFLED again,' said Stephen to O'Dwyer in his room at the Neptune. ' Mallow took that Order without turning a hair. " I understood ", says he, as cool as a cucumber, " that it was unnecessary for Directors to submit the routine work of their departments to the Executive." " There was nothing routine about this," said I. " Excuse me," said he, " but if you will examine the orders closely you will see that they are entirely contingent upon general orders, and that they deal only with demolitions, which is my particular department." Well, the Executive accepted the explanation, and said it mustn't occur again. So of course they'll take care never to get found out again. They'll send no more orders to Crowley.'

'Do you know', said O'Dwyer, 'if their party supplies the knaves on the Executive, ours supplies the fools. I feel very uneasy about things . . . I wish we had Lascelles with us again. He has very sound ideas to hand out as a rule, and it would distract him from worrying about that woman. She was married a few days ago, by the way, to a damned Englishman. May his skin be tanned and made into slippers for the Kaiser.'

'McGurk and O'Flaherty have gone to fetch him over here to tea, if they can find him. But he's generally out. How's your own little affair progressing?'

'Not so bad. I took her to the pictures yesterday. I wonder could I dare ask her to come to the D'Oyly Carte Operas in Easter Week.'

'I'm afraid I'm not an expert in those matters, but why not try? She can only refuse.'

'Yes, but a refusal's such a blow. It seems to discount all the favourable omens for weeks before it.'

'Well, faint heart never won fair lady, you know.'

They descended to the coffee-room and sat down to a plenteous, if inelegant, meal of tea, bread and butter, boiled eggs, jam, and cake. They had only just set to when Hector, McGurk, and Bernard arrived.

'Hello, O'Dwyer!' cried McGurk. 'How's the form?'

'And the fair Gladys?' added Hector.

O'Dwyer blushed and said she was quite well.

'Sit down, Bernard,' said McGurk. 'Tea'll be up in a minute. Ye won't scorn a humble tea, you that's used to dining late, will ye?'

Bernard protested his entire delight with the arrangement, and the new-comers drew up their chairs as the meal was served in.

'Holy murder!' exclaimed McGurk. 'Ye put no sugar in me tea, Stephen.'

'I put your whole ration in,' said Stephen. 'You can have some more if you don't want a second cup.'

'Well, to hell with the war!' said McGurk. 'Hector,

you rotten false prophet, how long more are the Germans going to spend taking Verdun ?'

'I don't know,' said Hector gloomily. 'They've made a bungle somewhere, I'm afraid.'

'Poor old Ireland !' said McGurk. 'The fates are agin her.'

'They tell me you're qualified at last, Hugo,' said Bernard. 'When are you going to start practice ?'

'Arrah, what are ye talking about ? Haven't I done enough for one year ? Say, boys, I've been and gone and got me exam., and this fella wants me to go and *practise* !' He took a slice of bread-and-butter, plastered it thickly with jam, bit off a huge mouthful, and turned to O'Dwyer.

'Been writing any pothry lately ?' he asked.

O'Dwyer shook his head.

'Felim has been better employed,' suggested Hector.

'I always thought courting was an incentive to pothry,' said McGurk.

'Not to the kind of poetry you like, Hugo,' said O'Dwyer.

McGurk burst out laughing and said :

'Janey Mack, he's been writing love pomes.'

O'Dwyer blushed red, and Stephen intervened on his behalf.

'Hold your tongue, Hugo,' he said. 'Pass the cake, Hector.'

'This is a punk cake,' said Hector, vainly attempting to cut it without breaking it up. 'Say, boys, we'll have to put a stop to the war.'

Gathering afterwards in the smoke-room, where there happened to be no other guests, they discussed the political situation. Recent developments were disclosed to Bernard, who received them with incredulity. He was not, like the others, personally acquainted with the leaders of the movement, but he had always felt sure that they were reliable, since their down-trodden cause could make no appeal to men who were not patriotic, unselfish, and

honourable. Mallow being diseased, he left out of account.

'Do you mean to say that these men that we've trusted would drag us into an insane rebellion by trickery?' he exclaimed at last.

'Every word I've told you is God's truth,' said Stephen.

'The meanness and treachery of it!' said Bernard. 'I wouldn't have believed it of them . . . But what are you doing to stop them?'

'That's what's so hard to decide. They've repeatedly sworn that there's nothing on foot, and they've explained away any positive evidence we've produced. If we recalled the Convention, the only evidence we could put before it would be our recollections of certain conversations, the order sent to Crowley, and a poem of Austin Mallow's. We'd simply be laughed at.'

'Perhaps you're alarming yourselves unnecessarily,' said Bernard. 'If your case is so very unconvincing how does it convince yourselves?'

'It's not a case where one can take any risks,' said Stephen.

'Mallow's eyes glaring across the table at the Dolphin were convincing enough for me,' said O'Dwyer.

'It's the devil of a puzzle,' said Bernard. 'What *good* do they expect from a rebellion?'

Stephen explained.

'I'm all at sea,' said Bernard. 'It's a hopeless muddle. I suppose we'll just have to keep our eyes skinned in the hope of hitting on a piece of evidence that'll appeal to the Convention.'

'If you ask my advice,' said McGurk, 'I'd say: "Take no risks. Poison their tea and have done with the whole job."''

10

TOWARDS the middle of April Willoughby came to spend the last three days of a fortnight's leave with Bernard. The latter was now looking more like his old self again,

but his friend was shocked at the change in his appearance.

'This damned Prussianism!' he exclaimed.

'Why do you call it Prussianism?' asked Bernard. 'I call it Britishism.'

'Irreconcilable still,' laughed Willoughby.

'Don't let's talk politics,' said Bernard. 'I'm about fed up with things in general, and it does me good to see you.'

They had a pleasant holiday together. Bernard showed his friend around the city and motored him out to some of his favourite haunts in the surrounding country. He also gave a lunch in his honour at Jammet's, to which he invited O'Dwyer, Hector, and Stephen—'just to let you see what extremists are like,' he explained lightly. Willoughby, of course, remembered O'Dwyer at Ashbury. He was somewhat mystified by Stephen, and he gave most of his attention to Hector, who made the best of such an opportunity to learn at first-hand about the war.

In the evenings Bernard and Willoughby sat over the fire chatting about old times and recalling old dreams they had once held in common. They talked of the dead: of Eugene and Murray.

'I got some nice letters of condolence from Ashbury after Eugene's death. Father Wallhead told me he was one of those Irishmen who had died to make England great, and there were others nearly as bad. The Chronicle said he had died as an Englishman should.'

'Lack of imagination I'm afraid is characteristic of our people,' said Willoughby. 'It looks as if it's gradually losing us the friendship of Ireland.'

'You had Ireland as an ally, much to my disgust, at the beginning of the war, but that didn't content you. You must have her as a subject or not at all, so it looks as if you're going to lose her altogether.'

'The average Englishman can't conceive of the Irish as distinct allies. He can only conceive of them as rebels and traitors on the one hand, or else as ceasing to be Irish and becoming British.'

'Exactly,' said Bernard. 'That's why alliance between us is impossible. What have we in common? Oh, Willoughby, when will you and the decent crowd in England step in and stop this perpetual waste of Ireland? How long is our genius going to be stifled under your dead weight? Look at my friends. Look at O'Flaherty, condemned to play at soldiering when in any other country he'd be a great strategist. Look at O'Dwyer, who in any other country would be writing novels and plays, wearing his soul out with useless hatred. Look at Ward, a philosophic statesman, condemned to hold a second-rate position in an insignificant faction. Look at myself, wasted and wearing out like the rest. Why the devil do you let Sherringham and Tracy-Sidbotham decide our destinies?'

Willoughby had no answer, and Bernard dropped the subject to talk of other things.

'How's your sister-in-law?' he asked later. Somehow he found a difficulty about uttering her name.

'Janet? Oh, she's quite well. She's working in a home for blinded soldiers at present.'

The days slipped by all too rapidly. The third night they sat up over whiskey and pipes till quite late in spite of the early train Willoughby had to catch.

'If all the men who love Irish whiskey loved Ireland she'd be free to-morrow,' said Willoughby. 'Here's Erin go brar! The land of good drink and sound logic.'

Bernard switched off the light and watched the fire-glow playing on Willoughby's honest rugged features as he told tales of the trenches: tales of horror and humour; tales of sublime heroism and bestial cruelty; tales of the endurance and self-sacrifice of common men. Willoughby's eyes and voice expressed far better than his halting and limited words the love and admiration he felt for the little Cockney warriors he commanded.

'By Jove,' he said, 'if you saw them in action! Brave as lions, Bernard . . . No, that's a silly phrase of poets and journalists and means nothing. Terriers fits them

better . . . And then when it's all over, their kindness to one another. I've seen a foul-mouthed little beast tending a wounded comrade as gently as a woman . . . And they take everything so philosophically, and joke through it all. My little counter-jumpers and costers are made of better stuff than the old knight errants, I tell you. . . . No. They've no hatred of the Germans, in spite of all the newspapers. They're decent cynical little beggars . . .

'I wish our nations could be friends, Bernard. We could be, too, if only the people had their way. It's men's natural instinct to be friends, after all. Why, I've known kindly feelings to cross No Man's Land from trench to trench . . . What are we killing one another for? . . .'

Willoughby looked up and saw Bernard's gaze fixed intently upon him. He laughed uneasily. There was deep affection between these two men, but Willoughby's English stolidity and Bernard's Irish shyness forbade the expression of it. Bernard, however, with a foreboding of disaster in his mind, was accumulating memories. They sat in silence until the fire died down . . .

Bernard saw his friend off from Kingstown next morning, where they parted on the deck of the steamer with a handclasp and a 'Good-bye and good luck'. So Willoughby went his way, to be blasted out of existence a few days later upon a field in Picardy . . .

The news reached Bernard almost at once, and of the three blows which struck him in so short a space this was the hardest. Eugene's loss had filled him with remorse; thwarted desire had lacerated him on Mabel's defection; but Willoughby's death left him stunned with a deep and abiding sorrow.

II

NOBODY—least of all those who knew them best—understood why Mr. Leeds and Mr. Conachy were such friends; for Leeds was a fanatical and ignorant Republican, while Conachy was a very moderate Home Ruler; Leeds was

loud-voiced and ill-educated, Conachy intellectual and refined; and finally Leeds had been at tremendous pains to find a Gaelic transmogrification of his appalling surname, while Conachy was acutely ashamed of the blatant Gaelicism of his. There was, however, one link between them, and that was that neither ever felt it incumbent upon him to act up to his opinions. Conachy had never taken Mr. Redmond's advice to join the British Army, and Leeds was not a member of the Irish Volunteers.

On Wednesday the nineteenth of April at five o'clock in the afternoon these two were having coffee in the Café Cairo, and discussing a handbill which had been given to them before entering. At numerous other tables the same handbill was the subject of excited conversation.

'*Secret orders issued to military,*' read Conachy. 'I wonder what on earth it means.'

'It means another plot by this bloody Gover'ment to down th' Irish people,' pronounced Leeds.

'By Jove, there's that fierce rebel O'Dwyer over there!,' said Conachy. 'Perhaps he can explain it.'

'Rebel, didja say?' said Leeds contemptuously. 'The man's a bloody West-Briton. Did jever hear th' accent of um? And he thinks Shakespeare a greater pote than Davis.'

Conachy paid no attention to this harangue, but waved his hand to O'Dwyer, who was sitting alone at another table waiting to be served.

'Won't you sit down with us?' said Conachy as O'Dwyer approached. 'We want your opinion of this secret order.'

'What secret order?' asked O'Dwyer.

'Haven't you seen it? It's issued as a handbill from your Headquarters.'

'I'm only just back from organising in the country,' said O'Dwyer.

'Well, what do you make of that?' said Conachy, and handed over the document.

O'Dwyer took it and read it over, with knitted brows.

“The following precautionary measures have been sanctioned by the Irish Office on the recommendation of the General Officer Commanding the Forces in Ireland.” Hm. “All preparations will be made to put these measures in force immediately on receipt of an Order issued from the Chief Secretary’s Office.” Hm. “First, the following persons to be placed under arrest: All members of the Sinn Fein National Council, the Central Executive Irish Sinn Fein Volunteers, Executive Committee National Volunteers.” Hello! This is getting interesting. “Coisde Gnotha Committee Gaelic League.” By Jove! “See list A 3 and 4 and supplementary list A 2.” I wonder what A 1 contains, and why should A 2 be supplementary to 3 and 4 . . . However! “Police will be confined to barracks.” Hm. “An order will be issued to inhabitants of city to remain in their houses.” Devilish exciting! “Pickets will be placed at all points marked on maps 3 and 4. Accompanying mounted patrols will continuously visit all points and report every hour.” What sort of donkey drew up this, I wonder? “The following premises will be occupied by adequate forces.” Hm. Adequate forces?’

He went on reading intently in silence.

‘Well, what do you make of it?’ asked Conachy, but O’Dwyer paid no heed.

An attendant brought O’Dwyer coffee and biscuits.

‘What? No sugar?’ he exclaimed. ‘You might bring me some saccharine.’

‘It’ll make syrup of your coffee,’ said Conachy.

There was a cry of ‘Stop Press’ in the street outside, whereupon Leeds rushed out and presently returned with a paper.

‘The military say it’s all a fabrication,’ he announced. ‘Just what they *would* say.’

‘They happen to be telling the truth this time,’ said O’Dwyer.

‘What!’ cried Leeds. ‘Wouldja take the word of the garrison against the word of yer own Executive?’

'I take nobody's word for anything,' replied O'Dwyer calmly. 'I'm going by internal evidence.'

'The Higher Criticism,' said Conachy. 'But who's the fabricator?'

'I reserve my opinion on that point, but you may take it from me no pogrom is intended.'

'Well, you're a nice sort o' Volunteer,' said Leeds.

'Doubtless,' said O'Dwyer. 'Well, Conachy, I'm afraid I must rush away . . . Oh damn!' This exclamation was caused by his having tried to drink off his coffee and scalded himself in the process. He caught up his hat and vanished.

'Well, I'm jiggered,' said Conachy. 'He's grabbed the handbill.'

O'Dwyer hurried down Grafton Street, caught a north-going tram at College Green, and arrived in ten minutes at the Neptune Hotel in a state of breathless excitement. Stephen was out, but he found Hector and McGurk waiting for tea in the coffee-room, and dragged them, in spite of their protests, up to the former's bedroom.

'Where did the original of that order come from?' he asked at once.

'From the secret service,' said Hector.

'Who runs the secret service?'

'Chap called Moran.'

'Is he one of the wild men?'

'He's rather a dark horse as far as I know, but he's a personal friend of Austin Mallow's.'

'That's done it then.'

'Why? What's up?'

'Couldn't you see that the whole thing's a forgery?'

'It seems all right to me.'

'Good Lord, Hector, you're a soldier, and yet you think that document was drawn up by a military man! I'm ashamed of you. Look here. Read the thing.'

He thrust the paper into Hector's hand.

'I served in the O.T.C. at school,' he went on, 'so I know how orders are drafted. That's no military order.'

It applies to no one in particular. In what earthly way could anyone obey the thing? You know how explicit military orders are. Now look at that. "Pickets will be placed . . . Patrols will report . . . Adequate forces will occupy . . ." Delightfully vague, isn't it. It's intended for the public, not for soldiers, and it's been drawn up, not by a soldier, but by a civilian with a smattering of military knowledge.'

'Glory be!' exclaimed McGurk.

'You're damn well right, O'Dwyer,' said Hector.

'What a set of mugs we've been.'

'The thing's a forgery on the face of it,' said O'Dwyer.

'Look at all these lists and maps they refer to: A 3 and 4, and no A 1. Maps 3 and 4, and no 1 and 2. That shows your amateur forger trying to be too clever. Then do you notice the list of premises to be seized? All the Volunteer premises are marked by name and number, but they've been content to say vaguely: "All National Volunteer premises." What does that show? The authorities would surely put down the numbers in both cases, so we can only assume that this was drawn up by one of our people who was too lazy to look up the necessary details about the other movements.'

'Me dear Holmes!' said McGurk.

'Perfectly simple, my dear Watson,' said O'Dwyer.

'Now look right at the end and you'll see that in addition to the houses named they're to seize "all premises in list 5 D." More amateur cleverness. Surely if they had such a list as 5 D it's the notorious houses that would be on it, and any others that they thought of would be mentioned separately?'

'Quite true,' said Hector. 'And I thought myself that they'd scarcely be such fools as to occupy the Archbishop's House.'

'That alone is enough to indicate forgery. They've laid it on just a little too thick.'

'But what's th' idea?' asked McGurk.

'It's an attempt to bring the whole country out in

rebellion,' said O'Dwyer. 'They probably intend to strike at once and they hope to get people on their side by faking up a Government pogrom against the whole national movement.'

'The bloody grafters!' ejaculated McGurk.

'Where's Stephen?' asked O'Dwyer. 'We haven't a minute to waste. They wouldn't have produced this thing unless they were going to take immediate action.'

'"Seven Spears in the Day of Light,"' quoted Hector.

'My God!' interrupted O'Dwyer. 'What a fool I was not to see it before! "The Day of Light" means Easter Sunday.'

'Begob!' cried McGurk. 'The manœuvres!'

Orders had been issued the previous week for the holding of reviews and manœuvres by the Irish Volunteer forces over the whole of Ireland, and it would be a simple matter for the agents of the conspirators to convert the manœuvres to reality. The only course open now to the peace party would be a public announcement, but this was impossible owing to the fact that it would inevitably result in Government intervention, and perhaps produce a Government offensive which would be quite as undesirable as the rebellion they wished to prevent. They were therefore constrained to a slow and secret course of action at a moment when time meant everything. Hector, plain blunt soldier as he was, felt completely at sea; so did McGurk; O'Dwyer, on the other hand, had already begun evolving schemes with lightning rapidity, each more complicated and futile than the last.

'We're in the soup,' he groaned. 'They've had six months to conspire in. How are we going to undo it all in three days? I wish to the devil Stephen was here.'

The mention of Stephen's name relaxed the tension at once. All had implicit faith in his cold, calculating intelligence, and at that very moment they thought they heard his step outside the door. But it was only Umpleby.

'Hello!' he said. 'I'm looking for Stephen Ward.'

'He's out,' said McGurk. 'Wouldn't we do?'

'Well, I came to find out his opinion about this exceedingly disturbing document' (holding out a copy of the handbill). 'I've just written letters to the editors of the Daily News and the Manchester Guardian, but I'm afraid we may find a sanguinary pogrom in progress before they can publish them.'

'Arrah, be aisy now,' said McGurk.

'I'm not at all easy, my dear fellow. I take this matter seriously. Never in the whole course of our country's tragical history—not even in the worst days of Mountjoy and Carew; not even in the sanguinary and sordid transactions before the Union—has such a dastardly and . . .'

'Hould on,' interrupted McGurk. 'Tell him the sad reality, Hector.'

The revelation made Umpleby gape. His fulminations were terrible to hear, but it was hard to say whether the impending fate of his country or the slight inflicted on his vanity by the neglect of the rebel leaders to consult him were the more potent influence.

'This', he said, 'is the most high-handed, calculated, insolent, treacherous piece of cynical audacious double-dealing and jerrymandering that it has been my lot to be the innocent, duped and deluded victim of. I shall write a letter immediately to the Irish Independent.'

'Holy Moses!' exclaimed McGurk.

'I'm afraid you'll have to restrain your epistolary activities,' said O'Dwyer. 'We don't want to drag the Government into the business, you know.'

'But what's to be done?' asked Umpleby, very much dashed.

'Search me!' said Hector. 'We're waiting for Ward. Meanwhile, let us eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we may be arrested. I think I heard the gong . . .'

'The worst of it is,' said O'Dwyer, 'I've seats booked for the "Gondoliers" on Tuesday—for two . . .'

When Bernard saw the 'Military Order' he doubted its authenticity at once on the same grounds as O'Dwyer, a

talk with whom confirmed his opinion. He went up to Malone's flat to discuss the matter with him and found him jubilant.

'There'll *have* to be a fight now,' he said.

Bernard expressed his opinion of the Order.

'Nonsense!' said Malone. 'It's what I've been expecting for the last month. I hope the Volunteers are ready for a scrap.'

They argued for a long time, but to no effect. Malone positively revelled in delight at the coming battle.

'All the world will know now', he said, 'that Ireland hasn't surrendered. Whether we live or die the rottenest page in our history is going to be turned over for good. Get your gun out, my lad.'

He produced a neat little magazine rifle from a cupboard and critically examined the breech.

12

ON Thursday night Bernard sat at home sorting some of Eugene's papers which had been entrusted to him by his mother. He realised now how little he had known of Eugene's inner life, of his ideals, emotions, and ambitions. Having persistently underrated his brother's abilities he had been inclined to regard them as negligible, but these papers undeceived him. There were poems amongst them: religious and nature poems mostly, lacking in high inspiration, but simple and sincere expressions of genuine emotion. There were three articles which he had sent in to different papers and which had evidently been rejected: all on the subject of the Dublin slums, honestly indignant, but sentimental rather than intellectual. There was an essay on the causes of the war, commonplace and platitudinous, but quite transparently an expression of opinions honestly held. And finally there was the rough draft of a scheme for the foundation of a society and a journal for the spreading of Irish ideas in Trinity College.

While he was engaged on this melancholy task he heard a ring at the hall-door and looking up saw that it was after

ten o'clock. His housekeeper he knew would be in bed, so he went out and opened the door himself. He was surprised to see Brian Mallow standing on the steps outside.

'Mum's the word!' whispered Brian, and stepped into the hall with a darkly conspiratorial air. 'Will you take me where we can't be overheard?'

Bernard conducted him to the sitting-room, gave him a chair by the fire, and returned to his seat at the table.

'Well, what's the mystery?' he asked.

'The greatest thing going,' replied Brian. 'The Republic's going to be proclaimed on Sunday.'

'What!' exclaimed Bernard. He was startled out of his self-control, but Brian thought he was merely excited. Bernard restrained himself forthwith and determined to hear everything.

'Yes,' went on Brian. 'There's to be a rising all over Ireland at midday on Sunday, fifty thousand Germans are to land in Kerry, and the German fleet is going to sally out and attack England. I got you the job of taking command in Kerry to receive the Germans.'

'Oh! And when was all this decided on?'

'At a special meeting of the Executive last night.'

'I never heard of such a meeting. Ward and O'Flaherty were dining with me last night.'

'We're not telling them. They're afraid to rebel, and they'd only try and interfere if they knew. They'll come in all right when it's on.'

'Does MacNeill know?'

'Oh Lord, no. He'd interfere too if he did.'

'Well, he'll know from me then.'

Brian began to look anxious.

'You mustn't tell anyone or you'll spoil everything,' he said. 'Look here. All this was between ourselves.'

'Pity you didn't mention that before,' said Bernard. 'I say, you don't mind my putting you out, do you? I'm going to see MacNeill.'

'No, you don't,' said Brian, and whipping out a revolver he pointed it at Bernard's head. 'Hands up!' he cried.

'Nonsense,' said Bernard calmly, and proceeded to fill his pipe. 'You know very well you wouldn't dare fire. Don't be theatrical.'

'Hands up,' reiterated Brian.

Bernard struck a match and carefully lit his pipe. Speaking between the puffs he said :

'I wish you'd . . . put that thing . . . down. It might go off.'

'You're not going to leave this room', said Brian, 'if I have to spend the whole night with you.'

'Indeed?' said Bernard.

Brian was standing up with levelled revolver, and the table was between them. With a sudden jerk Bernard drove the table hard against Brian, who, taken unawares, staggered back, tripped, and fell, striking his head on the fender. His revolver dropped on the floor, and Bernard hastened to seize it.

'Damn you, Lascelles' said Brian, sitting up and fingering the bump on his occiput.

Bernard unloaded the revolver, put the cartridges in his pocket, and tossed the weapon back to its owner.

'Woe betide you if you give us away,' muttered Brian.

'I'm sorry for my apparent inhospitality,' said Bernard, 'but I really must be going. You can follow at your leisure. Close the door when you're leaving, by the way.'

'And you're the man I converted,' said Brian. 'I wish to hell I'd let you remain a Unionist . . .'

'What'll Austin say?' he ruefully asked himself when Bernard had gone. He consoled himself by reflecting that things had gone too far to be stopped. Those fifty thousand Germans would be enough to ensure action.

'All the same,' he said as he left the flat, 'I'll get it in the neck from Austin . . . Good Lord, what'll he say?'

Meanwhile Bernard had taken out his car and run over to O'Dwyer's lodgings. He was out, the landlady said. Two gentlemen had called for him in a taxi about an hour ago. Bernard thereupon turned and hastened across town

to the Neptune Hotel. He found McGurk in the smoking-room.

'Where's Stephen?' he asked.

'Oh, is that you, Bernard?' cried McGurk, springing up from the arm-chair in which he had been lounging. 'Have ye heard the news? The fat's in the fire at last. Stephen and Hector are gone to MacNeill's. There was a fella came in here a couple of hours ago who'd been in with the rebels and got cold feet. There's to be guns landed in Kerry and a rising on Sunday, and . . .'

'Are there German troops coming?'

'Divil a troop.'

'I thought as much.' He told McGurk about the Brian Mallow episode.

'Oh, there's to be no Germans,' said McGurk. 'Our man said so, and he ought to know, for he was thick as thieves with them. Sure, if there was, wouldn't we all be in it?'

'And what are our people going to do?'

'They'll be holding a palaver at present. Hector swears he'll put lead in Mallow. I hope they'll shoot the whole bloody bunch.'

'Then there's nothing I can do?'

'The best thing you can do is to go home, where they can find you if they want you. Stephen told me not to stir from here.'

Instead of going straight home, however, Bernard made for Mallow's house. He was in a most uneasy frame of mind, foreseeing nothing in the contemplated rebellion but the smashing of the Volunteer movement and the loss to the nation of its sole defence against conscription and its hope of freedom. Arriving at the house at Rathgar, as soon as he was admitted he pushed past the servant and opened the sitting-room door. Austin Mallow and Barrett were sitting at the table, poring over a map.

'Oh, it's you, is it?' said Austin.

'Yes,' said Bernard, breathing hard. He expected a violent tirade from Austin, but the poet merely said:

'I'm glad you came. Sit down.'

'I want to know the meaning of all this high-handed trickery,' said Bernard, still standing.

'Certainly,' said Austin. 'Our methods are not quite what we'd like ourselves, but . . . under certain conditions . . .'

He shrugged his shoulders.

Bernard took a chair at the foot of the table.

'Do you seriously expect to beat the British Army?' he asked.

'We do,' said Austin.

Bernard uttered an exclamation of derision, and Barrett interposed.

'You don't understand,' he said. 'We don't expect to win in a military sense, but we are confident of a moral victory.'

'Hmph!' ejaculated Bernard.

'I appreciate your feelings,' said Barrett. 'You and your friends are extremely clever young men, and all the force of reason and common sense is on your side. But . . .'

He paused, as if not ready to speak all that was in his mind.

'Well?' said Bernard.

'Reason and common sense are not enough. You have no vision. You are blind to the spiritual essentials. You will organise and drill and discipline your men for ever, but you'll never do anything decisive, because reason and common sense are always on the side of the big battalions. We see beyond these petty things. We see beyond failure and death to the victory which failure and death will achieve. Failure and death will be the voice by which we shall speak, first to our own people, and then to all the peoples of the world, and by our failure and death we shall forge a weapon which those who scoff at us now will afterwards use . . .'

'You may be right,' said Bernard. 'Personally I think you're wrong, but I won't argue that. But, however right you may be, you can't justify your acting against the will of the majority of the Executive, or the way in which you

have deceived us.' He addressed himself to Barrett, feeling it useless to argue with his fanatical companion. Barrett hesitated at this however, and Austin broke in :

'Do you think that when we've decided what must be done we're going to be held back by considerations of that sort? Do you think that we're going to place the feelings of our colleagues, or even our own personal honour, above the interests of Ireland? Do you think that we'll allow ourselves to be thwarted by your timidity and lack of enterprise? No, thank you. Ireland must be saved in spite of the strength of her enemies and the weakness of her friends.'

Bernard paid no attention to this harangue, but continued to address himself to Barrett.

'It isn't fair to the men,' he said. 'They joined the movement in the belief that if there was to be a fight it wouldn't be a hopeless one. To lead them out to what even you admit to be certain defeat is the grossest treachery to them.'

'The men will endorse our action afterwards,' said Barrett.

'All Ireland will endorse it eventually,' said Austin. 'And just mark my words. Our minds are made up. The fight is bound to be fought. And anyone who interferes with us from this out will be crushed. Ireland has been ruined by faint hearts too often. We shall see that it doesn't occur again. . . . That's a warning to you . . .'

'Hm. Very dramatic, I'm sure,' said Bernard. 'But don't you imagine that you're the only people who can play the crushing game . . . not by long chinks. And don't think you've a monopoly of patriotism. For myself I can say that I prefer Ireland to my theories about her, and that's more than you can say.'

'How charming!' said Mallow, with a sneer on his thin lips. Barrett turned to Bernard and said :

'I've no doubt whatever that you are as much con-

cerned with the good of Ireland as we are. But consider this: nothing can stop the fight now, and interference on your part will only hamper us—no more. It's a pity we cannot agree, but there we are.'

'I hold my view as strongly as you hold yours,' said Bernard. 'So I'll oppose you to the end . . . Good evening.'

He rose and went out.

13

NEXT morning Bernard was sitting down to a Good Friday breakfast—milkless tea, butterless buns, and a kippered herring—when O'Dwyer came in, looking pale, heavy-eyed, and exhausted.

'Can you give me some breakfast?' he asked. 'I've a lot to tell you and I'm in a hurry . . . None of your black tea and buns. I'm starving and worn out, so I'm giving myself a dispensation.' He dropped heavily into the nearest arm-chair.

Bernard hurried out to give the necessary orders, but was back in a moment to ask:

'Tea or coffee?'

There was no answer. O'Dwyer had fallen asleep in the chair. Bernard left him so until breakfast was ready and then roused him with difficulty.

'Have I been asleep?' murmured O'Dwyer. 'Lord, I'm fagged out. Up all night and running all over the city this morning.'

Bernard poured out tea for him and O'Dwyer stumbled over to the table. He drank and ate a little and soon woke up completely.

'Listen now,' he said. 'Stephen and Hector discovered last night that there's to be a rebellion . . .'

'I know,' said Bernard. 'McGurk told me.'

'Good. Then I can skip a lot. They came straight over to my digs and fetched Sullivan from his, and we all drove out to MacNeill's. He's drawn up countermanding orders, and we've had them typed and addressed, and

we're sending them out by hand all over the country. I've got about a dozen here for you, for corps scattered over southern Leinster. You'll take them, I suppose? . . . Good. I've another set for Umpleby: he's a sound man for all his absurdity. McGurk's doing the west, and I'm going north this evening after I've had a sleep . . . Tea's great stuff, Bernard. I feel a new man already.'

'I suppose I'd better start as soon as possible?'

'The sooner the better,' said O'Dwyer, and handed over a bundle of letters . . .

So Bernard found himself driving all that day over Ossory and Hy Kinsella. First he posted straight to Ballylangan, where Crowley—who was mightily indignant at the idiocy and trickery of the whole affair—undertook the delivery of three of the documents whose addressees lived fairly near.

'What sort of an insurrection these fellows expect in this neighbourhood I can't make out,' he said. 'Our corps are all small and only a quarter of them armed, and they're scattered about all over the place. What the devil we could do beats me.'

At shops in country towns, at doctors' houses, at farm-houses, at labourers' cottages, at lonely cabins on the mountains Bernard left his missives, and the look of relief on the faces of the recipients was good to see. They were shrewd fellows, these young Volunteer captains, and there were few that did not realise the madness of the adventure to which they had thought themselves committed. They would not have hesitated a moment about obeying those orders, issued, as they thought, by the Executive they had elected to govern them, but the countermanding order was obviously welcome. Bernard's task was a long and tiring one, and not much more than half of it was accomplished by midnight, when he put up at a village inn where not only the son but the proprietor himself were Volunteers. He completed his round by the middle of the next day and hastened back to Dublin.

On arriving at the Neptune that evening he found Hector sunk in intense gloom.

'What's the matter now?' he asked.

'We've our backs to the wall, sonny,' said Hector. 'Barrett has beaten us at every turn. Sullivan has been kidnapped, and Stephen escaped by the tips of his eyelashes.'

'Great Scott!'

'We had the mutineers up to Headquarters, and after a grand palaver they withdrew and apologised and swore that it was all off. The only thing to worry about then seemed to be the arms ship, and we just prayed that Jellicoe might be propitious to us. Well, when all was squared up, the mutineers took their departure, and about three hours later Stephen was sitting here alone when Austin Mallow arrived in a cab and asked him to come to a conference at his place to settle up matters of detail. It seemed a bit thin to Stephen, but he went down to the cab, and if the fellows inside hadn't been just a trifle too quick on the draw he might have gone with them. As it was he just smiled and excused himself. Since then we've heard that the others have disappeared, but where they are we don't know.'

'What does it all mean, I wonder?'

'It means that they're going to try and pull the thing off in Dublin, anyway. You see the countermanding orders have never reached the Dublin men, as the four battalion commandants happen to be in the plot. However, Stephen's called the remainder of our party together, and we've sent in a notice to the Sunday papers. Short of calling round on all the men individually I don't see what else we could do. . . . I'm fair sick of this game. I'm a soldier, sir, and my career in that line has been persistently interfered with. I joined this movement in a military capacity, not as a keeper in a criminal lunatic asylum, which seems to be my principal function at present.'

The following morning Bernard bought a Sunday

paper. Prominent on the front page was the following notice :

Owing to the very critical position, all orders given to Irish Volunteers for Easter Sunday are hereby rescinded, and no parades, marches, or other movements of Volunteers will take place. Each individual Volunteer will obey this order strictly in every particular.

The day passed by uneventfully. Bernard spent it with his mother, Alice, and Sandy.

CHAPTER XVI

CATASTROPHE

I

ALL Dublin—that is to say, all Dublin that felt that it really counted and a good proportion that had no idea that it didn't—was at Fairyhouse Races on Monday. The society papers said all Dublin was there, and as definitions are valuable to students and statisticians let it here be stated that in this context 'all Dublin' means and includes five peers, six baronets, eleven knights, two generals, an indeterminate number of colonels, captains, and subalterns, some hundreds of untitled gentry, and some thousands of the commonalty: with women and children over and above. The Earl and Countess of Ringsend were there, with their son Lord Sandymount. Sir Swithin and Lady Mallaby Morchoe were there; and Sir Marmaduke and Lady Perry; and Sir John and Lady Bonegraft (newly titled and striving to appear unconscious of it); Mr. and Mrs. Gunby Rourke were there; and Sir Eugene Lascelles; and Mrs. Harvey (whose newly acquired son-in-law had evidently been a sound investment). It was a most brilliant assembly.

The refreshment-room behind the Grand Stand hummed with conversation during the luncheon hour.

'How dowdy Lady Inchicore is!' said Mrs. Moffat to Mrs. Metcalfe. 'Really, my dear, if I were a Countess I think I'd treat myself to a new hat now and then.'

'It's a long time since Mrs. Harvey appeared in society,' said Mrs. Metcalfe. 'Has she come in for money?'

'My dear, haven't you heard?' said Mrs. Moffat, and proceeded to explain . . .

'How well Sir Eugene bears his sorrow!' said Lady Bonegraft to Mrs. Gunby Rourke. 'So brave and patriotic of him, isn't it?'

Sir Eugene at the moment was enjoying a paternal flirtation with a pert little miss of seventeen. Sir John Bonegraft, who hated him, interrupted heavily, saying: 'Hello, Lascelles! Is that boy of yours out of jail yet?'

Sir Eugene flushed angrily and said:

'I know nothing whatever about him.' Whereat Sir John emitted his thumping laugh and went off to mimic him to Sir Marmaduke Perry . . .

A young man came into the refreshment-room breathless with excitement and blurted out to the first person he saw:

'Heard the news? . . . Riuctions in town . . . Sinn Feiners out . . . Shooting everybody . . . The Castle taken . . .'

People pressed round him eager for news, which however was received with incredulity.

'A mere street riot, I'm sure,' said Sir Eugene Lascelles.

'No. They've got the Castle.'

'Disloyal beggars!'

'What's all the excitement?' someone asks, pressing into the circle. The story is told again. There is a babel of questions and comments.

'Sin Fainers: what are they?'

'But they've got the Castle . . .'

'It's all nonsense.'

'They ought to be shot.'

'I *knew* this would happen.'

'This weak-kneed Government!'

'What can you expect with a man like Birrell?'

'German gold, you may be sure . . .'

'And in the middle of the Great War too!'

'I hope they'll all be shot.'

'I'll bet it's all over by this time.'

These are samples of the more intelligent of the remarks which filled the air. The excitement lasted for some ten or fifteen minutes, but for lack of definite information it quickly subsided, and incredulity took its place. Interest returned to the races . . .

The road was packed with pedestrians and vehicles when it was all over. The humble commonalty footed it to the station, or cycled, or crowded in half-dozens on to outside cars, while motors of every description, humming, hooting and screaming, threaded their courses Dublinwards through this chattering, jangling confusion. Mr. and Mrs. Gunby Rourke in their magnificent Rolls Royce were the first to extricate themselves from the multitude and hasten down a clear road towards the city, to their ultimate undoing; for at the end of a long suburban road they came upon the outermost of the barricades.

It was a ramshackle structure. An overturned tramcar made up nearly half of it; the remainder consisting of a couple of motor-cars, half a dozen bicycles, a few paving-stones, some sandbags, and the pillage of a second-hand furniture shop. There was a gap at one end. The fortification was manned by five men in the grey-green uniform of the Volunteers, and rifles could be seen projecting from the windows of the houses that flanked it. The inhabitants of the district, respectable and ragged, stood about staring, grumbling, or cursing.

'Halt!' rang out the voice of one of the garrison; and, as if to guarantee the seriousness of the command, there burst forth the sound of rifle-fire from a distant quarter of the city.

'Don't mind him,' said Mrs. Gunby Rourke to her chauffeur, who had slackened speed. 'Drive for the gap.'

'I'll blow your brains out if you do,' said the Volunteer, whereat the great Rolls Royce stopped dead.

'What impertinence!' cried Mrs. Gunby Rourke. 'Drive on, Jennings.'

'We'd best go back, madam,' said Jennings.

'Ye'll do nothing of the sort, then, said the sentry.
'If ye move wan inch I'll shoot ye dead.'

'This is outrageous!' said Mrs. Gunby Rourke.
'What can we do, Arthur?'

'I'm afraid we must bow to the inevitable, dear,' said Mr. Gunby Rourke.

Another Volunteer, evidently a section-commander, now came out of one of the houses and crossed the barricade.

'We'll have to commandeer this car,' he said, fingering the handle of a revolver at his belt. 'May I ax ye to step out?'

Mrs. Gunby Rourke was perfectly furious at this.

'Do you know who I am, sir?' she demanded.

'Ye may be the Empress o' Chiney, ma'am, but we've got to finish this barricade, and that car o' yours'll just do it.'

Mrs. Gunby Rourke was almost speechless with indignation. She gasped incoherently and then turned on her husband, who was lying back in his seat passively smoking a cigar.

'Are you going to sit there quietly and hear me insulted?' she asked.

Mr. Gunby Rourke waved his cigar helplessly and said:

'What can one do, my dear?'

'Do!' exclaimed his wife, and became incoherent again.

'Arrah, be aisy, ma'am,' said the Volunteer. 'We won't do y'anny harm, an' when the Republic's established sure we'll give ye compensation for the car. Will ye dismount if ye please?'

Mrs. Gunby Rourke turned her outraged eyes to heaven and sat still, but her husband and the chauffeur alighted.

'Come along, my dear,' said the former. 'We must yield to superior force for the moment, but they'll all be shot in a few days.'

Mrs. Gunby Rourke made no answer, but, seeing the Volunteer lovingly fondle the handle of his revolver, she descended from the car and walked off on her husband's

arm. The Rolls Royce was stuffed into the gap in the barricade.

2

A SHOT and its echo sounded in the far distance. Bernard dropped the book he was reading and listened. Another shot rang out close at hand. Then silence.

He heard someone come down the stairs at a run, and in a moment John Malone burst into the room.

'Did you hear it?' he cried. 'They're suppressing the Volunteers!'

Another distant shot was heard, followed by two others in rapid succession. A chill sense of realisation came to Bernard.

'It isn't that,' he said. 'It's a rebellion.'

'Hurroosh!' cried Malone. 'I guess I'm going for my gun.' And he rushed out.

At the same moment Bernard heard the tramp of feet in the street outside, and going to the window he saw a squad of men in green uniforms marching up the street.

'Foiled again,' he muttered; and added: 'Poor devils!'

Malone returned, carrying his rifle.

'Aren't you coming?' he said.

Bernard knew it would be useless to enter into a discussion with him, so he merely said:

'Not yet. Don't wait for me.'

Malone disappeared. Bernard went out a few minutes later. Hurrying down Harcourt Street, he was struck by the unnatural quietness everywhere. Traffic seemed to have been suspended, and people stood at their doors or in little groups on the sidewalks, talking in subdued tones, with every now and again an anxious glance down the street in the direction of Stephen's Green. Arriving at the corner Bernard saw a little bunch of people being hustled out of the Park by some of the Citizen Army, who, as soon as the last of the civilians had been thrust outside closed the gate and secured it with a lock and chain. In a

shrubbery inside the railings half a dozen of the men in green were digging entrenchments. The people who had been expelled from the Green stood staring at them, and from the open doors and windows of all the houses in the neighbourhood the inhabitants were staring hard. Passers-by in the street stopped and stared in their turn. There seemed to be nothing else for people to do but to stare : they were too much puzzled and stupefied to talk. An ominous silence reigned over all, broken only by the clink and scrape of the tools of the trench-diggers and the occasional pop of a distant rifle.

Bernard had no time to stop and stare. He walked on along the east side of the square until he reached Grafton Street, where he stopped abruptly on seeing a section of his own company marching towards him. Bernard succeeded in catching the commander's eye and raised his hand, whereupon the latter halted his men, came over to Bernard, saluted, and stood to attention.

'How's this, Muldoon?' asked Bernard. 'How did you come to be mobilised without me?'

'Captain Skehan mobilised us, sir,' replied Muldoon.

'*Captain Skehan?*' queried Bernard.

'Yes, sir. He showed us his promotion order signed by Commandant-General Pearse. . . . I thought you'd been promoted to the Staff maybe, Captain.'

'Not exactly, Muldoon,' said Bernard. 'In fact, I rather fancy I've been cashiered.'

'I'm sorry to hear that, Captain.'

'This rebellion isn't an Executive affair at all, you know. It's a mutiny against the President as a matter of fact. The whole thing's a frightful mix-up and there's no time to explain it. I'm going down to Headquarters now to see what can be done. Meanwhile, what'll you do?'

'I suppose I'll have to carry out me orders, Captain. But between ourselves I don't know what we're out for. We'll be bet for certain.'

'Something may be done yet. Where are Headquarters, by the way?'

'At the G.P.O., Captain.'

'Very well. I suppose you'd better carry on for the present.'

Muldoon saluted and returned to his men. Bernard resumed his way, passed down Grafton Street and Westmoreland Street, and, arriving at O'Connell Bridge, ran into Stephen and Hector.

'Well,' said Stephen, 'what do you think of this piece of lunacy?'

'Can nothing be done?' asked Bernard.

'Look,' said Stephen, and pointed down Sackville Street. The Republican Tricolour of Orange, White and Green was flying from the roof of the General Post Office.

'There's been a scrap already,' said Hector. 'A party of Lancers went down the street about ten minutes ago and were fired on. Three were killed.'

'Nothing can stop it now,' said Stephen.

There was a burst of firing far away on the south side of the city.

'Attack on Portobello Barracks, I suppose,' suggested Hector.

Excited groups of people were standing about on and near the bridge discussing the situation. Stray words from some of them reached Bernard's ears: 'Bloody fools!' 'What the hell do they think they're up to?' 'I hope they'll all be shot.'

'The Republic doesn't seem to be exactly popular,' observed Hector. 'Physical force won't have much stock in the country when the dust-up is over.'

'I hope to Heaven the country'll keep quiet,' said Stephen. 'How did things look where you were?'

'They didn't seem at all anxious to come out,' replied Bernard.

'I bet they won't like abandoning Dublin,' said Hector.

'Well, let's hope they'll have the sense to do it all the same,' said Stephen.

'I don't know that sense is everything,' said Bernard. He was looking at the flag of Ireland flying in the breeze,

and a longing seized him to fight and die in its defence. He was in the grip of hot emotions. The spirit of the rebels of all the ages was calling to him; the music of Ireland was playing to him; the anger of Ireland was thrilling him; reason was being swamped in floods of passion. Stephen, reading all this in his face, said quietly:

'This rebellion will be the ruin of Ireland. It'll be crushed in a few days; the country will be conscripted; and when the people see the damage done they'll react to constitutionalism for another generation and the Union will have a fresh lease of life.'

'I suppose so,' said Bernard.

'Hello, you chaps!' said a voice suddenly, and turning round they were faced by Fergus Moore. They had not seen him for over a year, so they were startled by the change in his appearance, constitutionally wrecked as he was by long-continued dissipation.

'Where are you off to?' asked Hector.

'I'm going down to the G.P.O. to see if they can spare me a rifle.'

'I gave you credit for more sense,' said Stephen. 'Don't you know that this piece of lunacy is going to be the ruin of the country?'

'Who can be sure of anything? And what matter, anyway? I've lived a rotten life, so I may as well die decently.'

'At your country's expense?' said Stephen.

'If you saw D.T.'s in front of you, you wouldn't split hairs over the morality of a fight that gives you a chance to die game, would you? I'd like to kill an Englishman or two, anyway.'

'There's no canteen in the G.P.O.,' said Stephen drily.

'That's unworthy of you, Ward,' replied Moore. 'But I'm going to my death, so I salute you. Good-bye, all.'

He shook hands sentimentally with the three and marched off towards the Post Office.

'I thought that kind of character didn't exist outside novels,' said Hector. 'Who says Sidney Carton's improbable now?'

'Those who go seeking death never find it,' said Stephen. 'I bet you Moore will come out of this scatheless: which is more than will happen to more useful poor fellows.'

Suddenly Bernard cried:

'Hello! Here's Umpleby!' and the others looking round saw the little man approaching from the direction of D'Olier Street. He was loaded up with equipment, carried a Howth rifle on his shoulder, and was quite breathless.

'Oh, I'm so glad to have met you,' he puffed. 'What's the meaning of it all? I was mobilised for a route march, but it looks more like a rebellion. I thought we'd cancelled that . . .'

Stephen explained the position.

'But,' said Umpleby, tentatively scanning Stephen's face, 'er . . . doesn't honour require that we should throw in our lot with our comrades?' He was hoping with all his heart that it didn't, and his brow was knit with anxiety.

'I can't answer for your honour,' said Stephen bluntly, 'but personally I'm going home.'

Umpleby heaved a sigh of relief. Here was good company to err with.

'I'll do the same,' he said. 'Meanwhile I think I'll rid myself of these superfluous and incriminating impedimenta.' Without more ado he divested himself of his accoutrements and dumped them, rifle and all, over the parapet of the bridge into the Liffey.

'Now I think I'll run off home,' he said. 'My wife will be very anxious about me.' (Distant firing.) 'Hear that? She'll think they're all hitting me . . . Good-bye, boys.' He shook hands hurriedly and scuttled back down D'Olier Street.

'I suppose I may as well be off home too,' said Bernard.

'No. Come along to the Neptune with us,' said

Stephen. 'We can get you a room. We may as well stick together in case of trouble.'

Bernard was glad of the invitation. Since Mabel's defection and the loss of Eugene and Willoughby solitude had become intolerable to him. He craved for human society, and now above all he needed the support of Stephen's strong will and character. Hector supplemented the invitation in his bluff way, and Bernard accepted it.

'Let's stroll on then,' said Stephen.

They crossed the bridge and walked down Sackville Street, which was a chaos of strange sights. In the upper stories of many shops the windows had been smashed and then barricaded with furniture, behind which could be seen the green-clad forms of Volunteer sentinels silently waiting. The street was still thronged with wondering people, who walked about, stood and stared, or flung jibes at the imperturbable garrisons of the shops. Excited children ran hither and thither, and a ring of them, with not a few of their elders commingled, was gathered round the body of the horse that had been slain in the affray with the Lancers. At the end of Abbey Street some Volunteers were erecting a barricade of bicycles and rolls of paper under the curious and not very friendly gaze of a crowd of spectators. The toilers seemed to be embarrassed by this publicity, and a pink-and-white youth who acted as sentry was shyly endeavouring to make the crowd stand back. Someone chaffed him rudely, whereat he blushed and desisted from his efforts. He was a bashful revolutionary.

Bernard and his friends walked on and arrived opposite the Post Office, whose windows had been smashed and barricaded like those of the shops.

'I'd just like to go in and tell our friends what I think of them,' said Hector.

'You'd only get shot for your pains,' said Stephen.

Bernard drew their attention to a small crowd collected at the base of Nelson's Pillar, evidently reading a poster of

some kind. He went over, followed by the others, and from the outskirts of the crowd read :

POBLACHT NA HEIREANN
THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT
of the
IRISH REPUBLIC

TO THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND

*Irishmen and Irishwomen : In the name of God
and of the dead generations from which she receives
her old traditions of nationhood, Ireland, through
us, summons her children to her flag and strikes
for her freedom . . .*

There were too many heads in the way to read any farther, and the others called to him to come on. The three continued their walk. When they reached the Parnell Monument, Bernard turned back, and saw once more the flag waving in the wind, the sunlight enriching its gold and green.

'It seems a shame to desert them,' he said.

'You're right,' said Hector. 'I hate leaving them in the lurch like that.'

'Look here, you two,' said Stephen. 'Do you, or do you not, believe that this rebellion is going to be ruinous to Ireland?' There was no answer. 'Well then,' he resumed, 'have sense and come on. If these people are bent on wrecking the country we're not going to help them, anyhow.'

'But the rank-and-file?' said Bernard.

'Indeed I'm sorry for them,' said Stephen, 'but I don't see how we can help them. We did what we could these last few days.'

There was nothing more to be said. They turned their backs on the Post Office, walked on in silence, and in five

minutes were at the Neptune Hotel. In the hall they met McGurk, fully equipped and armed.

'What are you up to, Hugo?' asked Hector in surprise.

'I'm going into this bloody rebellion,' replied McGurk.

'Don't be an ass, Hugo,' said Stephen.

'Ah, sure, I know it's absurd,' said McGurk. 'But I can't be deserting the poor boys.'

'You'd rather desert your country instead?' said Stephen.

'Sure this fight finishes Ireland for our time,' said McGurk, 'so we might as well go down with it. We'll all be shot, anyway, whether we fight or not.'

'That doesn't make it right to fight, Hugo.'

'What matter? I want to kill a few of them bloody English before I die, anyhow.'

Plainly he was not to be argued with.

'Well,' said Hector, 'good luck.'

'Good luck, boys.'

And Hugo McGurk made his sally.

'What splendid material these fellows are going to waste,' said Stephen.

'The best stuff in Ireland,' added Hector . . .

After lunch Bernard crossed town to pay a visit of warning and reassurance to his mother. The poor lady could not understand the situation at all: it was enough for her to know that her son would not be in the fighting, and she made him promise faithfully to take care of himself and not to stir out of doors.

In the evening he returned to the Neptune Hotel. The aspect of the streets was unchanged; no troops had as yet appeared on the scene; but the distant sound of sustained firing from three different directions indicated that fighting had already begun on the outskirts of the city. In Sackville Street the crowds had increased, but they were of a different complexion from those of the morning. Dusk had sent respectable people to their homes and lured forth the under-world in search of loot. All the ragged, starving, and deformed population of the slums

was abroad and looting had already begun. Two sweet-shops and a boot-shop had been broken into and plundered to the very walls, and a draper's was being rapidly stripped when Bernard appeared on the scene. The dead horse still lay in the centre of the street, but attracted no more attention. Ragged children ran about clad in all kinds of finery. Old women staggered along with sacks bulging with loot. Drunken harlots danced and sang. The crash of another window brought every one racing in its direction for more plunder. The shouts of quarrelling thieves rang through the air. In the distance was the muffled roar of the fighting.

Bernard passed on. A dirty dishevelled young woman wearing a gorgeous hat and with a sealskin coat over her tattered blouse and skirt was dancing in the middle of the street yelling :

'The Volunteers is up ! Ireland's free ! Hurroo !'

Another equally repulsive creature was shouting obscenities at the garrison of the Post Office.

'Up th' Alleys an' to hell wid the Kayzer !' she shrieked.

Grim and silent stood the Post Office in the gloom. The tricolour hung limp from its staff. Bernard walked on. The uproar in Sackville Street sank to a murmur and finally died away.

3

THE dawn of Tuesday, the twenty-fifth, was heralded by fresh bursts of rifle-fire. Bernard and his friends had an early breakfast, and a meagre one too, for the Neptune, having many mouths to feed, had begun to ration already. Doran the landlord came in to them full of news.

'Sure they're not doing so bad at all,' he said. 'They've got the Castle and the whole country's up, and the Jairmans have landed in Kerry and there's an English cruiser sunk off Fenit and the Pope's sent his blessing.'

'Get out of that, Doran, you old cod !' said Hector.

'It's God's truth I'm tellin' ye, Misther O'Flaherty,' said Doran. 'I couldn't tell ye thruer if ye were the priest

of God and I was on me knees to ye in the Confessional. Sure the milkman told me this morning, an' his brother told him, an' the brother has a son in the Volyunteers, so he has . . . Arrah, why aren't yez all in the fight? It's down to the G.P.O. I'd like to be going meself, so I would.'

'If we went down to the G.P.O.,' said Hector, 'it's precious little you'd ever see of the money we owe you, friend Doran.'

'Sure you're welcome,' said Doran; and went over to abuse the rebels and all their generations to a Unionist customer who had just come down to breakfast.

The three went out into the streets, which, as on the previous day, were again thronged with the curious. Looting was still going on in Sackville Street, which was strewn with paper, cardboard boxes, and broken and discarded plunder. The sacking of Lawrence's great toy-shop was in progress.

For half a crown Hector obtained a copy of the Irish Times from a newsboy, from which they learned that Dolan's news was untrue. The attack on the Castle had been attempted with insufficient forces and had completely failed; there had been no German landing, but a ship laden with arms had been sunk off Cork; the country was quiet, with, however, reports of small movements in North Dublin, Wexford, and Galway; the British Navy was intact; and the Pope was apparently neutral. The centre of the city was, however, still in the hands of the Volunteers, and their outposts were evidently holding their own, for the sullen firing in the distance had approached no nearer. It was, however, getting more and more continuous. Monday's sporadic bursts were replaced by a long, seldom-interrupted roar, which by midday was sustained almost without a lull, showing that hard fighting was in progress. Then all of a sudden came an explosion of firing from a quarter quite close to the centre of the city, and this time it was mingled with the rattle of machine-guns.

'Can they be attacking the Castle again?' said Hector.

'More likely the enemy have broken through and are attacking the City Hall,' replied Stephen.

The sounds of battle were certainly coming from Cork Hill, where, as Stephen surmised, the military were attacking in force. Volley followed volley of rifle-fire until volleys could no longer be distinguished, and howling them down came the relentless grinding *dud-dud-dud* of the machine-guns. Two long hours it lasted without intermission, while Bernard listened tense with excitement and anxiety. Then there was silence. What did it indicate? Bernard and his friends could only guess, but it meant that soldiers and Volunteers—Irishmen both as it happened—were fighting desperately hand to hand up and down the staircases and in and out of the rooms and corridors of the City Hall and the Daily Express offices. No quarter was asked or given in that ferocious *mélée*, and when the blood-stained buildings finally remained in the hands of the military a deathly silence settled down over the city.

'What does it mean?' asked Bernard.

'Hard to say,' replied Hector. 'Probably they've found infantry assaults too costly and they're going to bombard us.'

'Poor old Dublin!' said Bernard. He was filled with dismay. The destruction of the dear old city was a melancholy prospect enough, but the possible fate of its three hundred thousand inhabitants was too terrible to contemplate.

'They couldn't do it,' he said.

'Couldn't they!' said Hector ominously.

'It doesn't make much odds either way,' said Stephen. 'Another few days like this and we'll all be starving.'

4

DUBLIN has reason to be proud of Easter Week, for the gay, shabby, majestic old city bore herself bravely during six days' agony. While her young Volunteers, sleep-

less, hungry, and bewildered, fought heroically against overwhelming odds, her citizens faced the horrors which had so suddenly and unexpectedly fallen upon them with calmness and fortitude. Indeed their principal feeling throughout was one of curiosity, and they were foolhardy in the extreme in their desire to satisfy it. Tradesmen went about their humdrum and necessary business with matter-of-fact courage in face of every danger. So long as there was milk to deliver the milkmen delivered it ; so long as there was bread it did not remain undistributed ; and it was the same with all the providers of necessities. When the fires began to add a new horror to the situation the fire brigade crossed bullet-swept zones to fulfil their duty and so saved the city from certain destruction. Of panic there was no sign anywhere.

On Wednesday the bombardment began. In the morning the gunboat *Helga* steamed up the Liffey, pounded Liberty Hall into ruins, and proceeded to drop shells into Sackville Street. Rifle-fire at the same time began afresh and the machine-guns recommenced their infernal racket. To those who listened it seemed that the whole city must inevitably be destroyed, for what buildings could possibly survive the fearful tornado that smote upon their ears ? As soon as the din slackened in one quarter it burst forth even more vigorously in another. Thus, when the dwellers on the south side noticed a slight diminution in the distant roar from Sackville Street, with shattering suddenness crashed forth a violent fusilade close at hand : where troops newly arrived from England and on the march from Kingstown had fallen upon the Volunteer outposts in the Pembroke area and been repulsed with heavy loss. And even as the sounds of this conflict died away, from the south-east with redoubled intensity burst out the cannonade which the *Helga* was directing against the stronghold of Boland's Mill. Then it too gave place to the sounds of a fresh attack from the north. So all day long the thunder of battle rolled unceasingly ; it went on muttering even after

dark ; and there were vicious bursts at intervals during the night.

Thursday brought hunger and the fires. There was no milk that day, and no bread : people counted themselves lucky to scrape together a meal of black tea, stale crusts, and scraps of meat. The sun shone brilliantly as it did all through the week. The battle roar boomed forth again, more heavily than ever, but it had ceased to terrify. It had become monotonous. All count of time had been lost ; people felt almost as if the rebellion had always been, and came to accept it as a thing of custom and part of the natural order of the day. On Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday people had asked each other incessantly : 'How long is it going to last?' On Thursday they asked it no more.

About midday came the first of the fires. Following the fall of a succession of shells a thin wisp of smoke rose up from a shattered house in Abbey Street. Almost simultaneously a second appeared farther on. There was no pause in the shooting. Flames began to leap out of the windows of some of the houses, and still shell after shell dropped in the area. A dense column of flame-reddened smoke came billowing up out of the wrecked buildings, and with a crackle and roar and the thunderous fall of beams and masonry the fire began to spread in every direction. Soon the whole block of buildings bounded by Abbey Street, Sackville Street, and Eden Quay was ablaze. Great black-and-ruddy pillars of smoke rose up into the sultry air, eddying and bulging and spreading themselves into a vast canopy aloft. As night fell the terrified inhabitants saw the sky lit by a lurid glare, and so immense was the conflagration that even in the outlying districts the spectators received the impression that it was close at hand. It was generally believed that the whole city was doomed, and that night nobody slept.

5

'Our boys are the stuff,' said Hector to Stephen. 'They sure are making some stand.'

'And all for nothing,' replied Stephen. 'What waste of courage and material.'

It was the evening of the fourth day of the insurrection. The sounds of battle were continuous; the smell of burning tainted all the atmosphere; the glow from the flames of Sackville Street leaping skyward grotesquely illuminated the smoking-room of the Neptune, paling the light of the single candle that burned on the mantelpiece.

'I don't like the look in Bernard's eye,' said Stephen. 'He's been over-wrought during this last month and this catastrophe seems to have upset him completely. He's in the mood for any kind of folly, I'm afraid. Where is he now?'

'Out on the roof,' said Hector. 'He's like a young soldier under fire for the first time. There are two kinds of men and they each act differently in that situation: one sort gets panicky and wants to run away; the other sort gets nervy and wants to get near the firing. That's Bernard's sort. I hope he's not going to do anything silly.'

Abruptly the cannonade stopped and they could hear faintly the hiss and crackle of the Sackville Street furnace.

Out on the roof stood Bernard gazing fascinated at the blaze. Great tongues of flame licked at the purple sky and playing on the smoke-columns gave them a sanguine hue. Black and red was the canopy that obscured the face of the moon, who, just past her full, glanced down once through a rent in its texture and straight was veiled again. Jets and cascades of sparks spurted up and were blotted out or tumbled back to earth. Sooty and flaming particles drifted about close at hand and fell around him. The acrid smell of burning tickled his nostrils. The rims of his eyes and the back of his throat

smarted. After the cessation of the cannonade the random rifle-shooting of the night was resumed.

‘Poor old Dublin!’ he muttered.

The last two days he had passed in a state of hardly suppressed nervous excitement. With the music of the guns stirring the battle-lust of the warrior latent within him he had found it increasingly difficult to restrain himself from rushing out headlong into the fight, and the impassivity of his friends had been a source of constant irritation. As the fight progressed the actual circumstances of its bringing about became less and less important to him; and more and more clamant came the call of Ireland and his comrades. Swamping all ratiocination rose the feeling that Ireland was fighting for her life and that he was standing aside and looking on. As the battle raged fiercer and fiercer he fancied that the Bocanachs and Bananachs and Witches of the Valley, that had danced on the spearpoints of the warriors of the *Táin*, were riding the shells and rushing behind the bullets, shrieking over the carnage and destruction of the fray, and mocking at him in his safety and seclusion.

‘Keep cool,’ Hector had said to him. ‘There’ll be another fight after this. When they come to conscript the country who will there be to lead the people unless we survive?’

But now he was in no mood to think. He beheld his city devoured by flames; he foresaw the downfall of his country and the destruction of the movement that had been his pride; he had heard in the streets the curses of the people against the insurrection, its leaders, and all who had act or part in it. He was weary of life too: he had borne more sorrow in a month than comes to many in years; and he asked himself whether existence would be endurable in the beaten and enslaved Ireland of the future.

‘What is there left to live for?’ he cried. ‘What is life without hope? What more poisonous than vain regrets?’

With that he gave one more look at the leaping fury in the southern sky, rushed down from the roof, and, hatless and unarmed as he was, went out into the night.

Stephen and Hector heard the hall-door slam, and half-suspecting what had occurred they started up and made one for the door, the other for the roof. Stephen opened the door and looked out, but no one was in sight. Hector came down and announced that Bernard was gone.

'I expected it,' said Stephen.

'Oughtn't we to go and look for him?' said Hector, but Stephen shook his head.

'No use,' he said. 'We'd never find him now, and even if we did we couldn't bring him back.'

Meanwhile Bernard was seeking the way to the Post Office. It would have been impossible to reach it by Sackville Street, bullet-swept as it was and lit up by the glare of the burning buildings, so he went hunting for a way round to the west, hoping to strike on Mary Street and so slip in by the rear. But this part of town being unfamiliar to him he lost himself. Wandering vaguely on he got entangled in a labyrinth of by-streets and finally lost all sense of his direction until, happening on a wider street, he got a glimpse of the Pole Star, by whose guidance he set forward once more on a south-easterly course.

And then he encountered the sentry. Right at the end of the street he stood, an unmistakable figure in his trench helmet and with the moonlight glinting on his fixed bayonet. Bernard was astonished to see him, and dismayed too, for he was himself unarmed. He guessed, however, that in the by-street he had got through the cordon which the military were drawing round the centre of the city, and he realised that to reach the Post Office he must break his way back through it. So he went on. Slinking slowly along the shadowy side of the street he got to within twenty yards of the sentry, whose back was towards him, without being heard. Then, bracing him-

self, he made a rush. The sentry turned at the sound of running feet, but Bernard was upon him before he could bring his rifle to the present. They grappled, but not for long. The soldier was a degenerate little factory hand and Bernard flung him easily. Down he went, his rifle underneath him, and Bernard on top. The soldier attempted to shout, but Bernard gripped his throat with his left hand, half strangling him, and looked about for a weapon. The bayonet caught his eye. Throwing his whole weight on top of the enemy and holding on tight to his throat, with his free hand he unfixd the bayonet from the rifle. There was fear and horror in the soldier's eyes, which made Bernard pause a moment. Then 'It's my life or yours' he muttered, and with some difficulty forced the steel home. The soldier gave a gasp and a shudder and then became limp.

At that a cold reaction came upon Bernard. Rising to his feet and dropping the bayonet he stood gazing down on the corpse.

'Poor devil!' he muttered.

All the fire had gone out of him, leaving him weak and hesitating. He remained standing there gazing stupidly at his victim. The dead eyes were starting from their sockets; the throat was bruised; there was a great dark stain on the breast of the tunic.

'My God! I've killed a man!' he told himself in ghastly realisation.

He thought of those to whom that poor body might be dear . . .

He had no desire to get to the Post Office now, and even as he thought of making for home he heard footsteps approaching. He turned and fled back the way he had come. There were sounds of pursuit for a while, but he soon left them behind. He slackened his pace and wandered on. He was lost once more in the dark deserted streets, but still he blundered forward. He knew not what he was doing nor where he was going. In his condition of physical and mental exhaustion everything

about him seemed unreal, and he felt as if he were in a nightmare.

It was in this condition that he fell into the hands of a military patrol. The meeting was a surprise to both parties, for they were simultaneously approaching a street corner at a moment when a prolonged spell of firing obscured all other sounds. Bernard was seized before he had time to realise what had happened, and in his state of carelessness and stupefaction he made no attempt to answer the questions put to him.

'There's blood on 'is 'ands, sergeant,' observed one of his captors.

'—— me!' ejaculated the sergeant. 'Then we'd best lock 'im up.'

Bernard was put in charge of a corporal and three men who marched him off forthwith.

'If you're one of these 'ere Sin Finers,' observed the corporal, 'you've no call to be ashimed of it. They can fight orlright. As I said to Bill 'ere this morning, standing as you might say on the edge o' the grive, with the bullets whizzing orl rahnd us, "—— me, Bill," I says, "these fellows are the stuff."'

Bernard remained silent, and in another minute they reached the gloomy sprawling bulk of a military barracks. A lamp flashed through the gate which was immediately opened.

'Taken in arms?' asked the sergeant of the guard when Bernard was handed over.

'Unharmed,' replied the corporal.

'Lucky for him,' said the sergeant.

A tall man in civilian clothes came forward out of the guard-room and after a careful scrutiny by the light of a lamp which he carried seemed to recognise Bernard.

'Important prisoner,' he grunted.

Bernard's original captors marched away. He was placed in the custody of a fresh corporal's guard and conducted across the gravelled barrack-yard to a door in one corner; then down a flight of steps, along a flagged

corridor, dimly illuminated and dismally echoing, down another flight of steps, and into another corridor dark and damp and cold. The corporal switched on an electric torch, took a key from his pocket, and pulled open a heavy iron door, revealing a cavity blacker than night.

Bernard was thrust inside and the door was slammed and locked. He was in utter darkness. The sound of the receding feet of his captors died away in the distance, and he felt that the last link connecting him with the living world was gone. He was entombed.

He stood for a few moments absolutely still, stunned by a feeling of overwhelming despair. Then gradually his senses became again perceptive. No ray of light penetrated the obscurity. The atmosphere was cold yet oppressive, and stank abominably. Walking round the cell he found that it was very small, which seemed to add to its horror; and he was seized by a fierce despairing impulse to kick and batter at the door. He restrained it, however, though the sensation of being buried and forgotten was chillingly real.

His body ached with bruises. One of his nails had been torn off in the struggle with the sentry, but in the march of events the wound had gone unheeded. Now that he had time to think he became painfully conscious of its burning agony. He tried to assuage it by sucking, but this only made it worse. He tried leaving it alone, but still it tortured him. He put it in his mouth again and by the counter-irritation of gnawing the finger low down near the knuckle gained some relief.

He wandered about aimlessly. He was tired and longed for sleep, but the notion of sleep in that tomb appalled him: it would be too like death. Moreover he shrank from touching any part of the cell, imagining the walls to be slimy and filthy and dreading to think of what might not be on the floor. So he stood in the dark for an hour or more, wondering, grieving, thinking, despairing. Nature, however, proved too strong for him. His frame was exhausted, his eyelids weighted. He sat down in a

corner of the cell, leaning his head against the wall. His hand, dropping to the floor, came in contact with some nameless shapeless filth, the touch of which made him shudder. And after that he fell asleep . . .

He was awakened by the arrival of a soldier with food. There was a dim grey light in the cell coming from a narrow slit very high up in the wall. Very faint and far away he could hear the muffled rumble of war.

6

'THINGS are quieter this morning,' observed Hugo McGurk on Friday.

He and his section held a house commanding one of the canal bridges. Every window-pane in the building had been smashed and the embrasures were fortified with sand-bags, mattresses, and articles of furniture. These ramparts had been riddled and splintered by bullets, and the front of the house was chipped and spotted and scarred all over, for the position had been under fire most of the previous day. The garrison had originally numbered eight, but two had been slain, and three of the survivors wore bandages. Smoke-grimed, hungry, and exhausted, they had scarcely left their posts at the windows for close on eighteen hours, but their spirits were still undaunted. No heart could fail under McGurk's cheery command.

Grimmest and most fearless of all the garrison was the grizzled recruit John Malone. Firing with deadly speed and accuracy he had done more to repel yesterday's assaults than all the rest of his companions put together. Towards the end of the day a bullet had pierced his right forearm, but he had barely given time to allow it to be bandaged before he was back at his post dealing out death once more. It was to him that McGurk's remark had been addressed.

'I guess things will be all the hotter when they come,' he replied. 'I tell you, sergeant, this has been some fight. Well worth living for, my son.'

The sentry from the roof entered the room just then and saluted McGurk.

'Troops massing at the end of the road,' he reported.

McGurk made the round of his defences.

'Hold your fire till you're sure to hit, boys,' he said. 'Mulligan, keep your head down. We can't afford any more casualties. . . . Kelly, don't waste your ammunition. . . . Now, boys, they're coming . . .'

A tornado of firing burst forth as he spoke. Bullets came through the windows and pattered on the opposite walls. The rooms were filled with smoke and dust. A motor lorry came down the street and on to the bridge. Then there was an explosion and it came to a standstill. Malone had emptied his magazine into the bonnet. Soldiers poured out from it and made a rush for the house. Down went three of them: a few ran back: half a dozen came storming at the garden gate. The man at the window over the hall-door dropped his empty rifle and fired both barrels of a shot-gun loaded with buck-shot into the midst of them. Four fell, and the remainder ran away screaming with pain. More soldiers came pouring over the bridge. Malone, hurrying not at all, but still firing with the same monotonous regularity, picked off man after man and drove the survivors behind the waggon for shelter. Some of them began shooting from this piece of cover, and Mulligan fell dead with a bullet in his brain.

'Steady, boys!' cried McGurk. 'Heads down! Shoot slow.'

There was a lull in the combat. A bandaged warrior stepped up to McGurk.

'Ammunition nearly gone,' he said.

'Well, well,' said McGurk. 'We'll have to retreat, I suppose.' He thought a moment. 'Have you any ammunition left, Malone?' he shouted.

'Plenty,' called back Malone.

'Well, the rest of you fall back over the roofs,' said McGurk. 'You take command of them, Mick. Me

and Malone will hold the rear for a bit. Carry on now.'

The man saluted and marched off with his three comrades.

'Here they are again,' cried Malone, and reopened fire. McGurk dropped behind a sand-bag and did the same. His shooting was wilder than Malone's and not so effective, but he did some damage all the same. It was, however, hopeless for these two to stop the enemy's rush. Over the bridge it came and into the garden. A terrible explosion told of bombs flung at the door, and at that moment Malone gave a cry of pain and rolled over. McGurk rushed to his side.

'I'm done,' said Malone. 'You'd better git.' And he died.

It was too late to retreat. Down went the door with a crash and the enemy surged into the hall and up the stairs. McGurk rushed out on to the landing. *Bang!* went his last cartridge and the foremost soldier dropped. On came the others, a tall man and a little man at their head. McGurk at the stair-head crossed bayonets with the tall man, and the little man tried to run in under his guard. McGurk knocked up the tall man's rifle and dealt the little man a kick in the stomach that sent him reeling. Back and forward went McGurk's bayonet like the tongue of a snake, jabbing the tall man in the chest. Before he could withdraw it another man leapt over the body of the little man and stabbed McGurk in the side. McGurk uttered a curse and went back a step. Another man thrust at him, wounding his thigh. With a roar of anger McGurk clubbed his rifle and smashed in his assailant's head, but at the same moment he was wounded again by another foe. Then at last he fell and the whole band swarmed up and over him, trampling the life out of him . . .

Once more the tumult of war crashed over the city. With redoubled intensity the big guns boomed and the machine-guns rattled, and gallantly the diminishing rifles

of the Volunteers answered back. The Post Office, heart and brain of the insurrection, was being shelled. After twenty minutes of intense bombardment those who watched saw the Republican Flag become obscured by a cloud of smoke. Up from the roof rushed a swirling black column, and soon afterwards a long flame curled up out of one of the windows and licked at the foot of the flag-staff. Little figures could be discerned running about on the roof desperately fighting the flames amid a hail of bullets. Their efforts were useless. Out of the windows and through the roof leaped the red blaze. Soon the whole interior was irretrievably involved and the building had become a vast raging furnace. With a crash the whole internal structure fell in and a gigantic pillar of smoke and flame and sparks and incandescent fragments shot up into the sky. Down came the sparks again in a glittering cascade; up rushed another fury of flames; down rolled the smoke in coiling, fuming billows, spreading themselves abroad or dissipating themselves in filmy clouds. Soon nothing was left of the building but the four bare walls, from one corner of which the flag still flew. It was still flying over the red glowing embers when night fell. For an hour after dark it still fluttered feebly in the breeze. Then suddenly the staff lurched forward and went down.

7

LONELINESS intolerable; darkness impenetrable; despair unfathomable: another long night stretched before Bernard in his subterranean dungeon. The day had been long and tedious enough. After the man who had brought him food in the morning had departed, not a soul had come near him, not a sound had been heard in the corridor outside. He began to fear that he had been forgotten. As the weary hours dragged themselves along he waited and hoped, hoped and waited for another visit, however brief: anything to break the appalling silence and monotony. But the grey light faded, the night

began, and he knew that he was abandoned. What had happened? Was Dublin destroyed? Had the barracks been taken and the garrison slain? Was he to be left here, down in the depths of the earth, to smother and starve? Horrifying thought, that sent him to batter at the iron door until he was exhausted. All his strength was gone now, and he was sick with hunger. He tottered and fell, bruising his head on the stone floor; then painfully he crawled into a corner and sat still.

He was destitute of hope now and his only wish was that death would come quickly and mercifully. He closed his eyes, thinking of death as a pleasant restful sinking into a warm velvet-like oblivion. He imagined that he felt it coming to him and resigned himself to it joyfully. But he was only falling asleep. In a short time he was awake again, shivering with cold, and with a throbbing pain in his head that made the pain in his finger seem mild by contrast. He groaned in anguish to find himself still alive. 'Buried alive!' a voice seemed to say to him. 'Buried alive! Buried alive': the terrible words, beating rhythmically in his brain, made him want to make another dash for freedom, but he found himself too weak to rise. How his head ached! He slept again; slept and woke alternately through several shivering hours. While he slept he dreamed, and while he lay awake his brain worked feverishly and automatically. He could no more control his thoughts than his dreams: both took possession of him and made him their plaything. Soon he was unable to distinguish between the dreams of his sleeping and those of his waking, which became intermingled and continuous like the strands of a thread or the threads of a tangle.

He lived over again the events of the past month. He saw Eugene fighting desperately for his life amid fire and darkness: heard him calling for help: saw him go down before a dozen bayonets and turn reproachful eyes on himself standing by inactive. He saw scenes from their life as boys: saw himself treating Eugene always

with scornful neglect : saw Eugene vainly attempting to propitiate him and make friends : saw again that reproachful look in his eyes. He felt himself base, with a baseness of which he had never been conscious before . . . In the red fire-glow from his own hearth he saw Willoughby as he had seen him their last evening together. Then the hearth vanished and the glow seemed to come from a burning village. He found himself standing beside a grave in Picardy feeling once more the flood of grief burst over him with all the keenness of first realisation.

He saw his early days of courtship with Mabel, but they were no longer days of undiluted happiness. Always they were strolling along a dark cedar-bordered avenue and frequently quarrelling over some trifling difference. Then they would come round a curve and beyond it Janet would be standing, and she would say : ' I wouldn't quarrel with you. Why did you hurt me ? ' Then he would start forward to go to her, but Mabel would hold him back, and Janet would disappear in the shadows. Afterwards he and Mabel would be walking together in the Dublin streets, and Musgrave's bestial face would appear out of a cloud of dust. Mabel would say : ' You like dust and all sorts of horrid things : so you can keep them,' and she would leave him and go over to Musgrave. Another time she was remonstrating with him for sacrificing their marriage to politics, and he was replying that politics was a sacred duty. Then appeared Austin Mallow saying : ' Do you think we'll let ourselves be held back by you ? Our minds are made up, and if you interfere we'll crush you without a thought.' And at that Mabel burst out laughing and said : ' So there's your lovely politics : and you'd sacrifice me for that ! ' Thereupon he showed her a picture of the island of his childish imagination, and opening his soul to her as he had never done in life unfolded to her all his hopes and projects ; but at these she only laughed and said : ' That's not politics. It's only a dream.' ' Only a dream ! ' he replied.

'No, the world is a dream if you like, or rather a nightmare. These are the only realities.' But she merely laughed again, and in the midst of her laughter he awoke to the dark silence of the dungeon.

In this waking interval his thoughts reverted to the insurrection. What would be its results, he asked himself. What would be the fate of the rebels? Of his friends? Of himself? Death, he felt certain, would be meted out to the rebel leaders, and perhaps to the rank and file as well. He and his friends would be less fortunate: long sentences of penal servitude would be their fate: a dreary desolate prospect of wasted life sickening to contemplate. At that he gave way to a recrudescence of violent anger against the authors of the calamity and the things they had done to enforce their will. What had they achieved? In one mad week they had shattered the work of years: dead were some of the bravest hearts in Ireland: broken was the orderly, constructive, enthusiastic movement that was to have been built up until it had become the Irish nation. He gave himself up to vain regrets over his vanished hopes. And what of the future? Stephen's prophecy came back vividly to his memory. He saw the Irish people, helpless and leaderless, tortured and dragooned, and conscripted into the armies of the oppressor. He saw Ireland, plundered of wealth and manhood, lose sight at last of the light of freedom which till then had never been eclipsed. For if the things that were done on Easter Eve can be repeated or defended, then there can be no more trust amongst Irishmen; and the country whose sons cannot trust one another can never be freed. So a despair blacker than his dungeon settled on Bernard's soul: despair for his country, despair for his friends, despair for himself. And out of his despair rose a hatred such as he had never felt before for the prime author of all these disasters: the great soulless enemy that had seized and tortured and wrecked his country and left it a wasted island of thwarted desire and lost endeavour. Over and over again, sleep-

ing and waking, the same hatred, the same anger, the same regret, bitterness, and disillusionment turn and turn about haunted and racked his brain; over and over again the same dreams and visions flickered before his imagination, wove themselves into one vast pantomimic nightmare and left his mind a bewildered incoherent turbulence. Grinning faces made mock of him, harpies snatched feasts from him, policemen tore him from the altar just as he was about to place the wedding ring on Mabel's finger. He argued interminably with hosts of people that he knew about the same perpetual subject—Ireland and the war—tormented as much by his own fiery logic as by the stupidity of his opponents, and could never prevail. He stooped gigantically out of the clouds and watched fantastic battles raging in the island of his childish dreams. He saw the right and wrong in their quarrels with a god-like dispassionateness, and sought to intervene: vainly, for he was invisible to his pigmy creation and it was impalpable to him. Then the ten nations sprang out of the map as ten ugly little figures that came quarrelling to his feet and demanding judgment from him, which, when he gave it, they laughed to scorn and went on quarrelling. He saw Europe spread out before him like a map, with little grey lines of smoke, like the fume of a blown-out match, where the battles were: no sound, no sign of the conflict but this; but a vast and woeful wailing arose on all sides that assailed his ears in his ethereal altitude. He saw the whole world handed over to three demons wearing the faces of Sheringham, Tracy-Sidbotham, and Musgrave. He saw the malevolent glee with which they took the sphere and rent it asunder and tossed it into a great fire. The fire leaped up all round him and he found himself standing in the witches' cauldron of Sackville Street; saw the city ringed round by hosts of demons led by the same infernal three. He stood in the middle of the street shouting denunciations at them, at which they shrieked with laughter. He argued and expostulated with them, and

the demon whose face was Sherringham's cried: 'Of course you're right. That's why you're going to be crushed.' At that a perfect storm of hatred swept over him and he rushed headlong at the ring of ghastly faces, but even as he did so they vanished, and he found himself in a dark street gazing down on the corpse of the soldier he had killed. His eyes were fixed in a hideous stare, and even as Bernard looked into them the flame of life leaped in their depths. At that such terror came upon him as he had never experienced in life: a cold transfixing terror that paralysed every muscle in his body, glued his feet to the ground, and set every molecule in his brain in furious vibration: a freezing, devastating terror from which death itself would seem a safe and kindly refuge. He awoke with a shriek, only to plunge back again into a repetition, more tangled and fantastical than before, of the whole hideous delirium. In a few hours he went through an eternity of torment. He had lost all sense of time, all feeling of reality. Existence had become phantasmagorical.

His head ached excruciatingly and seemed ready to burst.

And then: *pitter-pitter-patter*: the scurrying of little feet. Rats? . . . Instantly he was frozen with horror. His heart stood still. A cold sweat broke forth on his brow. He felt his hair rising on his scalp. *Pitter-pitter-patter*. It was somewhere in the room, looking at him. It could see in the dark. *Pitter-pitter-patter*. Another? How many? . . . Frantically he realised his position, buried underground with this loathsome pattering horror. Shudder after shudder shook his frame. He remembered that he was weaponless, and tearing off one boot he staggered to his feet. The rats, frightened by the noise, scudded away, but he fancied they were assailing him. Their numbers sounded legion. . . . He shrieked with terror and fell . . .

In his debilitated condition the revival of a childish fear was enough to turn his mental balance, already weighted

against sanity by sorrow, disillusionment, darkness and solitude. It was a madman that they found in the cell on Sunday morning—a piteous terror-distorted figure that cowered in a corner, beating the air with a boot.

8

ALL hell seemed loose in Dublin on Saturday. One after another the Volunteer outposts had been swamped or driven in, and now the main positions were isolated one from another, while the cordon was closing tighter and tighter on the centre of the city, where somewhere in the mean streets behind the Post Office the chief command had sought fresh quarters. On this position the enemy's artillery was now concentrated. From ten o'clock in the morning till four in the afternoon the bombardment went on relentlessly, still answered feebly by the rifles of the defenders, until the west side of Sackville Street, Henry Street, and part of Moore Street was made fuel for a conflagration which rivalled that of Thursday. Once more the unfortunate people of Dublin saw imminent destruction lowering over their city. Despair at last took possession of them.

'Is this going on for *ever*?' they asked each other, and even as they waited for an answer, the boom of the big guns ceased and the rifle-fire diminished in volume and was no longer continuous. The rebel commanders had surrendered.

Then those who watched from a distance saw a strange sight. A little band of men, not quite a hundred in number, weary, tattered, and grimy, came marching down Sackville Street under a fluttering white flag. They were met at the bridge-head by a party of military, and there at the foot of O'Connell's statue, with the flaming buildings forming a lurid background to the scene, they laid down their arms. The insurrection was over.

Amongst those who surrendered was Fergus Moore. Throughout the fighting this man had performed deeds which would have been heroic had they not been inspired

by suicidal determination. When the flag was shot away it was he who had fixed it up again amid a hail of bullets ; when the Post Office was in flames it was he who was foremost in the futile attempts to extinguish them ; when volunteers had been called for to storm a British barricade he had been the first to offer himself and the only one to return unscathed. He had sought for death and it had been denied him, and now he handed in his arms and equipment with the same bitter smile still hovering on his war-stained countenance.

9

NEXT morning Hector was arrested in bed, but Stephen, who was already up and nearly dressed, made his escape by the roof. By bluff and good fortune he succeeded in passing the cordon ; got away westward out of the city ; swam the Liffey in the neighbourhood of Lucan ; and struck out for his home in the mountains. There was a hiding-place in Glencole which he had discovered as a boy and which he now intended to make use of, relying on his father to supply him with provisions.

In the evening he reached the top of the glen and turned round to look back on the city from the spot whence he had so often gazed as a boy. In the darkness he could dimly discern the great plain which, stretching from sea to sea and dividing the northern mountains from the southern, had rendered possible the conquest of Ireland. Very black to the east lay the sea with a thousand twinkling lights girdling its shore, and the great ray of the Bailey sweeping in a magnificent circle over the cliffs of Howth and the waters of the bay. On the edge of the blackness a dull red spot like a cooling cinder marked the site of the city, and in the sky above it was a delicate glow. The wind sighed in the valley behind him.

He stood for a moment wrapped in melancholy contemplation, but shook the mood off abruptly.

'Regrets are waste of time,' he said. 'What's done is done. What of the future ? Is conscription coming ?

Can we repel it by diplomacy, or shall we have to fight ? . . . And what shall be the national policy now ? . . . Will constitutionalism revive ? What will the war bring ? . . . Is the Revolution coming ? . . . What shall be our next step ?'

His thoughts were far away in the future as he turned and walked down the valley.

10

WHEN everything was over the people of Dublin came forth in their thousands to look at the wreckage ; and mothers and wives went searching the barracks and prisons and hospitals and morgues for those who had fought, or for those who had ventured out foraging or sightseeing and had never returned. Among these went Lady Lascelles seeking her son, whom she found at last by the aid of Mr. George Molloy, the rising young solicitor (who afterwards took charge of the lunacy proceedings).

'What news ?' asked Sandy anxiously from his couch when she returned home after her heartrending discovery.

Lady Lascelles threw herself down on her knees beside her youngest son and burst into tears on his shoulder.

'Is he dead ?' asked Sandy.

'Worse,' sobbed the mother. 'O my three boys !' she cried. 'My broken, wasted boys !'

11

IN his refuge in Glencole, Stephen read of the collapse of the rebellion ; of the minor skirmishes in Galway, Wexford and Fingall, where evidently the countermanding orders had gone astray or been disobeyed ; and of the quiescence of the rest of the country. It was quite clear that Ireland was both puzzled and annoyed by the whole affair ; she repudiated the insurrection and its authors with anger and disdain ; and contemplated their possible punishment with indifference. It seemed for a time as if militant nationalism had slain and discredited itself.

Then came the executions. The insurrectionary leaders

undid by their death much of the harm which the insurrection had done to their cause, for Ireland roused herself in rage when her sons were slain by the foreigner.

News came in slowly to Stephen, for his father dared not visit him too often. First the lists of the executed trickled in ; then he heard of the death in action of The O'Rahilly, McGurk, Malone, and others ; then of the arrest of Casement ; and finally of the rounding up of the Volunteers all over the country. Crowley and Umpleby and Moore were amongst those deported and interned at Frongoch ; Brian Mallow and Hector O'Flaherty received sentences of twenty and ten years' penal servitude. Saddest fate of all was that of Bernard Lascelles.

'What a catalogue of wasted material !' he muttered.

There was no news of O'Dwyer. Presumably he had escaped arrest. One vaguely familiar name hovered hither and thither through the newspapers. Mr. Molloy the rising young solicitor rose higher and higher on the wreckage . . .

'And now,' said Michael Ward to his son, 'now that everything has turned out as I told you it would, what do you mean to do ?'

'I suppose,' replied Stephen, 'we must begin all over again.'

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