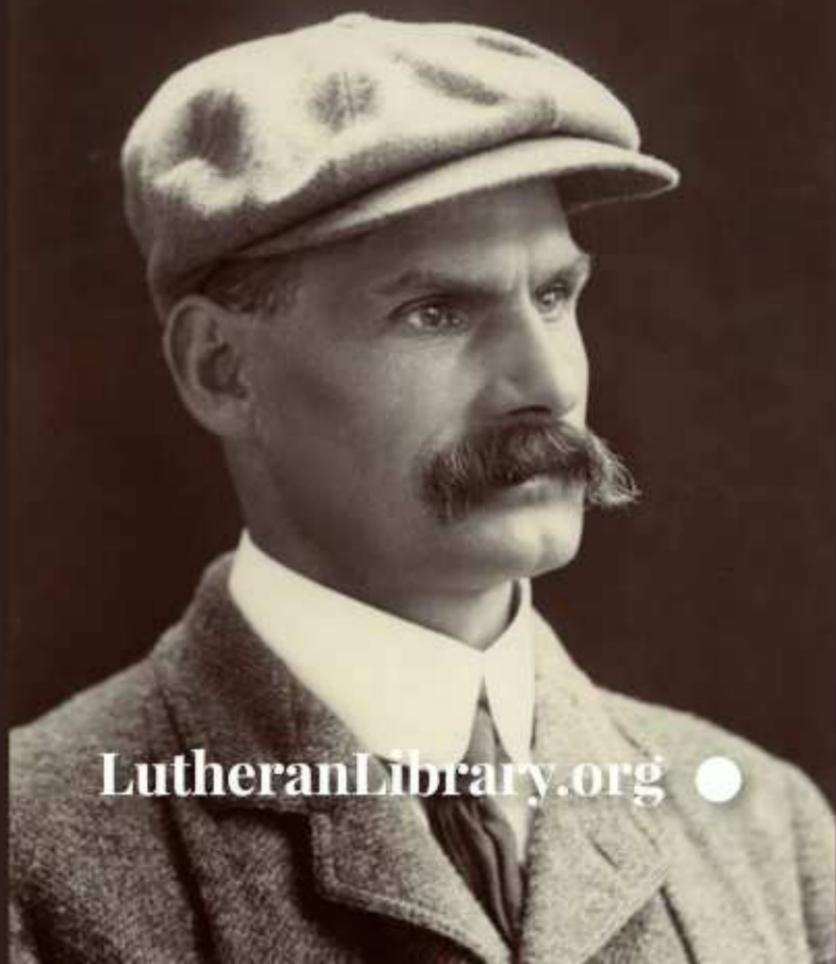


Joseph Hocking

The Jesuit



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"The history of the Church confirms and illustrates the teachings of the Bible, that yielding little by little leads to yielding more and more, until all is in danger; and the tempter is never satisfied until all is lost. – Matthias Loy, *The Story of My Life*

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THE JESUIT

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Andrew Boconnoc's Will

The Day of Judgment

A Flame of Fire

The Sword of the Lord

Prodigal Daughters

A Strong Man's Vow

The Woman of Babylon

CASSELL & CO., LTD., LONDON

THE JESUIT

BY

JOSEPH HOCKING

*Author of "Andrew Boconnoc's Will," "The Sword of the Lord,"
etc. etc.*



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CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
1. A FIGHTING CHANCE	I
2. THE STRANGER AND THE WARNING	II
3. COUNTING THE VOTES	21
4. AN OLD MAN WITH CONVICTIONS	32
5. GASCOIGNE SENDS FOR HELP	42
6. THE DISAPPEARANCE OF EVE GASCOIGNE	53
7. MORTON GASCOIGNE'S BROTHER	64
8. EVE GASCOIGNE'S LETTER	74
9. DREAM-PICTURES	84
10. THE SPIDER AND THE FLY	95
11. THE PLOT THICKENS	105
12. I GO TO IRELAND	115
13. KATHLEEN CASTLEREAGH'S HOME	125
14. MICHAEL CASTLEREAGH	134
15. I MEET TITUS BREEN	144
16. BREEN UNDER EXAMINATION	154
17. MY WOOING	164
18. GEORGE FANSHAWE'S DISCOVERY	173
19. A VISIT FROM SIMON MAYNOOTH	183
20. A STRANGE MEETING	193
21. A VISIT FROM MORTON GASCOIGNE	203

CHAPTER	PAGE
22. THE FOURTH LETTER	213
23. 274 PILCHARD STREET	222
24. SIMON MAYNOOTH'S LOGIC	232
25. THE CALL FROM AFAR	244
26. BACK AT CASTLEREAGH	253
27. I MAKE A DISCOVERY	262
28. WHAT EVE GASCOIGNE TOLD ME	271
29. DOES KATHLEEN KNOW ?	280
30. TWO MEN IN EARNEST	289
31. MICHAEL CASTLEREAGH'S VOW	298
32. THE BATTLE	307
33. VICTORY	316
34. THE JESUIT	325
35. THE CROWN OF LIFE	334

THE JESUIT

CHAPTER I

A FIGHTING CHANCE

THE great majority of the dwellers upon earth are people with two talents. They are neither very wise nor very foolish, very learned nor very ignorant. Not one in a thousand can be likened to the man with five talents; not one in a thousand can be likened to the man with only one. The preachers preach earnestly about the five-talented man and the one-talented man, but seldom refer to the man with two talents. Yet he typifies the bulk of the human race. The reason, I suppose, is that it is difficult to find anything to say about him—he is so ordinary.

I have often, as I have walked along a busy thoroughfare, made a study of people's faces. Each man has his battle to fight, and each his work to do, but one feels that, in the main, the pessimist in the Old Testament was right in saying that what happens to one happens to all, and that if you knew their story you would know nothing new, and very little that was interesting. And yet Solomon, or whoever wrote the Book of Ecclesiastes, was not altogether right. There is generally one face in the crowd that is interesting; there is one person who has had experiences that are unknown to the multitude. Get to know that person, and you feel that the atmosphere of life has changed; get him to tell his story, and you live in the world of romance.

I can make no claim to having more than two talents, although, in my pride, I sometimes fancy I have. Whether that which has happened to me is out of the

common and romantic or not, those who read these pages must judge for themselves. Certain it is, however, that but for the belief that my experiences have been unusual, if not unique, I should not have determined to set them on paper.

My name is Kerry Trevanion Killigrew. As will be seen, one of my Christian names is Irish, while my surname is Cornish. Hundreds of years ago the Killigrews were great people in Cornwall. In the time of Queen Elizabeth, a Killigrew was the keeper of Pendennis Castle, which stands on a headland close to the town of Falmouth, while a descendant of this Killigrew was a renowned wit in the Court of Charles II. Time was when the family held large estates in the Delectable Duchy, and occupied an important position in the annals of the nation. As a family, however, the Killigrews have died out. Even the old Arwennack House, in Falmouth, is occupied by strangers, and the glory of the old name is gone. In fact, I am not sure whether I am not the only Killigrew alive to-day. Of course, there may be others, but I have never met any.

None of the Killigrew lands or properties of any sort have come to me. I imagine that I have descended from some branch of the great family, but, although I am proud of my name, I have never taken the trouble to study the family tree, in order to see exactly how my forbears were associated with the great ones of the past. It is true my father told me when I was a lad that I came in a very nearly direct line of descent from the governor of Pendennis Castle. Certain it is, however, that I have no claim to the old estates, and the Manor House and five hundred acres of land which I possess were the dowry of my great-grandmother, who bore the name of Trevanion—a name as old as Killigrew, and one that has also died out and become well-nigh forgotten. Still, I love the name of Trevanion, and am glad that it was given to me in the days of my baptism.

I suppose my father's marriage with my mother was a most romantic affair. When he was two-and-thirty a beautiful Irish girl came to Cornwall on a visit to a neigh-

bouring squire. My father immediately fell in love with her, and, in spite of the fact that he knew little or nothing about her, that she had no dowry, and that their views on almost everything in life, including religion, were utterly different, he married her a few weeks after their first meeting.

My mother's picture is lying before me as I write, and as I look at it I do not wonder at what my father did. Those eyes—wild, laughing, roguish, pleading, mischievous, sad, to say nothing of a perfectly oval face, full red lips, and a glorious crown of dark, curling hair shot with gold—must have been enough to turn any man's brain. Even I, although I was very young when she died, can remember the music of her voice, made all the more musical, as it seemed to me, by that suggestion of Irish brogue, and the beauty of her presence. There is only one face to compare with it, but the time to speak of it has not yet come.

The fact is, the Celt in my mother caught on fire the Celt in my father; they loved, and, regardless of consequences, they wedded, and she of whom the old people in this neighbourhood speak even to this day as fitter for a gipsy queen than for a farmer's wife, became mistress of the old Manor House.

My father was a Puritan in religion, and my mother was a Roman Catholic, but he never in the slightest degree interfered with her faith. Indeed, he offered her every facility for worshipping according to her conscience. For the first two years after their marriage a conveyance stood on Sunday morning at the Manor House ready to take her to the nearest Catholic chapel, some seven miles away. In only one matter did he disagree with her, and that was at my birth, when she desired a priest to come and baptise me. But my father would not have it. What passed between them I do not know, but I do know that I was christened in the old parish church, and that the vicar came to dine with my father afterwards.

Whether my mother changed her religion I do not know. Certain it is that her visits to the Catholic chapel became less and less frequent, and she never in any way

persuaded me to depart from my father's faith. An old nurse of mine has told me that she got hold of a New Testament, and this led her to cease being a Papist ; while others have it that the vicar, Mr. Trenoweth, won her to the Protestant faith by his loving counsel. But concerning these things I have grave doubts, for while she ceased to attend the Catholic chapel, she never went either to the parish church or the Methodist chapel, both of which are only a mile away from my home. Moreover, when she died, the Catholic priest claimed the right to bury her, and my father, Puritan as he was, and hating Popery as he did, made no demur against her being buried according to the rites of the Roman faith. I imagine, therefore, that although her belief in Romanism became weak, she never accepted the faith of my father.

For that reason I was always led to think kindly of the Catholic religion, not because I knew anything about it, but because of the love I had for my mother. Indeed, that fact has always made me sympathetic with the hopes and aims of the Irish. For am I not half Irish myself ?

My father did not long survive my mother's death. I was but ten years old when she died, but I shall never forget the look on his face. I scarcely knew him, so drawn and haggard were his features and so great was the look of agony in his eyes. In less than two years he died. He was buried in the grave where my mother lay, Mr. Trenoweth reading the burial service, while Father O'Brien, who had buried my mother, stood by and watched the proceedings with, as I thought, an angry look in his eyes.

From twelve to eighteen years of age I was away at school, a distant relative having undertaken to manage the farm until I was old enough to take the responsibility on myself, my father's executors seeing to it that the man did his duty faithfully. From eighteen to twenty-one I learnt the secrets of farming. I had five hundred acres of land, and while over a hundred acres were woods and moorland, there was enough to yield me a tolerable income.

Had I consulted my inclinations, I do not suppose I should have chosen to be a farmer; but it was my father's wish, and I never thought of objecting to it. Besides, I had time to pursue the studies I loved, and my education being fairly good, I was looked upon by the vicar, by the Methodist minister, as well as by the inhabitants of the village, as something of a scholar.

At twenty-one I took upon me the work of managing my own farm, keeping the distant relative as foreman. I am inclined to think that this was something of a mistake, as it is hard for a man who has been master to take orders from another. But I was determined to be master on my own lands, and although it hurt me sorely to keep Seth Skidgemore in his place, it had to be done.

Moreover, I was fairly successful. I was not rich, but I had enough for my needs, and I enjoyed my simple life thoroughly. It is true I sometimes found my life rather lonely, but not often. I subscribed to two libraries, and was thus able to obtain a good supply of literature, and as I went to Plymouth every few weeks I was able to fill my own bookshelves with the volumes I loved most. In addition to this, I took so much interest in the affairs of the parish and county that when Mr. Trenoweth told me I ought to seek a wife in order to save myself from becoming a recluse I was able to laugh at him. Indeed, by the time I was twenty-five I was noted for miles around as a speaker on public questions, and it was more than once hinted to me that I ought to be invited to contest one of the Cornish constituencies when a vacancy should occur.

To this, however, I had to give a cold hearing. It is true I was comfortably off, but I was not rich enough to fight an election and possibly enter Parliament. Skidgemore had only just made the farm pay during my minority, and although there had been an improvement when I took the reins in my own hands, there were so many things necessary to be done that most of my capital was swallowed up.

Besides this, however, I found myself regarded as a political heretic. I could not utter the shibboleth of

either party, and I found that at political headquarters free-lances were looked upon with suspicion. In the main I subscribed to the principles of one of the great historic parties (which, I need not say, for this story has but little to do with party politics), but I was too heretical to be regarded as a "safe man."

Presently, however, my fortunes underwent a change, more by luck, as it seems to me, than by anything else. I discovered a fairly rich lode of tin in one of my outlying fields, and this discovery led to a mining company being formed. The mine was successful, and at the end of two years I found my income augmented by something like two hundred pounds a year, with prospects of better things in the future. This was when I was twenty-seven years of age, and when my story really commences.

One morning I received a letter from the secretary of a political association, asking whether I would consider an invitation to stand as candidate for Parliament at the forthcoming General Election, and also suggesting that I should receive a deputation from the constituency at an early date.

I must confess that the letter aroused my interest, and before the day was over I had sent back an answer to the effect that, although at the moment I could pledge myself to nothing, I should be glad to receive the deputation.

In due course four men came to see me. One was a shopkeeper, another a small farmer, a third was a struggling lawyer, while the fourth was a retired manufacturer. I was not long in discovering that they were inviting me to fight a forlorn hope. Almost from time immemorial the district had been represented by a member of a well-known local family. This family owned a large amount of land in the district, and well-nigh dominated the trade. Still, there was a fighting chance, and they asked me to lead the fight. They confessed that others had been asked, but they had refused. Indeed, the constituency was regarded as so completely hopeless at headquarters that no money help would be forthcoming. Moreover, those who were of my way of

thinking were in the main poor people, and if I accepted I should have to bear the whole cost of the election myself.

As will be seen, the prospects were not rosy, but I was young and eager for a fight. My finances were in a much improved condition, and although I had no money to squander, I thought I could afford to fight their battle. At that time the political atmosphere was in a heated condition, and as I held very strong opinions, I was burning to give expression to them.

"Well, gentlemen," I said, "I would rather the constituency had been in my native county, but it is not, and there is an end of that matter. The chance is only a fighting chance; still, I love a fight. But have you considered that while in the main I support the party to which you belong, I am a long way from orthodox?"

On this Mr. Jacomb, the lawyer, said he had heard me speak at a political meeting a few miles away, and he came away with the conclusion that I was their man. But would I give particulars of my heterodoxy?

I did so, and the deputation looked rather frightened. Still, as they bluntly admitted, half a loaf was better than none, and they didn't like seeing the other side go in without a struggle.

The upshot of the interview was that I went to the constituency, which I will call Blenheim, although that is not its real name, and was finally selected as the prospective candidate.

Scarcely had I accepted when news came that the Government had resigned, and that the General Election would take place at once. Although it was not favourable to my chances, I was glad that the battle was to be fought quickly, and I entered on the fray with all the enthusiasm, all the energy and confidence of a youth of twenty-seven who starts to fight his first battle.

I quickly discovered the disadvantage of not being supported by a great political party. I could get no well-known speaker to come to my meetings. First of all, Blenheim was regarded as hopeless, and they believed they would only waste their time by coming to my aid,

and for another thing I was not a party man. The few Members of Parliament whom I happened to know were fighting in their own constituencies, and thus I had, with the exception of a few local and uninfluential people, to fight my battle alone.

Still, I did not despair. I found that my youth told in my favour, while my enthusiasm became contagious. Every night my meetings—and I spoke at two or three each evening—became more largely attended. For many years the seat had been uncontested, and although no one seriously believed that I could unseat a man of great wealth and pre-eminent local influence, political feeling ran high. I found that my speeches were discussed everywhere, and that Sir John Bridgetown, who at first laughed at the very idea of my contesting the seat, and refused to speak in the villages, presently began to regard my candidature as serious.

Let me say here that no sooner did I enter upon the contest than I conceived all sorts of visions as to the way I should conduct the campaign. I determined that I would go to no meetings with carelessly prepared speeches; that I would pander to nothing that was base in order to catch a vote, and that I would treat all my audiences, no matter how rustic and unlearned, with all respect, placing the issues at stake before them with as much care as if I were speaking before an assembly of trained politicians. Nature had endowed me with at least two qualities which stood me in good stead. I was as strong as a horse. My father had been a giant of a man, with a leonine head and wonderful powers of endurance, and I had inherited not only his physical appearance but his great strength. Added to this, I came of a race of Celts, who, as all the world knows, are gifted with the power of speech. I do not write easily, but when I am standing before an audience words come to me naturally and without effort on my part. Even when I was a boy of eighteen, and was addressing my first political meeting near Trevanion Manor, I so delighted the audience that many cried out with delight, "Aw, Master Kerry, you've kissed the blarney stoan!"

It may seem egotistic and in bad taste to mention these matters, but I do not do so without a purpose, as these pages will reveal. Moreover, it was largely because I had the power to place difficult questions before an unlettered crowd in a way they could understand that I made considerable progress in the constituency.

Be that as it may, I found myself gaining ground; the people came for miles around to hear me, and even the county papers spoke in a complimentary manner concerning me.

One fact particularly interested me in the numberless meetings which I attended. Wherever I went—and, as I said, I spoke at two or three meetings every night, for the constituency was very large and included a great number of villages—I always saw one man present. He was easily distinguished, for in many of the village meetings he was the only well-dressed man present. He neither manifested dissent nor assent, but he listened carefully to every word I uttered. He asked no questions, although I have a shrewd suspicion that he inspired some that were asked, but he listened with great eagerness while I was replying to the “posers” submitted to me.

I noticed, too, that he always left immediately I had finished speaking, but I invariably found him in the audience when I reached my next meeting. As may be imagined, I inquired who he was, but no one knew. He was a stranger to the district, and no one could tell me where he stayed.

Presently it was agreed that if I stood any chance at all, it was in the villages. In the town of Blenheim and in its immediate vicinity I should get but few votes, but it was admitted even by my opponents that I had gone far to capture “the ignorant villagers.”

Indeed, when we were within a week of the polling day, my opponents admitted that while, of course, there was not a shadow of chance of my being returned, I might reduce their majority.

One night, five days before the date of the election, I returned to my hotel in Blenheim after speaking at three meetings, the faithful stranger being at each one of them,

feeling somewhat depressed. In spite of my youth and strength, my labours were telling on me, and I longed for a respite from the turmoil. I realised the tremendous forces which were against me, and that I had practically to fight the battle single-handed. After supper, however, I felt a little better, and, throwing myself in an arm-chair, I lit a cigar and began to think out my programme for the coming days. I had not been alone five minutes, however, when a servant entered saying that a gentleman wished to see me.

"Who is it, James?" I asked.

"I don't know, sir; he's a stranger."

"Did you ask his name?"

"I did, sir; but he said you wouldn't know it. He asked me to tell you, sir, that he'd come on important political business."

"Is he—that is, does he look like a gentleman, James?" I asked.

"Certainly, sir, I should say so. I thought at first that it was Sir John's agent, sir; but it's not."

"Very well; show him up," I said.

A minute later my visitor entered the room, and at a glance I saw that he was the stranger who had attended my meetings so regularly.

CHAPTER II

A STRANGER AND THE WARNING

"I MUST beg of you to excuse my calling," he said quietly. "I am sure you must be tired after your exertions. You are living a very strenuous life."

"You certainly have a good chance of knowing," I replied with a smile. "You have taken a great interest in my meetings. But pray be seated, and tell me what I can do for you."

He took the chair I drew before the fire and carefully placed his hat and gloves by his side.

"Would you mind if I took off my overcoat?" he said. "It is very cold outside, but it is warm here."

"Pray do," I replied, and watched him while he deliberately divested himself of an expensive fur-lined coat. I noted that he was a spare, thin man, possibly about sixty years of age. He was nearly bald, and what hair he possessed was almost white. His cleanly shaven face, however, showed no signs of the weakness of age. Had he worn clerical attire, he might easily have passed for a studious divine; wearing ordinary layman's attire, he reminded me of an astute and careful lawyer. His lips were rather thin and firmly compressed, his eyes were small and watchful, his forehead somewhat receding. He spoke with great deliberation and very quietly.

I passed him a box of cigars.

"Thank you," he said, "I do not smoke."

"Shall I order you refreshments of any sort?" I asked.

"No, nothing at all, thank you," he answered, and I noticed that he kept looking at me questioningly.

I waited for him to proceed, but he seemed in no hurry to speak. Rather he appeared to take a doubtful

interest in the condition of the fire, at the same time casting quick, searching glances at my face.

"You are sure you are not too tired to talk?" he said presently.

"Oh, no; I am scarcely tired at all now," I replied, and again a silence followed.

Of course I was interested. The man was no ordinary man, as I could see at a glance. Moreover, I realised that he created what, for want of a better word, I will call an atmosphere. He made me expectant. Knowing as I did that he had followed me like a dog from meeting to meeting, I was anxious to know what he had to say.

For at least two minutes there was silence between us; then he said quietly and deliberately:

"I am not a politician, except in an academical sense, but I am fond of dialectics; I am always interested to hear issues which affect a nation presented clearly."

"It has struck me that you have heard only one side in this battle of words," I suggested.

"Would you call it a battle of words?" was his rejoinder. "Yes, in so far as words express ideas, I suppose it is."

He spoke like one thinking aloud to himself.

"You've not heard Sir John Bridgetown?" I queried.

"Oh, yes, I heard him here in Blenheim. He has no sense of humour."

"No? I have heard him described as a bluff, country gentleman who dearly loves a joke."

"He has no sense of humour," he repeated almost wearily.

"What makes you think so?" I asked.

"If he had he would laugh at himself."

He did not smile as he spoke, although I thought I saw his mouth pucker somewhat. After this there was silence for, I should say, a minute.

"I don't think I have the pleasure of knowing your name," I suggested presently.

"Haven't you?" he replied slowly; then he added, almost with a sigh, "No, I don't suppose you have."

I felt like laughing, although I believe I was a little

angry. I think I should have told him that I wanted to go to bed, had he not interested me. But he did interest me, and I wanted to know why he had followed me like a shadow for nearly three weeks.

"Do you think you stand a good chance of winning the seat?" he asked.

"Lookers-on see most of the game," I replied; "what do you think?"

"The unfortunate thing is that in an election like this prejudice is of more importance than principles, and money has more weight with voters than the man."

"That has always to be taken into consideration," I replied. "My business is to make principles overcome prejudice, and to show them——"

"That your manhood is of more value than the other's money."

It was the first time he had spoken quickly and decisively. Indeed, so eager did he seem to speak that I did not think of the compliment his words contained.

I did not reply, but waited for him to proceed.

"Your hope, if you have any, is in the villages, in the country places"; and again he spoke in weary and almost apologetic tones.

"It would seem so," I replied.

"It seems to me wise that you have given so much attention to the villages; but your organisation is poor, your canvassers few," he said.

"Sir John holds the immediate welfare of many of these people in the hollow of his hand," I replied. "In Blenheim he is almost the only landlord; in the other districts his friends own nearly all the property. The people dare not, in the main, openly work for me."

"And yet they listen to you."

"That does not pledge them, nor compromise them. They go to Sir John's meetings also."

"You have no influential speakers, no Cabinet Ministers who come to assist you."

"For one thing they think it would be a waste of time; for another I am not regarded as a sound party man."

"And, of course, your supporters being poor, you have to pay everything out of your own pocket?"

"I understood that before I came," was my answer.

The truth is, I was getting impatient, and was on the point of telling him to go. I was not in the humour to discuss the difficulties of the situation. I knew them well enough.

"You may have noticed me at—at some of your meetings," he said at length.

"Others did also," I made answer. "Many of the meetings were small, and a stranger is easily distinguished."

"I dare say. I dare say." He lay back in his chair and seemed to be thinking deeply.

"Has it ever occurred to you that you have made progress among the poor people by one thing?" he asked.

"There must have been many things."

"No; in the main one thing. You have been wise, and have insisted upon it. You have made the yokels feel it. You have laid stress on the question which shows that Sir John and his class have stolen the people's rights, the people's liberties, the people's birthright. I needn't tell you what that question is; you know it. But your insistence upon that one topic, and, if I may say so, your enthusiastic way of dealing with it, has impressed them. You have fired their dull imaginations; you have aroused them from their sleep. For a week they could not see what you meant, but now they are beginning to see. They are interested in you. Many have made up their minds to vote for you."

"Then you think my chances are good?"

"Excuse me, I never said so. No; I think you will lose, unless——"

"Unless what?"

"You see," he went on, and he almost yawned as he spoke, "the people who will decide this election do not read newspapers. They know how to read, but only a weekly newspaper comes to them, and hundreds—yes, hundreds, of these British voters do not even see the little local rag which appears on Saturdays. The whole constituency is behind the times, and the distance which a

great many of the voters live from a railway station or a library makes them at the mercy of the man who owns the land. They have not a chance of knowing the truth. To read a leading article in a newspaper is to many of them like learning a new language. What the people want is knowledge—knowledge of facts. Those facts need to be placed before them in language which they can understand. In spite of the number of meetings you have addressed, you have only touched a percentage of the voters."

"Yes, yes, I know," I said almost irritably. "That fact has become patent enough to me. But what can I do? My supporters are uninfluential men; they do not possess the gift of speech. The party caucus will send me no help. It is regarded as a hopeless constituency, while I am an unsafe man. For that reason I have to fight my battle alone,"

"Just so, just so," he replied, and then lapsed into silence.

Two or three minutes passed and neither of us spoke. He sat looking into the fire, from time to time throwing a side glance at me, while I, almost angry with myself for speaking so freely to one entirely unknown to me, but still wondering why he came to see me, watched him closely.

"It is getting late," I said presently, looking at my watch, "and I have five hard days before me."

"So you have," he replied, still in the same weary voice, "so you have. What a pity it is you have no organisation, no literature, no anything!"

"Well, I must do without them," was my answer. "By the way, have I forgotten your name, or did you forget to tell me?"

"If anyone were to ask me what you need," he said, "I should feel inclined to say, 'Flood the constituency with literature.'"

"The other side is doing that," I answered.

"Yes, the stuff that is doing duty in every constituency in the country. It is like ready-made clothes—turned out in quantities. and it doesn't fit"

"My party would send me theirs, only I—well, there is so much of it I don't believe in."

"Better without it," he answered almost testily. "But if the main facts in your speeches were served up simply, pithily, and sent out liberally—liberally, mark you—it would tell. How does this strike you?"

He took some papers from his pocket and passed them to me.

"It's plainly written, and it won't take long to read," he said, reverting to his quiet, apologetic tones.

I was about to say that I did not feel in the humour for reading after having given three speeches that night, but altered my mind. After all, the man was not a fool, and he had put his finger on the weakness of my position.

It is no use denying it—someone had put my case better than I could have put it myself. Sentence followed sentence—bold, striking, convincing. They summed up the speeches I had given in a masterly way; they synthesised the principles on which I had been fighting, in a way calculated to appeal to the people in the district.

"How many voters are there?" he asked.

"Fifteen thousand," I replied; "and with the exception of two little towns, containing perhaps three thousand voters, they are scattered over a huge area."

"If what you have read were printed and sent to every voter it would tell," he said.

"I can't afford it," I replied. "I've already spent more than my means justify."

"Two hundred pounds' worth of literature of that nature would work wonders during the next four days," he suggested.

"Impossible," was my answer.

"I am inclined to think it would win the election," and this time he yawned outright.

"No doubt it is what I need," was my reply, "but I've neither local nor party aid, and I haven't got the money to spend

"I'm not a politician," he said quietly, "but in my way I am a sportsman. If a couple of hundred pounds would be of any use to you, I have it with me."

Needless to say, I stared at the man in astonishment, but his face never moved by a single muscle.

"You are anxious to see Sir John Bridgetown thrown out," I suggested.

"I should like to see you go in."

"Do you know Sir John?"

"Not in the slightest."

I must say the offer tempted me, for I was anxious to win, and I knew that his suggestion would be of tremendous advantage to me. On the other hand I felt uncomfortable. I cannot say I liked the man. There was something about him which aroused within me a feeling almost akin to fear.

"No, thank you," I said presently. Then I added tamely, "I think I will play the game off my own bat."

"And get beaten."

"I shall still have fought a good single-handed fight," I said.

"Why do you refuse?"

"To begin with, you are a stranger—and—and I have a sort of family pride."

"I took you for a sensible fellow," he said presently. "Suppose I made a contribution to the funds of your local organisation—would you have refused to use it?"

"That would have been different," I answered.

"Doubtless I have a dull brain," was his reply. "Still, it is refreshing to find a man who will refuse money under any circumstances whatever. By the way, you cannot hinder me from sending out this stuff?" And he pointed to what I had been reading.

"I am not aware that I can," was my reply.

"Ah! I think I will be going."

"At least, I hope to have the pleasure of knowing the name of a man who is so deeply interested in me," I urged.

"In your principles—your principles," he muttered, as I helped him on with his coat. "Good night, Mr. Kerry Killigrew. Kerry, Kerry—that's Irish, isn't it?"

"My mother was Irish," I replied. "Her maiden name was Kerry."

"Ah! Long dead?"

"Seventeen years."

"Seventeen years—seventeen years," he said slowly as he went towards the door. "It's a big piece out of one's life. Good night."

"You haven't told me your name," I said.

"No, I haven't. Honestly, it's not worth the telling. Think of me as Smith, Jones, or Robinson; one is good as another."

He left the room as he spoke, leaving me to wonder as to who my visitor might be. Suddenly, as a thought struck me, I opened the door and rushed downstairs, but only in time to see a carriage dash away into the night.

"Have you found out anything about that gentleman, James?" I said to the man who had shown him in.

"No, sir; but he drove away behind as fine a pair of horses as ever I saw."

"Did you know the coachman?"

"Never saw him before, sir. Excuse me, sir, but here's a letter that came for you just after the gentleman came. I would have brought it to you, but I didn't think you wanted to be disturbed."

I took the letter and walked thoughtfully to my room. It was then I realised that my cigar had gone out, and that I had not smoked since the stranger had taken his seat.

I sat for some time quietly thinking. To say the least of it, the visit was interesting. Here was a man who refused to tell his name, and had yet offered me £200 in order to help me to win the election. He had not asked my views and had demanded no pledges. Who was he? What was his purpose in coming to me?

While seeking for a match to relight my cigar, I realised that I had not yet read the letter which James had handed me.

It had evidently been delivered by hand and not sent through the post, for there was no stamp or post-mark of any sort. The writing on the envelope was in what I will call for want of a better term, "the Italian hand," or what the children in the day school at home

called "sharp hand." It was addressed to "Killigrew, Esq., The Red Lion, Blenheim." I broke the seal and read it. This is what was written :

"If Mr. Killigrew is wise he will give no confidences to, and receive no favours from, the man who visits him to-night."

That was all. There was no signature, no indication from whom the letter came.

"Things are becoming mysterious," I said to myself. I rang the bell and James appeared.

"You say this letter was brought soon after that gentleman arrived, James?" I said.

"Yes, sir."

"Do you know who brought it?"

"Yes, sir. At least I don't. I was standing at the front door, and a little girl came up to the door. 'Is this the Red Lion?' she says, and I says 'Yes'; then she says 'Do Mr. Killigrew stay 'ere?' and I says 'Yes.' 'Will you give 'im this?' she says, and goes away, and that was all."

"She didn't ask you to give it to me at once?"

"No, sir, not that I can remember."

"All right, James, that will do."

A day later every voter in the constituency had a copy of the document which had so interested me. It was sent in a closed envelope, and the paper on which it was printed was of very fine quality.

"The man must have had it ready," I reflected. "What does it mean?"

"During the next four days," to use my visitor's term, the constituency was flooded with literature. Moreover, it was of a nature that pleased me. There was no suggestion of a libellous statement; there was nothing in any way objectionable. Every sentence was couched in dignified language, and yet it was forcible and telling. Moreover, it tended greatly to damage Sir John Bridgetown's candidature and to strengthen mine.

My supporters were delighted, and assured me it was

telling in my favour, and creating dismay in the opposite camp. As for me, I said nothing, although I wondered more and more who the man could be. That he did me good service I could not deny. I realised it at every meeting I attended. There was increased confidence and energy on every side. But I never saw the stranger at one of my meetings again.

CHAPTER III

COUNTING THE VOTES

WHEN the election day came another surprise awaited me. Entirely without my knowledge, a number of conveyances bearing my colours had been imported into the constituency. Several fine motor-cars appeared at the doors of my committee rooms, the chauffeurs stating that they had received instructions to place themselves at the disposal of those who acted for me. Mr. Harper, my election agent, rubbed his hands with delight.

"I begin to have hopes, Mr. Killigrew," he cried.

"What of—winning?"

"Yes, of winning—actually winning. I never saw better election literature than that which has been sent out these last few days. It has not been of the usual 'down with the other side' order. It has been carefully written, and exactly suited our need. I tell you it has done enormous good."

I could not deny what the man said. The literature had been exactly of the order needed. It had appealed to the rustic electors; it had aroused in them a feeling of independence; it had told in my favour.

"There have been brains behind this," went on Mr. Harper, "brains of a first-rate order. Of course, I don't say it would have done anything if you had not been a strong candidate. Excuse me, sir, but I am only stating a self-evident fact, you are a strong candidate. To use the people's own words, you've got the 'gift of the gab,' and you've made the people like you. You've made politics a new, a living, thing to them. On the other hand, Sir John, for all his wealth and local influence, is a stick—the very boys mimic him in the lanes. All the same, I have been terribly afraid. I have known

that Sir John would be able to command motor-cars and carriages galore, while we had nothing but a few farmers' traps. But these motor-cars will work wonders. They will show the people that you have influential friends; and that will tell, sir, it will tell."

"Do you know who they've come from?"

"Not the slightest idea. Of course, I have inquired of the chauffeurs, and they've given me the names of the owners."

"Well, that should mean something. You can find out from that information."

"How can I? Three came from Bristol, some from Brighton, and several from London. The names of big towns tell nothing."

"Then these men gave no detailed addresses?"

"No. Simply Mrs. Smith, Bristol; Mr. Jones, London, and so on."

Evidently my visitor was at the back of it all. He had refused to tell his name, and now he hid the identity of the owners of the cars. But what did it matter? They were sent to help me, and I could do nothing but accept.

"I wish you were married, sir," said Mr. Harper presently.

"Why?"

"The wife of a candidate always counts, especially if she's young and good-looking. Better still, I wish you were engaged to be married. A pretty girl by your side as you drove through the constituency would mean hundreds of votes."

"Well, I am neither married nor engaged," I laughed, "so, unless you take your wife around, there will be no petticoat influence to count."

"You may laugh," said Harper, "but a woman means a great deal. Still, the fact that you are a young bachelor has been a good card to play. Anyhow, I'm very hopeful."

I need not describe the polling day at any length. It was associated with the usual features of an election; but there was nothing out of the common. As I drove from village to village, however, I was confirmed in my

impressions as to the value of the literature. Striking phrases, taken from it, were shouted approvingly after me, while reports constantly reached me that this or that man who had always voted for a Bridgetown, was going to put a cross opposite my name.

The motor-cars bearing my colours flew everywhere; but although I endeavoured to find out particulars concerning them, I was unable. I made up my mind, however, that when the polling was over I would gain the information I desired.

When eight o'clock came, however, the cars vanished like phantoms, leaving no trace behind. Where they came from, no one knew; whither they had gone was a mystery. They had done their work, and they had departed.

"We have done well, sir," said Mr. Harper, when the boxes had been deposited in the Town Hall at Blenheim, and we had returned to my hotel. "We may not win, but no opponent to a Bridgetown ever made such a fight before. I saw Barry, Sir John's agent, a few minutes ago, and he was very downcast. It's been a great fight, sir. Up to now the people have never dared to vote against a Bridgetown, but you've put a new heart into them."

"Well, we shall know by about noon to-morrow," I said. "Whatever the result may be, Sir John cannot say I have dealt in personalities or abuse. I've fought the election fairly."

"You've fought in your own way, sir, and you've fought well. Those speeches of yours, sir——"

"Now, Harper, we've had enough of that sort of talk."

"But it's the talk of the county, Mr. Killigrew. Ask Mr. Jacomb here. In fact, I'm told on good authority that at headquarters they are very sorry they've treated you so coldly. They didn't take a proper measure of you, and they didn't think any man could lay hold of the constituency as you have done."

"Well, I shan't have to thank them, anyhow," I said.

"If you'd only been engaged to be married, Mr. Killigrew, and had your young lady by your side as you attended your meetings and drove around the constituency, I'd have staked my bottom dollar that you'd have come out top."

"And as it is?" I laughed.

"I have strong hopes. But, as you say, to-morrow will tell. Anyhow, those motor-cars—well, they are a poser to me still."

It is no use saying I was not excited during the counting of the votes. It was my first election, and—well, I stood, as it seemed to me, in a peculiar situation. Sir John Bridgetown was accompanied by hosts of influential people, while I had none. A few weeks before I was utterly unknown. I was simply a young yeoman farmer fighting my first political fight.

When the ballot-boxes were first opened Sir John met me, and gave me a cool nod; indeed, he was almost disdainful in his demeanour. I might have been a foeman utterly unworthy of his steel. Besides, he stood in his own town, and he felt that it was an impertinence on my part to dare to oppose him. He looked upon me much as a landlord looks upon a loafer poaching on his domains.

"You think it'll be all right, Barry?" I heard him say, after the counting had been going on some time.

"All right, Sir John. As I make out, we are nearly five hundred ahead up to the present. Of course, it's the Blenheim and Barkley boxes that have been counted, but——"

"That's all right. I've no fear about the villages; they've always stood by me."

"It's a good many years since we had an election, Sir John."

"Yes; but that kind of people don't change. They are all right. Of course, that Killigrew fellow is a talker, but——"

I moved away then. I had not realised that I had been guilty of eavesdropping.

Lady Bridgetown, who was in the room, utterly

ignored me. She seemed more supercilious than her lord. Sir John's eldest daughter, however, was quite jovial.

"I'm glad to know you, Mr. Killigrew. You are a good sportsman, and you've given father a fright. Of course, he wouldn't own it; but you have. Do you think you'll win?"

"I'll prophesy in two hours' time," I said.

"It does father good to be shaken up," she went on. "He seems to have an idea that he has a sort of proprietary right to the seat. Of course, he'll get in; Mr. Barry and everyone else says so, but—I say, do you hunt?"

"I've been in at the death a few times."

"You keep hunters, then?"

"It is one of my extravagances."

"Splendid! When my father is member again, I'll get him to ask you to one of our meets. What do you ride?"

"I'm a heavy fellow. Nearly eleven stone, I am afraid."

"And you shoot and golf?"

"I have all the vices, Miss Bridgetown. Not badly, but I have them."

"Why, you are a paragon of virtue. I say, what's father looking so gloomy about?"

She walked away as she spoke, while Harper came to me.

"We are running neck and neck," he said excitedly.

I caught another look at Sir John's face. It was quite flabby. His great double chin hung loosely over his collar.

"The country boxes are telling," went on Harper, "and Barry's in a funk. Look! see what a way the Bridgetown crew is in. My word, if you win, there'll be something like a riot."

I looked from the Town Hall windows on to the little market square outside. A great crowd had gathered, and every individual member of the crowd seemed excited.

I stood well away from the clerks who were tabulating the results, and as far as possible I kept perfectly cool.

"I hear you are running me close, sir?"

It was Sir John who spoke to me.

"Ah, that's good news—for me," I said.

"But rough on me. Well, I'll give you this credit, you've fought like a sportsman."

"I hope I am a sportsman, Sir John," I said. "If I'm beaten, I'll take my beating like a man, and if I win——"

"Of course, you won't win," he interrupted. "But I say, are you of the old Killigrew family?"

"My name would signify as much."

"I thought it had died out."

"I have a family tree at home somewhere, but I've not taken the trouble to study it."

"You should, sir, especially with a name like yours. And your mother's side, Mr. Killigrew?"

"My great-grandmother was a Trevanion."

"You don't say so! I say—— What's that?"

"They've begun counting the last box, Sir John," said Barry, coming to his side.

"Well, how are things going?"

I did not catch the agent's reply.

"What!" cried the baronet.

"I believe you are safe, but it'll be very close."

The atmosphere of the room began to grow tense with excitement, and I felt my heart thumping loudly against my ribs, although I flattered myself that outwardly I appeared cool and collected.

I went again to the window and looked out. I saw that two factions of the crowd were struggling to obtain a flag, on which I saw the words, "Killigrew is our man. He has opinions of his own!"

"I shall be sorry for the poor beggars who have worked for me if we lose, anyhow," I thought; but I did not go near the desk where the clerks kept adding up figures.

A few seconds later there was a deathly hush in the room. Everyone seemed afraid to speak, or even breathe.

The last ballot-paper had been counted. I looked at Sir John Bridgetown, and I thought he was going to have an apoplectic fit, while Lady Bridgetown looked around the room as if she dared the little piles of voting papers to declare against her husband.

"The figures are as follows," said a voice:

KILLIGREW...	6,917
BRIDGETOWN	6,902

"Fifteen votes! Only fifteen votes!" "It can't be!" "There's a mistake!" "All the boxes have not been counted!" "Sir John out? It's madness!"

"I demand a recount," said Sir John.

After this there was some discussion, and some formalities complied with, while the counters returned to their weary work.

I had never known such excitement before. The time when I broke my first colt, which ran away with me, was nothing to it. The fever of the place and the situation well-nigh mastered me.

"Harper," I said, "keep a sharp look-out. Let each of your men keep to his post."

"Hadn't you better come up yourself, sir?"

"No; I'm going into the next room, where I can smoke a cigar."

"I say, Killigrew, where—where are you going?"

Sir John's voice was shaking with emotion. For a moment I pitied him. Remembering that he thought his position was impregnable, the blow was very great.

"I'm going into the next room to smoke a cigar," I said.

He looked at me as though he could not believe his ears.

"Well, you are a cool one," he said; "but you are a sportsman. Lose or win, give me your hand!"

We shook hands.

"I'm hanged if I don't go with you," he said. "After all, if a man can't stand a licking he isn't an Englishman, and I've been wanting a cigar all the morning."

We entered an empty room where a fire was burning.

"I say," he cried after a few minutes, "I can't rest here, I must go back; but I'm glad to know you, Mr. Killigrew; you are not a party hack, you are a sportsman."

Presently the recount was completed, and the figures confirmed the previous count. I was member for Blenheim.

I needn't describe what followed, except to say that, but for Sir John's handsome behaviour, I believe there would have been a riot; but he took his defeat in such good spirit, and spoke of me in such a hearty way, that the spirit of antagonism gradually subsided, and good-fellowship prevailed.

It was not until nearly four o'clock that I could obtain five minutes rest, and in a few seconds even this was broken by a quiet voice close to my ear:

"Would you mind my congratulating you?"

I turned and saw my anonymous visitor.

"You know, then?" I cried, scarcely knowing what I was saying.

"I have been in Blenheim all the morning."

"I have not seen you."

"I am seldom in evidence," he said wearily.

"Well, I owe my victory largely to you," I cried, with a burst of enthusiasm.

"You think so?"

"I am sure of it. The literature you sent out caught many votes, while the motor-cars were invaluable—for I'm indebted to you for them, am I not?"

"I did have a few friends who were interested in you," was his reply.

"Well, you will find me grateful," I cried.

"I didn't demand any pledges, did I?"

"Pledge or no pledge," I cried, "you may command my services. I am afraid I can never repay you, but if ever I can——"

"Perhaps the time will come when you can," he said, looking steadily at me. "Perhaps I shall tax your gratitude very much—who knows?"

For the first time I felt slightly uncomfortable. I

remembered the anonymous letter, and again I asked myself why he was so anxious for me to win. What ulterior motive had he? Still, I was elated with my victory, and I regarded sinister suspicions as unworthy.

"You will find it difficult to tax my gratitude too much," I said with fervour.

"I shall remember those words," he said quietly, and he began to move away.

"But at least you'll tell me your name before you go?" I cried.

"Oh, my name doesn't matter. Still, since you are so anxious to know, and it's perhaps just as well you should, it is Maynooth—Simon Maynooth. I think you'll find it easy to remember."

It is no use denying it, but I felt depressed. Why, I could not tell. There was nothing sinister in the name; it was Irish for that matter, and I loved Irish names.

"Good day. I shouldn't be surprised if you made a name in the House of Commons. Not that it is worth much, but I fancy you will. Good day," and he left me.

The next day I found myself not only the hero of my constituency, but of the county. The leading county paper gave an article on me, which painted me in such glowing colours that I hardly knew myself; and, what was more, the leader of a great historic party, and one who had been Prime Minister, sent me a long telegram:

"Sincerest congratulations. You have done valiantly. I shall look forward to seeing you fighting on our side, and shall hope to see you before the House meets."

What wonder that I was elated! I did not know then how little such congratulation meant.

Among the number of other messages which I received was one from a constituency forty miles away, urging me to come and speak at a great demonstration that night. It was on the very eve of the election, and I was assured that a speech from the victor of Blenheim would

tell tremendously. Would I wire reply, as they wished to placard the town without a second's delay?

Little thinking what the result of my promise was to be, I accepted, and set out almost immediately.

The candidate himself met me at the station.

"This is kind of you," he said. "I know it was awful cheek on my part to ask you, especially as you've been allowed to fight your own battle practically alone. But your victory has come as such a surprise, and your speeches have been so much talked about, that I couldn't help trying for you."

"But I'm a political heretic," I said.

"Yes," he laughed; "but in the main you are on our side. This way, please."

He led the way out of the station, and I saw a fine Mercédès car waiting.

"By the way, I've taken the liberty of arranging a home for you. Our hotels are not very good, and I'm anxious that you shall stay with my most influential supporter. Besides, he's read your speeches with great delight, and wants to know you."

"I hate staying at private houses," I said; "still, if it is your wish——"

"It is, I assure you. Besides, you'll not regret it. In his own way, your host is one of the most remarkable men I ever met. He is very old, but hale and hearty; he is a scholar; he has one of the finest private libraries in the country; he's as rich as Croesus, and his granddaughter is charming. By the way, you are a bachelor, aren't you?"

"Thank God—yes."

"Well," said Mr. Binton—for that was the name of the candidate—"now is your chance. Look: as far as you can see in every direction the land belongs to Mr. Gascoigne, and every acre of it will come to his granddaughter. Of course, she has had suitors without end, but up to the present nothing has been settled. See—there is the house."

I looked, and saw about a mile away a fine old Tudor mansion, nestling among great trees, on the slope

of a hill. I had seen some of the finest houses in my native county, but even the historic Tregothnan, on the banks of the Fal, was eclipsed by this noble structure.

A moment later we dashed through the park gates, and then for a mile, under giant trees, we made our way through park-land to the house at which I was to stay.

"You will find him a man of strong opinions," said Mr. Binton, as the car came up to the door; "some may call them prejudices, but he does not hold them without reason. Moreover, I don't believe there is a more honourable man in England."

I had no sooner entered the door than I saw coming towards me a very old man, who, in spite of his age, was very tall and upright, and by his side was a girl about nineteen years of age.

CHAPTER IV

AN OLD MAN WITH CONVICTIONS

LET me describe the old man first, for he was the first to bid me welcome. I have said he was very tall, but I did not realise at first how tall he was. I, who am six feet three inches in my stockings, found myself looking up at him ; but his great height was not so noticeable owing to his tremendous breadth of shoulders and largeness of limb. He must have been quite eighty years old, but his movements showed no sign of age. His hair was as white as snow, but years had not thinned it. Indeed, I never saw a man of his years possessing such a head of hair. In such profusion did it grow that many a young man might well envy him. He wore a long white beard, which gave him quite a patriarchal appearance. Call to mind Michael Angelo's statue of Moses, and you will have an idea of Mr. Gascoigne. Everything about him was large: his features were large, his forehead was large and protruding, his mouth was large. He was a man to be noticed in any crowd, a man who, wherever he went, would make himself felt.

"Thank you for coming, Mr. Killigrew," he said ; and his voice was the voice of a young man. "I suggested to Mr. Binton a week ago that I should like to see you here, even although I didn't expect you to turn Bridgetown out. I hope your speeches indicate the kind of man you are."

"Sir John Bridgetown said they were misleading and dangerous," I said. "I hope I am not that kind of man."

"You will be a dangerous party man," he said, eyeing me keenly ; "at least—but there, pray forgive me. I

have not introduced you to my granddaughter. Eve is my nest-bird, and stays with me in spite of my whims."

Eve Gascoigne did not impress me so favourably as did her grandfather. Not that she was not fair to look upon—she was. She was tall, too, and finely proportioned; moreover, she carried herself with dignity. But the bold, unflinching look in the grandfather's eyes was wanting in the girl's. She looked at me frankly enough, and spoke to me pleasantly, and yet, as I thought, she seemed ill at ease. That she stood in great awe of the old man there was no doubt. She watched him as a dog might watch its master, and did not seem sure whether he were pleased with her. And yet there seemed no reason for this. The old gentleman evidently doted upon her. She was the light of his eyes, the joy of his heart.

"There is only just time for you to change before an early dinner, and then we must be off to Binton's meeting," he said. "It's very absurd, of course, but I have been persuaded, in spite of my age, to take the chair at this 'Monster Demonstration,' as it is designated. However, I shall have little to do. All the district is coming to hear Mr. Killigrew."

"Yes," laughed Binton, "no sooner did I get Mr. Killigrew's wire than all the advertising machinery in the district was utilised. By one o'clock to-day every hoarding was covered with his name, while criers have been sent to all the villages for miles around. 'Come and hear the victor of Blenheim,' they've been yelling."

"That's the result of winning what was thought to be an impossible seat," said the old man. "But there, it seems necessary to take advantage of these favourable winds. John, will you show Mr. Killigrew to his room?"

A minute later I stood in a fine large room, full of the old-fashioned furniture which our great-grandfathers delighted in. I stood and gazed from the window over the landscape, and seldom have I seen such a fine panorama of hill and dale; never have I seen finer park-

and wood-lands than those which immediately surrounded the house.

"If Miss Eve Gascoigne is to be the heiress of all this she will indeed be a rich girl," I reflected. "All the same, they must find it terribly lonely. There must be forty bedrooms in the house, and with only two people in residence——"

"May I come in?"

It was Binton who spoke, and who entered a moment later.

"I thought I would like a minute alone with you before we went down to dinner," he said; and then he broke out with the exclamation, "My word, what a magnificent view!"

"Glorious, isn't it?"

"Think of it in the summer, man! And all that you see will come to that girl, besides, heaven knows, how much more. The old man has estates in Ireland; he well-nigh owns a fleet of vessels; he has huge mining royalties, and what else nobody knows. A duke might envy her rent roll when she comes to her own."

"I suppose the fortune-hunters are after her?"

"They are afraid of the old man, I fancy. Still, I have heard of some. A young Irishman was here some time ago—a distant relative—but he's gone. Then George Fanshawe—Sir George Fanshawe's heir—is, I am told, mad about her. I think old Morton Gascoigne is rather fond of him, too. But my place is forty miles from here, and I don't know much for certain. But, by the way, Killigrew, I want to put you on your guard a little," and there was an anxious tone in his voice.

Mr. Binton was a round-faced, complacent-looking man of about forty years of age. One glance at him had convinced me that he would never do a thing that was unsafe.

"Of course, you won Blenheim off your own bat, and I admire you for it. Naturally, it is the talk of the county. But I'm fighting under the flag of my party; I hope you'll remember it to-night."

"You should not have invited such a dangerous character," I said.

"I had no option," he sighed dolefully. "Lots of my committee are raving about you, and Morton Gascoigne almost ordered me to do it. I can't afford to offend him."

The little man spoke in such lugubrious tones that I almost felt like laughing.

"Oh, I'll go on safe general lines," I said presently.

"Thank you. I knew you would. You see, it is not as though you were stating your own policy; and then there is another thing. I hope you'll not tread on Mr. Gascoigne's corns."

"I don't understand."

"No, that's why I wanted this chat. By the way, you are not by any chance a Roman Catholic, are you?"

"My mother was a Roman Catholic," I replied.

"But, great heaven, man! don't tell me that you are."

"Why?"

"Because Mr. Gascoigne is a Protestant of Protestants. For one thing, he has estates in Ulster, and for another—well, if he were not such a well-read and broad-minded man generally, I should say he had a bee in his bonnet. He hates popery; he abhors priestcraft; he is mad with the Government for not passing a law for the inspection of convents, and he simply loathes the Ritualistic movement in the Church of England. But I say, Killigrew, you are not a Romanist, are you?"

"No," I said, "but I feel very kindly disposed towards them. Of course, down in Cornwall they scarcely exist; but I can't help feeling friendly towards my mother's religion and my mother's people."

"For heaven's sake don't say anything about it. Personally, I'm very tolerant about the matter. Of course, I'm a member of the Church of England, and naturally I want to see England kept a Protestant country. Moreover, I *do* think we are giving the papists a good deal of rope; but I don't hold with these ultra-Protestants. Many Roman Catholics are good people,

and that sort of thing; and I don't see why the old man is so strong about it. Mind you, he presents a strong case—so strong that I can't answer him; but there you are, I thought I would mention it to you so that you might know your whereabouts. And I take it that you are half a Catholic. For example, you would make it possible for a Catholic to be crowned king if he came in the line of succession, I suppose?"

"Why not?" I queried. "Why should a man's religious views bar him from holding any position, no matter how high?"

"A Catholic country wouldn't allow a Protestant to be king," he said timidly.

"That doesn't make it right," I urged, more for the sake of teasing the little man than because I had any settled convictions about the matter. "How can Protestants, the heart of whose creed is liberty of thought—nay, more, who are always urging that no man should suffer any disability because of his religious opinions—logically argue that the reigning monarch of England must believe in a certain set of dogmas?"

"Then you would destroy the Bill of Rights? You would do away with the King's Coronation oath?"

"Why not?" I laughed.

"For heaven's sake don't say such things before Morton Gascoigne. But there, it is time for us to go down. I thought, however, that I would let you know how the land lay. Don't give me away, my dear fellow."

"Have an easy heart, my dear Laodicean," I said with a laugh. "The wind shall be tempered to the shorn lamb."

When we reached the dining-room I saw that there were two additions to our party. The first was introduced to me as Miss Eve Gascoigne's late governess and present companion. Miss Grant was a fine handsome woman of nearly thirty years of age. My impression of her was that it would be impossible to choose a more suitable person for such a post. She was good-looking, pleasant of speech, hearty and natural in her manners, and withal a well-educated and accomplished woman.

Indeed, I had not been more than five minutes in her society before she quite captivated me.

The other was young George Fanshawe, son and heir of Sir George Fanshawe, Bart., who happened to share the opinions of Mr. Binton's party, and whom Mr. Gascoigne had invited to dinner. I saw at a glance that he was greatly enamoured of Miss Eve Gascoigne, but I was extremely doubtful whether she reciprocated his sentiments. Still, I liked the fellow. He was a splendid specimen of an old and honoured county family, and I could not help thinking that he would have been a far better political candidate than Mr. Binton. I heard afterwards, however, that Mr. Binton was simply there as a stopgap until young George felt disposed to take his place.

Nothing of importance happened during dinner. Miss Grant kept the occasion from being absolutely dull. George Fanshawe was ill at ease and nervous; Miss Eve Gascoigne did not seem disposed to talk, while I imagine that the rest of us were thinking of our speeches. Anyhow, I left the dinner-table feeling what a pity it was that Miss Gascoigne, and not Miss Grant, was heir to the old man's millions.

Two motor-cars took us over to Gascon, a market town containing a few thousand inhabitants. I found that the market house had been adapted for the meeting, and accommodated about five thousand people. Many of the notabilities of the district were on the platform, and the hall was crowded. Never until that night did I believe that an old man eighty years of age could speak with such vigour and power as Mr. Gascoigne spoke that night. I saw, too, that he had tremendous influence in the district. Indeed, he was the largest landowner in the county, and I afterwards discovered that the very name of the town in which we met was a corruption of Gascoigne, and that the family had owned the estates for many hundreds of years.

There was no doubt about it, the old man held very decided views. Concerning what he called the lawlessness in the Church of England, and the invasion of the

monastic orders, he spoke in the strongest of terms. Up to that time I had paid practically no attention to such matters; indeed, I was scarcely interested in them. But to Mr. Gascoigne they were questions of vital importance. According to him, there was a big plot on foot to bring England back to the condition of pre-Reformation days, and he regarded it with alarm. "God help our country," he cried, "if popery or priestcraft ever comes back in power. Our strength would be gone, our right to think would be gone, our manhood would be destroyed, and we should become even as Spain and other nations have become who have not thrown off the papal yoke."

I could not help seeing, too, that the people responded to these sentiments. Thundering applause greeted his words, while no one cheered him more heartily than Miss Grant. Her face was wreathed with smiles, and she clapped her hands as if for very joy. "At any rate, Mr. Gascoigne has a warm supporter in his daughter's companion," I thought; "perhaps that is why she is treated as a member of the family."

Of my own part in the meeting I need say nothing. It was a very enthusiastic affair altogether, and everyone went away with the belief that the next day's polling would place Mr. Binton in the position he desired.

"And now," said Mr. Gascoigne, after we had returned to the house, and were seated in huge lounge chairs by a big open fire, "we can be comfortable."

He passed a box of cigars to me as he spoke, and stretched out his legs as if with huge enjoyment, and gave a sigh of contentment.

"Don't you feel tired?" I asked.

"Not a bit," was his reply. "Why should I?"

Indeed, as he sat there, in spite of his great age, I saw no reason why he should; and, as we discussed various matters for the next half-hour, I felt as though I were talking to a young man.

"I thought you seemed surprised at one part of my speech to-night," he said at length.

"I confess I was a bit," I answered. "I thought the days for that kind of sentiment were over."

"God knows we've become lax enough. For that part I'm a sort of latitudinarian in my theological beliefs myself, but I'm an Englishman, thank God."

"What has that to do with it?"

"Everything. Every Romanist must, from the very nature of his faith, put his 'ism' first and his country afterwards. No faithful Romanist can be a patriot. Gladstone made that plain enough in his 'Vatican Decrees.'"

I did not reply. Why should I worry about his pet fad?

"More than one Gascoigne was burnt at the stake," he went on presently. "'If you'll not confess, and recant your heresy,' said the priests to them, 'you'll burn here, and burn in hell afterwards.' 'Then we'll burn here, and take our chance of burning in hell afterwards,' said those old stalwart Englishmen. Yes, and they were burnt, too. There's a monument to them in Gascon."

"But surely that kind of thing is over?" I said.

"Not if they gain power. They admit it would not be over. The Vatican longs for power here, and they are trying in a thousand ways to get it. But I'll do my best to save my country. Thank God, my family speaks with no uncertain sound."

"Miss Eve is a strong Protestant, of course?"

"Yes; but they've tried to pervert her."

"Who?"

"The Romanists. Oh, it's hard to believe; but I'll tell you about it. She lost both her father and mother when she was a baby——"

The old man was silent for a time, and then went on. "Of course, the work of rearing her fell upon me. I could not bear to send her away to school, so I had to have governesses. When she was ten years old the nursery governess who had taken care of her was unfitted to instruct her further, so I engaged another—a clever, well-educated woman. I took every precaution, and the woman presented the highest testimonials as an Evangelical Protestant Christian. Well, sir, for two years that woman lived in this house, and I suspected

nothing. Then I discovered that she was a papist, and that for two years she had been poisoning the child's mind with popish lies. When I brought her to book she brazened it out. She confessed that she was a papist, and that she had received a dispensation to pretend to be a Protestant in order to pervert my little girl. Think of it. The priests had ordered her to come here, a living lie, that—that she might make little Eve their slave. Of course, the reason was plain. They thought she would be my heiress, and that when I was dead they would be able to command her money."

"But did not the child tell you?" I asked.

"No. She had persuaded Eve to be silent; had frightened her, in fact, to be secret about the matter—made her deceive me. Remember, she was only a child."

The old man's vehemence silenced me.

"Of course, I thought of having the law on those who sent the woman; but I was powerless. She defied me; she refused to give me any names. Nay, more, she even laughed at me, and told me that the child would remain a papist for all I could do."

"Well, what then?" I asked.

"Of course, I sent her about her business, and I have never heard of her since. After that, for twelve months, I made it my business to destroy the poison which had been instilled into Eve's mind."

"And you succeeded?"

"Oh yes, I succeeded; but you would be surprised at the way the woman had warped the child's will and poisoned her mind. She had, on pretence of taking her to Excheater shopping, taken her to a priest, who had baptised her, and instructed her, and confessed her. That's their idea of religion."

"Well, you were successful in getting Miss Grant. She evidently holds your opinions very strongly," I said after a few seconds' silence.

"Oh yes; my brother secured her for me."

"I did not know you had a brother."

"He is my half-brother, really. My father married a second time late in life. Well, do you know, even

Robert got into their clutches at one time; but I saved him from them. There is no stronger Protestant in England than Robert now, and he secured Miss Grant for me. Of course, I wasn't to be deceived a second time, and I took every possible precaution."

"And she has served you well?"

"She has been with me six years, and she has eradicated the last trace of poison from the child's mind. There, forgive me for talking about these things; but I thought you regarded me as somewhat of a bigot, and if there is anything I hate it is narrowness of mind."

I left Gascon Hall the next day, but before doing so I had a chance of half an hour's chat with Eve Gascoigne. I must confess, moreover, that she entirely removed the half-unfavourable impression I had formed of her on the previous day. I had never been a woman's man, and I found more pleasure in her society than I thought would be possible. Indeed, so pleasant a thing did I find it to walk by her side that when, on my departure, old Morton Gascoigne expressed the hope of seeing me there again, I was eager to assent.

"Excuse an old man's frankness, Killigrew," he said, "but I like you. I believe you have a future in the House of Commons. Come and see me, my boy, when you have a week-end to spare. It will be simply delightful here when the spring comes on, and we'll both be pleased to see you, shan't we, Eve?"

"We shall indeed," assented Eve Gascoigne; and the emphasis with which she spoke delighted me.

I did not think then how soon I should return to the house, nor did I dream of the reasons that would take me there.

CHAPTER V

MR. GASCOIGNE SENDS FOR HELP

OF course I returned home almost immediately after my visit to Gascon Hall, and received a great welcome from my own people; but I must not speak of that now. The events which really caused me to write this story were rapidly approaching, and it is of them that I must write.

When Parliament met, I, of course, took up my abode in London. I had for some time been a member of the Celtic Club, and as the management was willing to let me have rooms there permanently, I engaged them. The situation was central for nearly everything. It was only a few minutes' walk from the Houses of Parliament, and was just as close to the great political clubs. Moreover, it had the advantage of being quiet. Even if I had no private sitting-room, the public rooms of the club were so well arranged and so cosy that I could at almost any time of the day do my work there.

Within a few weeks I had settled down to my duties. I was very kindly received even by those who regarded me as a "free-lance"; and when, as the days went on, I came to be looked upon as a kind of leader of a number of men who sympathised with the attitude I had taken, I was treated with an amount of consideration which surprised me.

But it is not of my parliamentary life that I wish to write at present. It is true I shall have to refer to it later, especially as it came to form a vital part of my story, but there is no need to enlarge on it here.

I had been in London only a short time when I received an invitation to a reception, which for various reasons I was led to accept. It was held at the house of an Irish peer, and when I arrived I found that many

well-known people had assembled. In the main, however, I found it to be a gathering of Irish people. Even in that well-educated crowd it was impossible to mistake the Irish brogue. This, I think, was more marked among the women than the men, and to me it was very delightful. Memories of my mother came back to me, and snatches of old Irish songs and sayings which, as a child, I had heard from her lips, came flashing into my mind amidst the buzz of conversation and the ripple of laughter.

Before long I found myself talking with an Irish Nationalist, who was also a man of considerable wealth, and who bore an old name.

"Do you know," he said, "that some of us, although you were an entire stranger to us until a few weeks ago, look upon you as one of us?"

"That's rather a large order, isn't it?" I said.

"Perhaps so. But I have my reasons for saying so. Naturally, we Irish are eager for whole-hearted supporters, and even in a General Election, when the individual counts but little and the party everything, we are always on the look-out for those who will support us. Many laughed when you agreed to fight Blenheim, because it was such a hopeless affair. The Bridgetowns looked upon it as a sort of family right; thus, when the results were made known, you became a marked man. You had done the 'impossible thing,' and some of us went so far as to buy the local papers and read your speeches. Besides, I happen to know a man who was in the division at the time, and he told me about you. Well, your speeches and what we heard about you led some of us to think you would be friendly to our cause. Oh, by the way, she has just come, and I want you to know her."

"Who?" I asked. "What do you mean?"

"The most beautiful girl in Ireland," he said. "There she is, talking with old Colonel Kelly."

I looked, and for a few seconds I was speechless. When Gabriel O'Hara had spoken of "the most beautiful girl in Ireland," I had paid but little heed, regarding his words as mere Irish extravagance. As I looked, how-

ever, I realised that he had uttered no empty words. I am much older now than when I first saw her, but I dare not try to describe her for fear of being accused of wild exaggeration. Never before did I think a human being could be so beautiful. Moreover, it was the beauty of my mother that I saw. There, amidst a crowd of women, many of whom were beautiful, she stood the queen of them all. Moreover, it was not the beauty which owed anything to art; indeed, she had seemed to have disregarded these aids to a very large extent. The glory of her hair, for example, owed nothing to the hands of a skilful maid. Some would call it almost unkempt, and yet in its wild profusion it was unlike anything I had ever seen before. It was dark brown, it was golden, it was red, it was none of these colours, but it crowned her with a crown of beauty. Her cheeks were coloured by perfect health and by pure air. Never had I seen such a complexion. The sun had never painted a rose more beautifully than Nature had painted the face of this girl.

Then her eyes, glorious in their brightness, her dimpled chin, the perfect contour of her features—but why need I go on? I had seen the loveliest woman in my native county, I had seen some of the most renowned beauties of London, but compared with her they seemed to me commonplace, plain.

I stood looking at her without speaking a word. I had forgotten Gabriel O'Hara, who was doubtless laughing at my open-mouthed wonder. What mattered? I feasted my eyes, and for some time wanted to do nothing else.

I was awakened to the realities of the situation by a laugh.

"What!" said O'Hara, "she has caught you, has she? You thought the 'ould cuntry' did not possess such a creature, did you? Well, this is the first time she has been to London, and everybody is raving about her."

I looked around and saw that the girl was a centre of attraction. Many eyes were directed towards her, and

exclamations of admiration were to be heard on every hand.

"She had only just entered the room when I spoke to you," went on O'Hara, "and you see every other woman is eclipsed."

"No wonder," I said. "Who is she?"

"I am going to introduce you," he said. "If she smiles on you, you will be the most envied man in the room."

"But tell me about her," I said.

"The best blood in Ireland runs in her veins," he replied. "But her father is as poor as Job, and I'll swear her dress has cost less than half that of any other in the room. She's as proud as Lucifer, and her temper's like lightning."

"With a face like that she should be clever," I said.

"Clever! Yes, she is in her own way, but she has no book cleverness. How can she have, poor child? Her father has been too poor to give her an education. She has spent her life in an old, dilapidated mansion, without companions and without friends. It is true she has had instruction, but I am afraid that as far as education is concerned—well, as I said, what can you expect?"

"She seems to suffer very little from the want of it," I said, nodding to the crowd around her.

"The child would be a queen anywhere," he cried fervently. "Even though she knows practically nothing of school-life, and has scarcely ever been away from home, she does nothing wrong. She may break conventions, but no one will mind. They will admire her for it. She's a child of Nature. She has drunk in the wisdom of the silent places of life, and she knows more about the things that really matter than your 'clever' girls who have taken honours at Newnham or Girton."

"You are very enthusiastic, Mr. O'Hara," I said with a laugh.

"Yes, and so will you be before the night is over," he retorted. "She has been in London only a week, and

she has worn the same dress every night, but in every place she has been she has eclipsed everyone else. Come, I want to introduce you."

I followed him without a word as he threaded his way through the crowd.

No sooner did she catch sight of him than her eyes gleamed with gladness.

"Mr. O'Hara," she cried, "it's good of you to come and speak to me."

"But you are not lonely, surely," he laughed, with a glance at the young men who stood around.

"Ah, but it's always good to see a face you know," she replied. "Come, take me to some place where we can be quiet. I want to talk with you."

"Impossible," he said; "there's not a quiet place to be found. Besides, I want to introduce you to a friend. He's a sort of Irishman, because he's a Member of Parliament who will not bind himself down to any party, and he's a friend of Ireland."

She gave me a quick, searching glance and then smiled.

"I always love to see a friend to Ireland," she cried. "Here in England I feel as though I am a stranger; sometimes I feel as though I am among enemies, for has not England oppressed Ireland?"

"Miss Castlereagh—Mr. Killigrew," said O'Hara.

"There's nothing Irish about your name," she said.

"There is about my Christian name," I replied.

"What is it?"

"Kerry."

"Ah, that's Irish," she cried, "and it makes me think of home. I've only been away a week, and I want to get back. But how did you get such a name as Kerry, Mr. Killigrew?"

"My mother was Irish, and her maiden name was Kerry," I replied.

"Then you're half Irish?"

"Yes, half Irish, and altogether a Celt."

"Ah, we shall be friends," she cried; "if you are half Irish you must love Ireland, you must be on her side."

But if you are Irish you must also be a Catholic. Tell me, Mr. Killigrew, that you are a Catholic."

"My mother was," I replied.

"Then you must be. No, you dare not deny it. You must be of the old faith."

I laughed at her impulsiveness, her eagerness, her utter heedlessness of those who stood around. Her eyes sparkled with excitement, and her Irish brogue became pronounced.

"Oh, you laugh," she cried, "but it means everything to me. That's why I think I don't feel happy here in England. Scarcely any of the people are Catholics. Come, tell me you are true to the Church."

I shook my head. "I'm afraid I can't," I replied, "but I feel very kindly towards those who believe as you do. How could it be otherwise when I love my mother's memory?"

She looked quite dejected. "Ah, but you must be one of us," she said. "I shan't feel as though we can be friends else."

"Do you want us to be friends?" I asked.

"How can I help it, when Mr. O'Hara said you were a friend of Ireland? And haven't you told me that your mother was Irish and a Catholic? But where is Mr. O'Hara?"

"He's gone," I said, looking around. "And there are two empty chairs yonder. Shall we sit down?"

She took my arm and I led her to a vacant chair.

"Did your mother come from County Kerry?" she asked.

"Yes," I answered. "Her name was Kathleen Kerry."

She clapped her hands. "Why, my name's Kathleen, too," she cried. "Kathleen Castlereagh."

The words were beautiful as she spoke them. Her voice seemed to me as musical and as caressing as the babbling of a brook on a summer night.

"Have you ever been to Ireland?" she asked presently.

"Never," I replied.

"Then you ought to be ashamed of yourself, Mr. Kerry Killigrew, when it was in Ireland that your own

mother was born. You ought to go as fast as you can to the county and the place where she was born. It was there, I suppose, that your father saw her."

"No," I replied, and I told her the story of my father's marriage.

"Ah, but it was beautiful," she cried; "it was just as it should be. They cared nothing about consequences. When they saw each other they loved each other, and—well, nothing else was needed. But did your father become a Catholic?"

I shook my head.

"Ah, that was wrong. She should have converted him. How can they meet in heaven when he was a heretic?"

"Just as they met on earth. Their differences of faith did not divide them. They loved, and love is greater than faith. Besides——"

"Besides what?"

"Suppose my father was of the true faith?"

"He couldn't be if he was not a Catholic," and that she meant what she said was apparent by the light in her eyes.

"Did you ever think of the reason why England became a Protestant nation, and why the people hold to a faith different from that of the Catholics?" I asked, not so much because I was interested in the subject as because I wanted to study her mind.

"No; why should I? I think England became Protestant because she had a bad king, and because the people were disobedient and would not do what the Holy Father told them."

"But you have never asked yourself or inquired why they believe what they do?"

"Oh, no. I am Catholic."

"But why?"

"Because it's the only religion. Because the Church is my mother. And I would die for my faith, I would gladly, Mr. Killigrew."

There were tears in her eyes as she spoke, and her lips trembled.

It is no use saying I was not interested in her. I was. Never had I met such a transparent child of Nature; never had I seen anyone so beautiful. And yet, now that I had a chance of studying her face more closely, I saw that an artist, a connoisseur, might point to defects in her face. He might say that her mouth was a shade too large, that her chin was rather too square for perfect feminine loveliness. He might have urged, too, that her profusion of hair should have been arranged with more care. But to me she appeared perfect. The mouth and the chin told of character; the wild profusion of hair, whose sheen was as the sheen of sunlit waters, made me think of her as a child of Nature.

"Some day England will be converted," she went on. "Father Shannon told me only a few days ago that you would all soon come over to the Church. That's partly what made me want to come here. I wanted to see the country that would soon come to the true faith."

"And have you enjoyed your visit?"

"Not in the way I hoped. It doesn't seem to be becoming Catholic. It's just a heretic land. And then the country is so strong, so rich. It's not like poor little Oireland."

Yes, she had so far lapsed into her native dialect that for the nonce she pronounced the word just as a peasant might.

"But you are going to fight for my country, aren't you, Mr. Killigrew? Yes, and you are going to fight for my faith. I feel it in me. You will, won't you?"

"You want me to, do you?"

"I'd be your friend for ever if you would. And you must be converted, Mr. Killigrew. I'm going to plead with the Holy Mother for you, and you'll be one of us entirely."

I laughed outright.

"Ah, but ye mustn't laugh. It's true what I'm telling you, and when it comes to pass I'll be very happy."

"And if I fight on the other side?" I said.

"But you wouldn't—you daren't!" she cried.

"Who knows?" I laughed.

Her eyes flashed with a new light, the wild fire of her Celtic blood burned within her.

"If you do," she cried, "the curse of the Church would rest upon you; and because you'd be her enemy I'd hate you, I'd loathe the very ground you walked on!"

"Then I must be very careful," I said, "for I wouldn't like you to hate me."

"Ay, but it's you who are laughing at me, Mr. Killigrew, and—but you wouldn't laugh at me if you ever came to Ireland."

"I mean to go soon," I said.

"If you do, you must come to our house. My father will give you a warm welcome. It'll be a poor house, Mr. Killigrew. You've heard of the absentee landlords of Ireland who suck the country dry; but it's not true altogether. My father has made himself poor for love of his country."

"And in what part of the country do you live?" I asked.

"It's Castlereagh Castle where we live, in County ——. And although the house may be poor, the country around is like heaven. At the back of the house are great hills covered with heather, which will soon be all in flower, and then it'll be as though the blessed Virgin herself came and kissed the whole countryside into beauty. Ah, I've been very gay here in London, but it's glad I'll be to go back."

"Do you go back soon?" I asked.

"Yes," she replied. "I had a letter from my father only this afternoon telling me he wanted me home, and so in a few days I shall go back to my own people."

In spite of myself my heart grew heavy. And yet why should I care? I had met a beautiful Irish child to-night whom I should forget in the morning.

I saw some people coming towards us whom she evidently knew.

"I must leave you now, Mr. Killigrew," she said, rising, "but I'm glad I've seen you. You love my country, and you are going to be of my faith and fight

for it. For are you not half Irish? And was not your mother called Kathleen? Good-bye."

"I shall always love my mother's name now," I said.

"Will you? And why?"

"Because—because—have you not told me your name?"

"Ah, but if you hadn't told me you'd never been to Ireland I should believe you had kissed the blarney-stone. But wait till you come to Ireland—then— Good-bye."

She left me as she spoke, and it seemed to me as though the room had suddenly become darker.

I did not stay long at the reception after she had left. I wanted to get back to my rooms and think quietly. Why was it that the simple speech of this Irish child made me want to be alone?

Just as I was leaving Mr. O'Hara caught sight of me.

"You got on well with Kathleen," he said.

"Splendidly."

"She must have liked you, or she wouldn't have been so friendly. Generally she's as shy as a bird."

"Perhaps it's because I'm half Irish," I said.

"Ay, and because she thinks you love Ireland," he replied. "I believe Kathleen would die for Ireland and Ireland's faith."

During the next three days I met Kathleen Castlereagh three times, and at each meeting my interest in her grew stronger. She fascinated me by her perfect simplicity, her artlessness, and her beauty; and when at length she left London I felt as though a shadow had fallen on the great city. As chance would have it, however, I was destined to have new interests, for on returning late to my club on the very day on which she left town I found among a number of letters a telegram which disturbed me greatly. This was how it read:

"Great trouble. Can you come and see me? Try arrange. Letter follows.

"MORTON GASCOIGNE."

"What can be the matter?" I asked myself. "And why should he telegraph to me?"

I noticed the time that it was sent from Gascon. It was 10.20 a.m. Why had I not received it before?

Then I remembered that I had not been in the room since morning. I had lunched at the House of Commons and had rushed hurriedly into my bedroom to dress for a reception without coming in here.

"I must go down," I thought; "but what can he want with me? 'Great trouble.' It must indeed be great for Morton Gascoigne to ask me to come to him."

I turned to the letters, and saw that one had been sent by special messenger service. It was also from Gascoigne. It ran as follows:

"I have just wired telling you that I am in great trouble, and asking you to arrange to come and see me. Forgive my taking such a liberty, but I am almost beside myself, and I can think of no one in whom I can confide but you. My little girl Eve has disappeared under peculiar circumstances. I dare not, as yet, make it public. I can tell you later. But do come if you can. I have a feeling that you can help me. There's a good train leaving Paddington at eight to-morrow morning, if that's not too soon. A car shall meet it at Gascon, anyhow. Forgive this appeal, won't you. I think you will, for you will understand my feelings."

I caught up a Bradshaw and saw that a train would leave Paddington in an hour. Why should I wait till morning?

An hour later I was on my way to Gascon, trying hard to understand the bearings of the situation.

CHAPTER VI

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF EVE GASCOIGNE

A GREY morning was dawning as the train entered Gascon station. A heavy mist hung everywhere, and although the porters expressed the belief that it would presently lift, and that the day would be fine, I felt chilled to the bone. Besides, I could not rid myself of a feeling of dread, a feeling which I could not understand. I am not, and never have been, a morbid man, neither have I ever been given to brooding. Rather I am optimistic by nature, and always endeavour to discern the blue sky between the clouds. But this morning I felt unable to throw off the weight that oppressed me.

"Can you get me a cab?" I said to the ticket-collector.

"In a few minnits, sur," replied the man. "Cold and miz'rabable vur April, ed'n et, then? But I shudden be surprised ef we doan't 'ave a fine day."

"Is there a fire in any of the waiting-rooms?" I asked.

"No, sur; but I'll show 'ee into a room where there es a vire, and then I'll git a cab. Where es et to go then, sur?"

"Gascoigne Hall."

"Oa yes, fur sure, sur. Why, I do mind 'ee now. I 'eerd 'ee in the market-'ouse. I'll soon be back with a cab, sur."

A few minutes later a cab rumbled up to the station, and the ticket-collector, seemingly glad of occupation at that early hour, held the door for me.

"Gascoigne Hall 'll look very beautiful ef tes a fine day, sur."

I saw that the man was a gossip, and, in order to

know whether any news concerning Eve Gascoigne's disappearance had reached him, I stood and talked with him for a moment or two. But evidently nothing had become known in the town, for the man, who seemed to know everyone's business, had heard nothing of it.

Short as the journey had seemed when I had undertaken it in one of Mr. Gascoigne's motor-cars, it was long and dreary this morning. Neither the driver nor the horse appeared to be awake, and so slowly did we crawl that it was more than an hour after I arrived at the station before I saw the great house in the distance.

By this time, however, the sky had become clearer, and the birds were singing among the trees. I saw, moreover, that spring was more advanced than in London, and the sight of the new-born life which appeared everywhere did something to dispel the gloom which oppressed me.

On reaching the house I saw servants flitting hither and thither, and as I heard them chatting and laughing gaily I concluded that they knew nothing of their master's trouble.

"Mr. Gascoigne is not down yet, sir, and Miss Gascoigne is away visiting," said the man who opened the door to me.

"Do you think he will be awake?" I asked. "If so, will you please tell him that I am here."

"Certainly, sir. He's been up some time, sir. He rises very early, and his fire was lit an hour ago. I'll tell him you are here, sir, but we didn't expect you till this afternoon."

I had barely been a minute in the library I remembered so well when Mr. Gascoigne entered. I thought he looked somewhat pale and haggard, but otherwise he showed no sign of trouble. His step was firm and decisive, his voice was clear and resonant.

"Ah, you caught the midnight train, did you?" he cried. "That's good of you. Michael, see that breakfast is hurried on at once. Mr. Killigrew must be cold and hungry. It's been a bitter night, even although April is here."

The man left the room as he spoke, and I tried to express something of the sorrow I felt for him.

"Not a word yet," he said. "Why, man, you are in your evening clothes!"

"I hadn't time to change," I replied, "but I have some others in my bag."

"This way, this way!" he cried. "You'll want a warm bath, and you'll be anxious to get out of those things. A swallow-tailed coat in the daylight is death to clear thinking. That's why waiters are so incapable till dinner."

He led the way to a bath-room as he spoke, and turned on the water with his own hands.

"I'll give you half an hour," he said; "breakfast will be ready by then. Your dressing-room is adjoining, and beyond that is your bedroom. See that your appetite is in good condition."

No one would have judged that he was weighed down by a great anxiety. Whatever he felt, he gave no sign of anything save a desire to give me a hearty welcome.

"Here you are!" he cried, when presently I entered the breakfast-room. "Michael, is everything here? That's right. You needn't stay, Michael. Mr. Killigrew and I can get everything we want."

When the man left us alone I again tried to broach the subject uppermost in my mind, but he would have none of it.

"Not a word till you have breakfasted," he said. "No man's mind is clear while he is eating. Besides, you are not a dwarf, and you need nourishment to keep that machine of yours going. What shall it be, tea or coffee? As for eatables, you'll find something on the side-board."

I was surprised to see him eat his breakfast with apparent relish; by neither word nor sign did he betray trouble or anxiety. He spoke freely of what was going on in political circles, congratulated me on my maiden speech in the House of Commons, and bade me tell him the latest news. When breakfast was over, he summoned the servants to prayers, and I could not help being

impressed by his patriarchal appearance and the sincere resonant tones of his voice as he besought the Divine blessing on the actions of the day and committed us all to the care and protection of the Infinite Love.

"And now," he said, "we'll be able to have a good long chat, Mr. Killigrew. There's a good fire in my den, Michael?"

"Yes, sir."

"That's right," and, with long, vigorous strides, he led the way to a part of the house which I had not yet seen.

"We can speak freely here," he said presently, when we entered a fairly large room. "I call this my den because here I am out of earshot and out of sight."

He closed the door as he spoke, and immediately I felt as though the atmosphere of the room was different from that of the others.

"Even if a servant stood at the door, and placed his ear against it, he could hear nothing," he said; "and—well, just at this moment I am suspicious of everything and everyone. But I say, Killigrew, it is good of you to come so quickly. I didn't expect so much of you."

"I got back to my club about eleven last night, and found your letter and wire waiting me," I said. "When I saw that I could catch the midnight train, I made a dash for it."

"It was good of you. But draw up your chair, man. Here are cigars and tobacco. Now let me tell you my trouble."

"Of course, I know your trouble," I said. "You told me in your letter."

"Yes. Eve is gone."

"When did she go?"

"A week ago."

"And you don't know where she is?"

"I haven't the remotest idea."

I waited in silence.

"Of course, you are waiting for information concerning events which led to the disappearance," he said. "They seem ordinary enough, but doubtless they have

meaning, although I cannot see enough in them to account for what has taken place. Perhaps it is because my brain is getting dull. I seem to have no grip of things as I used to have. But here are the facts: Twelve months ago a distant relative, a young Irishman, came here on a visit. He pretended to fall in love with Eve, and asked to be allowed to pay court to her. I did not consent. First, I did not think Eve cared very much for him; second, I did not like him. There seemed something tricky about him. He spoke fairly enough, was a good sportsman, possessed the Irishman's usual good humour and all that, but I was never sure of him."

"What part of Ireland did he come from?" I asked. "South or north?"

"I see what you are thinking about," said Morton Gascoigne, and his eyes flashed as he spoke. "You are thinking that I did not like him because he was a Catholic? Well, perhaps there is some truth in it. He was from the south of Ireland, and a Catholic; and I could not bear to see my Eve marry a Catholic. I don't think I should have distrusted him so had he been open and frank about it at first; but he was not. The fact of his religion leaked out. Besides that, I discovered that he was sadly in want of money to pay off the mortgages on his estates, and I suspected his motives in asking for Eve."

"Had you any proofs against him?" I asked.

"Nothing positive. Yes, you can put it down that I was prejudiced, if you like; but that is by the way. I did not consent. He did not take my refusal badly; indeed, he acted so well about it that I was very kind to him. Indeed, I told him that while I could not consent to him being a suitor for Eve's hand, I should be very pleased for him to be a visitor at the house."

"Which he was?"

"Which he was. But he seemed to make no progress with Eve; indeed, I thought the child disliked him, and that she took no pains to hide her feelings from him. More than once I came upon them together, and I could

see that she was angry with him. On inquiring of her as to what her anger meant, however, I found it to be only a trivial matter.

"Of course, Eve has had a good many suitors, but the one whom in my heart I hoped she might favour was young George Fanshawe."

"A fine young fellow," I said.

"Exactly. Well, during these last two months I was led to think my desires might be gratified. They got on well together. They rode together, played golf together, and seemed on the best of terms. A week ago George asked for my consent to their engagement."

"And you gave it?"

"I gave it. He did not seem quite clear about the state of Eve's feelings; but, believing all was well, I gave it. When I spoke to her about it, she seemed strangely excited, and acted in a way I could not understand. Then she asked me if she might visit a girl friend, that she might talk with her about it and have time to think it over. Of course, I gave my consent, although I could not quite understand. She left home that same day, and I have not heard from her since."

"Of course, you have made inquiries?"

"Yes, and very quickly. Whenever Eve has gone away before, I have always insisted on a line telling me of her arrival. When, therefore, I heard nothing from her, I wrote to Mrs. Scobell, to whom I supposed she had gone, asking if Eve was well. To my surprise I found that not only had she not been there, but that she had not been expected. Mrs. Scobell, moreover, informed me that her daughter Laura, Eve's friend, was away on a visit, and would not be back for a week. This, as you may imagine, upset me considerably, and I, while keeping my own counsel, set to work to discover her whereabouts. I have done everything that I can think of—but in vain."

"Had she money with her?"

"I dare say. She has always had a liberal allowance. Up to yesterday, when I wired to you, I was not without hope, but the morning's post destroyed every

hope. Every road seemed a cul-de-sac. You'll forgive me writing you, won't you? But we got on well when you were here before, and—and—well, I wanted a man like you to talk with. Even the thought of your coming has cheered me. You're sure I haven't inconvenienced you?"

As may be imagined, I quickly set his fears at rest on this score, and entered with zest into the situation.

"You've not thought of a private detective agency?" I suggested presently.

"Yes; but I can't bear to lay my affairs bare before such men. I suppose I am a proud man, and my name is an untarnished one. It was difficult even for me to write to you; and, if you'll excuse my saying so, it is many years since I have met a man to whom I can speak so freely. Up to the present, however, what has been done has been done by myself; no one suspects anything wrong, not even one of the servants."

"Mrs. Scobell?" I suggested.

"I wrote to her allaying any suspicion my letter might have aroused."

"George Fanshawe?" I persisted.

"He knows nothing, suspects nothing."

"But surely Miss Grant must know?"

"Miss Grant left us three weeks ago. She got a letter from her mother urging her to come home. It seems that her sister, who had lived with her mother, had been obliged to leave home, and so Miss Grant went home to Scotland. If she had been home I don't believe this trouble would have taken place."

"Have you written to Miss Grant?"

"I got a letter from her before Eve left home, saying that she and her mother were just leaving for the Continent. She wrote from Dover."

"She gave no address?"

"No. She said they would be travelling from place to place, but that she would write to us."

I knew that my questions were only of a skirmishing nature, nevertheless they cleared the ground somewhat.

"What is in your mind, Killigrew?" said Mr. Gascoigne, after I had been silent for a minute.

"I was thinking of motives," I replied. "I presume Miss Gascoigne was happy—that is, in her home life?"

"My dear fellow, you saw for yourself. Who could be gayer than she on the morning of your departure? More than once since then she asked me if you had written, and suggested your coming to see us. Indeed, up to the time George Fanshawe asked for my consent to an engagement she was as cheerful as a bird."

"What was the name of the Irishman?"

"Breen—Titus Breen."

"How long is it since he was here?"

"Five months."

"You are sure he has not been near the place since?"

"As sure as a man can be."

"Of course, Miss Gascoigne received and answered letters freely?"

"Of course—absolutely."

Again I was silent. To be perfectly truthful, I was thinking of my early impressions of Miss Eve Gascoigne.

"Come," said the old man at length, "how does the matter strike you?"

"I have very little data yet," I said. "You will excuse me for asking what, under other circumstances, would be impertinent questions?"

"Go on," he cried eagerly. "Ask anything you like."

"Miss Gascoigne is spoken of as one who will one day be very rich," I suggested. "I suppose that is true?"

"Yes, that is true."

"I presume you intend her to inherit all your property?"

"Beyond what I propose giving to servants and charities—yes."

"And she knows it?"

"Naturally. But she has never seemed to attach any value to money."

"Were you quite decisive in your refusal of Breen?"

"Absolutely."

"And she understood it?"

"Oh yes, she understood," and the old man's eyes flashed significantly. "Oh, I've gone over all these questions; but I see no light—not a ray anywhere."

"There must have been a tremendously strong motive to drive her away from home," I said. "There is another question, however. I presume she knows that you can bestow your property on whom you will?"

"Yes; she knows that."

"How?"

"I told her. When Breen asked for her, I told her that not one penny of my money should go to him."

"Suppose," I said, "that she should die, or should in any way forfeit her claim to your fortune, to whom would you give it?"

"Why do you ask?"

"The question struck me, and it might have a bearing on the case."

"I should—yes, I imagine I should give it to my younger brother. It is true he cares nothing about money. He does not spend half his income; but he is a good fellow, and I could trust him to use it wisely. Yes, I should doubtless leave it to Bob."

"I don't know that my questions have any bearings on the case, Mr. Gascoigne," I said, "but all you have told me confirms what I said. If she left home of her own free will—that is, presuming her action has any serious meaning—there must have been terribly strong reasons for it."

"But what are they?"

"Did you not misunderstand her when she told you she was going to Mrs. Scobell?" I asked. "Might she not have had another friend? You are sure she mentioned Mrs. Scobell's name?"

"I'm certain. I looked up the train for her."

"She had a maid with her?"

"Yes."

"Ah," I said. "How long has she been in her service?"

"About six months. She is a good girl. I had the best of testimonials with her."

"Let me think," I cried presently, "and would you mind if I walked around the room? My mind always works more quickly when I am on my feet."

For five minutes I thought hard, but I could not see a ray of light anywhere. That a young girl like Eve Gascoigne, a great heiress, who lived in a beautiful home, and whose every wish seemed to be gratified, should leave a fond grandfather, giving no clue as to her whereabouts, seemed pure absurdity. Yet the facts were as they were.

"There are three alternatives," I said at length.

"Let's have them," cried Morton Gascoigne eagerly.

"First, some accident may have happened to her."

"Can't we rule that out?" suggested Mr. Gascoigne.

"I have read every line of the *Times* daily since she left. If an accident had happened to her, I should have heard of it."

"Yes, I should imagine that is so," I said; "but I thought I would mention it."

"Well, go on."

"The second is, that she may have been kidnapped."

"Why should she be kidnapped? How could she be? We are living in a civilised country. She had a companion. She is a capable girl, abundantly able to take care of herself. She told me she had arranged to go to Mrs. Scobell's, whereas, as I told you, Mrs. Scobell told me that no such arrangements had been made. Besides, if she had been kidnapped, there must have been some motive for it. Who would kidnap her?"

"Breen."

"Breen would know that he would not get a farthing of my money under such circumstances. Besides, Eve spoke to me quite freely about the fellow's proposal. And she loves me; I am quite sure she loves me."

"What is Breen like?"

"I told you."

"Yes; but in appearance. Is he good-looking—captivating? Is he the kind of fellow a girl would lose her head for?"

"He might be. I don't know. I have his photo-

graph in the house somewhere. I'll get it," and he left the room as he spoke.

A few minutes later he returned, carrying a cabinet photograph in his hand.

"That is he," he said.

There could be no doubt about it, Breen was a captivating-looking fellow. He appeared to be about twenty-eight or thirty years of age, and I judged him to be tall and well-built. There was a merry twinkle in his eyes, and I could imagine him to be capable of any wild, irresponsible deed.

"The third alternative, of course, is, that she, for reasons of her own, has decided to forsake her home and you."

"In any case she must be found!" cried the old man. "If she has left me for any reason there must be a horrible mistake somewhere. She *must* be found. Tell me, Killigrew, will you help me?"

Before I had time to reply there was a knock at the door, and a servant came in bearing a telegram.

"It is from my brother Bob," cried Mr. Gascoigne. "He says he will be here by the 9.15 train. Why, what does this mean? This ought to have been delivered last night. Michael, tell Smith to meet Mr. Robert at the station at once. He must be there in twenty minutes from now."

In less than an hour Mr. Robert Gascoigne was in the room.

CHAPTER VII

MORTON GASCOIGNE'S BROTHER

ROBERT GASCOIGNE had but little resemblance to his elder brother. He was at least twenty-five years younger, and still in the prime of life; nevertheless, he did not possess the other's commanding appearance and striking personality. Not that he was either little or weak, but he lacked the decision which characterised his brother, and he was altogether wanting in what, for a better word, I will call virility. He was rather tall and stooped somewhat, and all his movements were rather hesitating. His manner of speech was slow, his voice well under control. But he had a habit of closing his somewhat small eyes when he spoke. On the whole I thought of him as a very kindly man, with no great force of character, yet one who was evidently conscientious.

He was very unostentatious both in appearance and in speech; he seldom gave an opinion without apologising, and seemed desirous of speaking kindly to everyone.

Very few seeing them together for the first time would trace any family likeness between them. Perhaps this was because old Morton Gascoigne was a giant in stature, with a profusion of white hair and a long beard, while Robert Gascoigne was not of exceptional height, was clean shaven, with only a few scattered locks remaining on his head.

He listened intently to his brother's story, and then laid his hand on the old man's arm.

"I am truly sorry for you, Morton," he said. "I little dreamed when I came to pay you a chance visit like this I should find you in such trouble. But look at the bright side, my dear fellow. Things may be explained. I am

sure that Eve is a good girl, a pure girl, a loving girl. I am not clever, as you know, and I cannot untangle this web of mystery; but I am sure there is a bright side. She is safe somewhere, and will doubtless turn up at the right time."

"Right time," cried old Morton; "now is the right time. No, there is some devilry on foot somewhere."

"Of course—I know I may be mistaken—but don't you think—well, that she was a bit afraid of you?"

"Afraid of me! Why should she be afraid of me, Robert?"

"You are such a terror, you know, Morton. To a mild fellow such as I you are a hurricane, a tornado."

"You think, then——"

"I didn't think anything, Morton; I haven't got the brains of a rabbit; but you know how you frightened Breen, and really I have sometimes thought that Eve was fond of Breen. Of course, you could have done no other. Breen is a Romanist, and—and well, I quite understand your feelings. No one knows that better than you."

"Do you think, then, that Breen had anything to do with this?"

"I daren't hazard an opinion; I'm such a duffer, such a terrible duffer. But supposing Eve was fond of Breen; supposing she was afraid you would insist on her marrying Fanshawe? I only say, suppose. Don't you think that—— But there, I dare say I'm talking nonsense."

"I can't believe Eve would do such a thing. Besides, Eve did not seem to like him. More than once they were evidently on bad terms."

"Excuse my saying so, but isn't that rather a—well, a sign that—that there was something more than ordinary between them? A girl like Eve would not get on bad terms with a fellow like Breen unless she had been on good terms with him. Excuse my making such a suggestion, but might there not be something in it?"

Of course, his answer was a fairly obvious one; all the same, it suggested that Robert Gascoigne was quick to draw conclusions. Evidently, too, old Morton Gascoigne saw the reasonableness of his brother's reply.

"Then your conclusion is that Breen had something to do with Eve's disappearance?"

"My dear Morton, I daren't conclude anything. As you know, I have a dull brain, and I don't understand women. I am a wanderer on the face of the earth, and have but little to do with men or matters; but might there not be something in it? Breen falls in love with her. He asks for your consent to an engagement, which you refuse in very bald terms. You don't think she cared for him, but do you understand a girl's heart? They seem to quarrel; but why should a girl quarrel with a fellow unless she cares for him? How does it strike you, Mr. Killigrew?"

"I'm listening," I replied; "but I know Miss Gascoigne so little that my opinion isn't worth anything—yet."

"Ah, you think it will be?"

He spoke almost sharply. Why, I could not tell, but certainly his manner changed, and he looked on me, I thought, somewhat suspiciously. It struck me afterwards that he might have thought of me as a possible suitor for Eve's hand.

"I think it might be, after I have thoroughly understood the situation," was my reply.

"Still," he said hesitatingly and nervously, "I should like to know how it strikes you."

"There appears something in your suggestion," I said, "only I cannot understand why, if she cared for Breen, she should have made her grandfather think otherwise, and why she should have seriously entertained Fanshawe's proposal."

"I put forward a suggestion with great doubt," he replied, "still, it might be worth considering. Breen is a Romanist, and both my brother Morton and Eve fear and distrust anything connected with the papacy. Therefore Eve might have fallen in love with the man, and yet because of this hindrance might have acted as she did. Again, she might not love Fanshawe, but, knowing her grandfather's mind, might have wanted to please him. Then might not Breen have appeared in the nick of time, and——?" He shrugged his shoulders significantly.

"Personally, I think the religious question may be ruled out of it," I suggested. "People in these days pay very little attention to it. The spirit of toleration is everywhere, and——"

At this point Robert Gascoigne showed a depth of feeling of which I did not think him capable.

"Excuse me," he cried, "but that remark betrays your ignorance on this matter. I speak as one who knows. Nothing is more likely than that the Romanist authorities are trying to use Breen as a tool. If he could succeed in marrying Eve, he would have her money; if he had her money the great part of it would go to Rome's coffers."

I laughed aloud. "Really, Mr. Gascoigne," I said, "don't let us imagine the impossible. We don't live in the Middle Ages, and it is surely foolish to imagine a popish plot at the back of this. Besides, a child could see that it would end disastrously to them."

"But how?"

"Because I imagine your brother would see to it that none of his money ever passed into Breen's hands."

"Not a penny of it," cried Morton Gascoigne, "not one penny. Dearly as I love Eve, I would cut her off without a farthing if she married Breen. You are right, Killigrew; whatever has become of her, Robert can't be right in his imaginings."

"I tell you you don't know what I know," cried Robert Gascoigne. "I was for years in their clutches, and I know that they are moving heaven and earth to get money and make converts. They have schemes without end, and they want money to carry them out. And nothing would rejoice them more than to handle the great wealth of Morton Gascoigne, the champion Protestant."

"I know I am a strong Protestant, Robert," replied the old man, "but let us rule that out. They would know that I should disinherit Eve."

"But would you? Excuse me, Morton, but I don't think you would. She's your own grandchild. She's your son Morton's daughter. Even although she did marry a Romanist, you could not cut her off with a shilling."

"But I would," cried the old man, "rather than see my money pass into Breen's hands, who, as you suggest, may be a tool of the priests, I would disinherit her, and—and—leave it to someone who would—use it as I would have it used."

There was an awkward silence, which I thought it wise to break.

"Aren't we getting away from the real question at issue?" I said. "The question now is to try to adopt means to find Miss Gascoigne."

"Forgive me, you are right," said Robert Gascoigne; "but—well, as Morton knows, I am not suspicious and bitter without reason. The Romanists had me in their toils for years and held me body and soul. But what do you suggest, Mr. Killigrew?"

"I think steps should be taken to find out whether Breen has been in the neighbourhood, and whether he has had communication with Miss Gascoigne," I said. "This we know: there must have been a tremendously strong motive to cause her to leave her home. It is not likely that an accident has happened to her, or that she has been kidnapped. A young lady of Miss Gascoigne's position, with plenty of money in her possession, accompanied by her maid, could not disappear in England against her will. It does not stand to reason. If she has left home of her own accord there must be very powerful motives at work. What are these motives?"

"Ah, now we are getting at it," said Robert Gascoigne. "Go on, Mr. Killigrew, I like to hear you talk. You evidently have a logical mind."

"Well, let me think of motives," I said. "What are the motives likely to influence Miss Gascoigne? Someone has said that the motives which accentuate great deeds are very few. They are love, hatred, politics, money, and religion. Can't we rule out several of them? Religion: she was quite at one with you in religion, wasn't she, Mr. Gascoigne?"

"Absolutely," said the old man decidedly.

"You are sure of that?"

"Absolutely," he repeated.

"I am quite of your opinion," I said, "but I mention it because your brother lays such stress on it. For my own part, I have no sympathy with those who see a popish plot in everything. Then there's money. I take it that Miss Gascoigne would not leave home about money matters?"

"The thought is absurd," said the old man.

"As for politics and hatred, they are both just as absurd when we consider the question of motives," I went on.

"Surely you were trained for a barrister?" said Robert Gascoigne. "Mind, I don't agree with you about religion. It always enters into the question of motives. It must. Still, go on."

"Then this question of love crops up again," I said, "and, as far as I can see, the only two men seriously in question are this man Breen and Fanshawe."

"Yes, yes," cried old Morton Gascoigne; "but what do you suggest doing?"

"I repeat," I said, "that steps be taken to find out whether Breen has ever been in this neighbourhood, or has had communication with Miss Gascoigne. If that is impossible, it will be necessary for some one to go to Ireland and visit Breen's place. I suppose you know where it is?"

"Oh, yes, I know all about it—but—but——"

"Then it is necessary to see George Fanshawe and explain how matters stand. He may be able to throw some light on the question."

"Yes," cried old Morton Gascoigne, "that's all right. But who's to do all this? Of course, I could see Fanshawe, but I'm not the man to deal with the other matters. I am an old man, and I am terribly upset. I really couldn't take a journey to Ireland."

"Employ a private detective," said Robert Gascoigne.

"You know I won't do that, except as a last resource," said his brother. "Old as I am, I'll go to Ireland myself first."

"Yes, yes, I know; forgive me for suggesting it. I would offer to go myself, only, as you know, I haven't

the brains of a rabbit; besides, I'm due in Venice the day after to-morrow. It's very awkward, but there is a manuscript there that I must see. It is a part of Dante's *Vita Nuova*, and the greatest find of the century. I must go, Morton; besides, there is a conference of the Waldensians that I must attend."

He looked at us out of his half-closed eyes as he spoke, and I couldn't help thinking how useless he would be as a private detective.

"I don't know whether I'm a fit man for such work, Mr. Gascoigne," I said, "but I shall be glad to help you if I can."

Old Morton Gascoigne grasped my hand. "If you only could, Killigrew," he said. "I know our acquaintance is very slight; and yet—well, you know what I feel."

I saw then how much his trouble had shaken him. His iron will had caused him to keep a brave face for the time, but he was an old man, and, in spite of his great strength, he was well-nigh incapable of undertaking any work which would mean prolonged fatigue and excitement.

"Killigrew is the man," said his brother. "You'll forgive my going away, Morton, won't you? But really I am as helpless as a child. Besides, my visit to Italy means a great deal to me. As you know, I regard Dante as one of the pioneers of Protestantism, and I feel I must cheer our brethren, the Waldensians, who are fighting the papists in their own land."

"A man with a bee in his bonnet," I reflected, "and utterly useless in a case like this."

"When do you go, Robert?" asked the old man.

"I must leave you this evening. I am dreadfully sorry that this trouble has befallen you; but it'll turn out all right, I feel sure it will. I know Eve. She's one of the best girls in the world, and although she may have lost her head for the time, she'll come back all right. Besides, you have Killigrew. He's a host in himself, so cheer up, Morton."

"If you'll excuse me, I think no time should be

wasted," I said, as I saw the look on old Morton Gascoigne's face. "I take it that we've talked about the matter sufficiently, and that I am in possession of all the facts."

"It's so good of you, Killigrew; but although I don't know how to thank you enough, I am ashamed to presume so upon your kindness. Besides, there are your parliamentary duties; how can you arrange them?"

"I'll manage," I said. "If I have to go to Ireland I'll get some one to pair with me." And even as I spoke I made up my mind that, if possible, I would go and see the beautiful girl who had so impressed me, and who would even then be on her way home.

"I'll order the motor at once," cried the old man. "Can I do any good by accompanying you?"

"No; I'd better go alone," I said. "You will be glad of a chat with your brother, and I can act quite as well alone."

A few minutes later I was on my way to Gascon with my plan of action plainly marked out, and, as events turned out, my inquiries bore fruit more quickly than I had dared to hope.

There were but two hotels in Gascon, and neither of them was so large but that every visitor was duly noticed. I had the advantage of visiting these hotels as a stranger, and I flatter myself that I aroused no undue suspicion by asking any questions.

At the first hotel, "The George," I gained no information. No one bearing the name or having the least likeness to Titus Breen had been there. It was a commercial hotel, and all the customers were known. Not a single stranger had visited the place for three weeks. At "The Red Lion," however, I was more fortunate. It was a family hotel, and nearly all strangers coming into the neighbourhood, "belongin' to the gentry," as the landlady emphasised, stayed there.

A few minutes later I discovered that a gentleman with an Irish accent had stayed there a fortnight before.

"Did he stop with you long?" I asked.

"Only one night," said the landlady. "When he came he said he had only come for one night. He

explained to me," she said very impressively, "that he'd come to see a particular friend, and would leave early next day."

"Had you ever seen him before?"

"No, never; but he was a nice gentleman, and was as full of jokes as an egg is full of meat."

"Did he tell you who his friend was?"

"No, sir."

"I should think it possible that he's the man I want to find," I said, "and if you can tell me what he's like I should be very glad."

"Why, sir, has he done anything wrong?"

"Oh, no, nothing of the sort; but I am anxious to see him on a particular matter; I want to get hold of him. The worst of him is, that he's a careless fellow, and never thinks of leaving an address."

"Well, that's strange, sir, for now I come to think of it, he never wrote his name in our register."

"I suppose you would know him again?" I asked.

"Yes, easy, sir."

"Would you mind describing him?"

"You are sure he's done nothing wrong?"

"Nothing at all, as far as I know. Many would think of him as a fortunate fellow."

"Has he come into money?"

I laughed knowingly. "I mustn't tell too much," I said; "but was he anything like this?" And I showed her the photograph that Morton Gascoigne had given me.

"Why, that is he, sir."

"And you say he didn't mention his name?"

"No, sir."

"But you must have made out his bill to some one?"

"Bless you, sir, when he told me he was staying only one night I didn't bother. The bill was made out to the number of his room."

"That settles one question," I said to myself as I got in the car. "I had better go back to lunch now and report progress before going to see George Fanshawe."

When I got back to the house I was informed that

Mr. Robert Gascoigne had gone to his room to lie down immediately after my departure, and that the master was in the room he had taken me to in the morning.

The man had barely given me this information when old Morton Gascoigne himself rushed towards me.

I saw that something of importance had happened. His face was haggard and drawn, his hands trembled.

"Come this way," he said, and his voice was so changed that I should scarcely have recognised it.

CHAPTER VIII

EVE GASCOIGNE'S LETTER

"It's that fellow Breen!" he said, directly we were alone together.

"Yes, it's Breen," I replied.

"You have evidence too, have you?"

"I have discovered that he was in Gascon a little more than a week ago."

"That settles it, then. Look at this!" and he handed me a letter which had come by special delivery.

I opened it eagerly. This was what I read:

"Forgive me, grandfather, for all the pain I've caused you; but I couldn't do otherwise. Pray do not try to follow me or seek to discover where I am; it will be useless. I would not have left you if I could have helped it, but there is that in life dearer to me even than my love for you. Do not grieve about me. I am very well, and should be quite happy but for the thought of the pain I am giving to you.—EVE."

I read this letter a second and then a third time. Its meaning seemed plain, and yet I could not feel that it helped me to get to the heart of things.

"Of course, this is in your granddaughter's handwriting?" I said.

"Yes." He spoke in a detached kind of way, as though his thoughts were a long way off.

"How long since this letter came?" I asked.

"Not more than ten minutes ago."

"It's from London, I see."

"Is it? I hadn't noticed. Then Eve's in London." His mind was evidently dazed. His old decisive

bearing had gone, and he seemed to have become a smaller man.

I read the letter through again. Why, I could not tell, but there was a sense of unreality about it which puzzled me.

As for Morton Gascoigne, he sat in a huge arm-chair, with his chin resting on his bosom. His crumpled-up appearance was pitiable. The blow he had received was undoubtedly a terrible one. Never did I realise until now how much the old man had loved the girl.

"Does your brother know of this?"

"No. He is lying down. What is the good of telling him?"

He rose from the chair, and then, walking to the window, looked out over the broad expanse of park. But I do not believe he saw anything; I do not think he knew that he had moved from the chair. Directly he had resumed his seat I started up and walked around the room. Immediately my body became active, my mind began to work; I seemed to see things more clearly.

I read the letter again.

"Eve Gascoigne never wrote this," I said.

I did not mean to speak aloud, but the words had passed my lips before I was aware.

"What?"

"Eve Gascoigne never wrote this," I repeated.

"But it is her own handwriting! I would know it from a million!"

I had succeeded in startling him. Life came back to his eyes, and he looked more like his natural self.

"But this is not her letter," I said.

"What do you mean, Killigrew? Tell me."

"Read it again, Mr. Gascoigne," I said, passing him the letter.

He snatched it from me and devoured every word.

"I—I don't understand what you mean," he said. "It's in Eve's handwriting—it's Eve's letter."

"No," I said. "Think, Mr. Gascoigne. Miss Gascoigne is a young girl of twenty or so. That is not a

young girl's letter. It is stiff; it is formal. She has lived with you all her life. You have cared for her from childhood; you have played with her, laughed with her, scolded her, grown angry with her, caressed her; you have been not only her grandfather, but her playmate, her comrade. She told me as much when I saw her. We walked together on the morning I stayed here, and she told me how much you were to each other. The young girl who spoke of you as she did to me could never write you a letter like that."

"You don't think so?"

"I am sure of it."

"But—but might there not be circumstances that might——?"

"No set of circumstances could make a young girl write a letter like that. Just think of the diction. It's not how a young girl would write. Take this phrase for example, 'Pray do not try to follow me.' That's not what a young girl would say. She would not use the word 'pray.' Just realise the circumstances. Whatever may have led her to leave you, she must be in a frenzy of grief. Even although she loved this man Breen, and decided to marry him, her affection for you would not be destroyed. She would be sobbing her heart out as she wrote. Do you think, then, that she would use such formal phraseology?"

"But it's her handwriting, Killigrew; I can't be deceived about that!"

"Oh, doubtless her hand held the pen, but some one else dictated it," I said. "She wrote what she was told to write."

"You think that Breen told her?"

"I—I suppose so."

His mental powers, his vigour had come back. He stood erect again, his hands clasped and unclasped nervously, his eyes flashed. He was Morton Gascoigne, the young-old man again.

"And the child's alive!" he cried. "She's in London. It may be that—that we can get some daylight on the matter. Yes, we can, we must, we will!"

"There is something else," I said. "She left home several days ago. Why did she not write before?"

"Perhaps she was afraid."

"Afraid of what?"

"Perhaps she wanted to be married before she wrote me."

I shook my head. The thing was not clear to me. Were there not influences at work which were unknown to me?

"Then, why the hurry for sending this letter by special messenger, seeing she has waited so long?" I said. "And still another question, Why, if she is married, has she given no address?"

"There is no address?"

"Look for yourself. A West End postmark, and that is all. If she were married, and thus out of your power (even if we look at it from that standpoint), she would have no desire to keep her whereabouts a secret."

"We know it was sent from London."

"A city twenty miles across whichever way you traverse it; a city with six millions of people. She is more effectually hidden there than if she lived in the heart of Africa."

"Then you think Breen had a reason for continued secrecy?"

I looked at Breen's photograph again. It was the face of a typical Irishman. The eyes and the mouth betrayed humour, and the whole man suggested a fairly happy-go-lucky sort of character. It was by no means a bad face, but it suggested weakness—at any rate, indecision, a lack of stability.

"I doubt if Breen is at the bottom of it," I said.

"But—you have narrowed the whole matter down to him."

"Yes, but from superficial data. I can't help thinking that there is more behind this than appears on the surface."

"But the child's life is as open as the daylight. She has rarely left home. I know her entirely; I know her companions."

"Yes, I quite realise that; but there is more here than appears. I must have time to think."

"If I were only twenty years younger!" cried the old man; "but my power to probe things to the bottom seems to be gone. I seem to see things for an instant, and then, before I can grasp them, they are gone."

"Look here, Mr. Gascoigne," I said, and a great pity came into my heart as I looked at him, "you have asked me to help you. I am young and strong, and I deeply sympathise with you. Just trust me for a little, will you? Don't worry, and remember I'm thinking hard."

For a moment his lips trembled, then he grasped my hand.

"Thank you, Killigrew," he said. "I have never realised till these last few days that I am a very old man. It is a great comfort to me to know that you are here, and that you are thinking and acting for me. Yes, I do trust you entirely. You know how I honour the name I bear and how dear it is to me. You know, too, how I love my little Eve. As far as possible I will do as you say. You can quite see that although my brother Robert is the best fellow in the world, he is not the man to help me, and—well, I have not been one to make many new friends, and all my old ones have died."

"It's after lunch-time," I said. "Will you forgive me if I tell you that I'm hungry?"

During lunch I succeeded in cheering him up greatly. I saw, to my delight, that he seemed very fond of me and that he trusted me completely.

"You have a telephone in the house?" I said presently.

"Certainly."

"And Fanshawe—is his house also connected?"

"Yes." ●

"Good. Many people abuse such advances of civilisation, but a telephone is a great convenience."

I discovered that George Fanshawe was out, and would not be back until five o'clock; and then, having said I would come to see him at that time, I gave myself

over to a reconsideration of the facts as they appeared to me.

Robert Gascoigne must evidently have been very tired. He did not appear until four o'clock, and then declared that, after looking up his trains, he must rush to the station at once.

"I am so sorry to leave you in this way, Morton," he said, "and still more sorry to leave you in such trouble; but I am convinced that everything will turn out right. Bless you, man, we don't live in the Middle Ages, and the truth will come to light. Even at the very worst, it is only a case of a young girl running away to be secretly married. And Eve is a good girl, a clever girl, and if she has married Breen, I feel sure she'll convert him to the Protestant faith."

Even although I desired old Morton Gascoigne to dwell on the bright side of affairs, I felt that Robert Gascoigne struck a wrong note. There was an airy flippancy which jarred on me, and I more than ever felt that he was just as well out of the way, for certainly he was not the man to help one in any matter of difficulty. Evidently, too, his brother had come to the same conclusion, for he did not say a word about the letter he had received from Eve.

At five o'clock I was at Moorvale Park, the home of the Fanshaws, and found George Fanshawe on the terrace awaiting me. He was in riding attire, and I could not help reflecting on what a fine figure of a man he made as he came towards me with outstretched hand.

"Motors simply annihilate distance," I said, as I stepped from Morton Gascoigne's car. "Fancy, twelve minutes ago I was at Mr. Gascoigne's house."

"Which is nearly five miles away," he said, with a laugh. "If you are brought up for exceeding the speed limit, I will witness against you."

"Needs must when the devil drives," I said.

He looked at me quickly, suspiciously.

"Anything the matter?" he said.

"A great deal. I want half an hour with you, alone."

Without a word he led the way into the house, and

we were quickly ensconced in his own den. I glanced eagerly around the room, for I was anxious to understand all about the man I had come to see.

On the walls were pictures of his school and college days, including one which portrayed him as captain of his college cricket team. I also saw several guns, some foils, two pairs of boxing-gloves, a pair of dumb-bells, several stuffed birds—apparently the trophies of shooting expeditions—and other evidences that the room was owned by an athlete and a sportsman. But this was not all. There were several good engravings of eminent men of letters, a fine bust of Dante, another of Milton, and still another of Robert Browning. In addition were bookcases containing, I should think, a thousand volumes, and from their miscellaneous nature I judged their owner to be a man of catholic tastes.

My respect for George Fanshawe increased as I noted these things. This was no heavy-headed squire that I had to deal with, but a man who knew his classics and who, I judged, had more than a nodding acquaintance with writers like Balzac and Victor Hugo, as well as our own English novelists.

These facts decided me to speak plainly.

"Fanshawe," I said, "I was summoned, urgently summoned, to come down here to see old Mr. Morton Gascoigne."

"He summoned you himself?"

"Yes."

"Then it must have been something serious."

"It was. So serious that I have come over here to ask you to tell me about your chances of winning Miss Eve Gascoigne's hand."

I saw his eyes flash angrily, but only for a moment. He could see that I had not come to him without a serious reason.

"I should like to know why you ask that?" he said.

"It is not because I have any ambitions in that direction," was my reply. "But before I tell you what is in my mind, I want to know how you stand with her. Forgive my speaking plainly, but are you very

fond of her? Do you really desire to make her your wife?"

He gave me a keen searching glance, as though he were trying to see what lay at the back of my mind.

"I will speak plainly," he said. "For five years the great hope of my life has been to win her love. No other woman has ever come into my life. She was a girl in short dresses when I fell in love with her, and that love has increased ever since."

"Thank you for your confidence," I said, "as you may be sure, I shall regard what you have said sacredly. A few days ago you proposed to her. Would you mind telling me exactly how matters stand between you?"

"You must have a very serious reason for asking such a question?"

"I have."

"What is it?"

"Directly you have answered my question I will tell you."

"There was nothing settled," he replied. "The understanding was that I was neither to see her nor in any way communicate with her for a fortnight, and then she would give me her answer. Now tell me why you have come to me in this way?"

I told him everything. As far as I could, I described the whole situation as it really existed. I reflected that I was speaking to a young man who was clear-brained, and who ought to know the truth.

He did not speak a word while I told him what had happened, and but for the occasional tremor of his lips, and the nervous movement of his hands, I should not have known how deeply he felt.

"Is that all?" he asked presently.

"That is all I know. Can you throw any light on the situation? Love is not always blind."

For some time he seemed in doubt about speaking. Perhaps it was because he was not sure he could control himself; perhaps he thought he did not know me sufficiently well to speak freely.

"I have been convinced, especially during these last

few months, that there has been something preying on her mind," he said presently.

I waited for him to proceed. What had struck me when I visited Gascon Hall for the first time had also impressed him.

"I may be a vain, boastful fellow," he went on, "but I feel sure she loves me. We have known each other for years. By nature she is frank and open-hearted, and yet it has seemed to me that she has always wanted to hide something from me. Sometimes she—well, she seemed to forget—whatever it was—and then—well, I had no doubt about her love. But at others—well, you remember that night when you dined there before the political meeting?"

"I remember perfectly."

"It was one of the occasions when she appeared to go out of her way to express her dislike for me. When I proposed to her I thought all was well; and then suddenly all was changed."

"Explain."

"I can't explain. But I felt sure she loved me, and yet I knew that something was in the background. What it was I could not tell."

"But surely there was some understanding between you when you parted?"

"Nothing but what you know. She said she was unable to answer definitely. She appeared confused for a time; then she said she would go and see Laura Scobell. She wanted time to think, she said, and to understand her heart. In the meantime she insisted that I must not go and see her grandfather, nor seek to communicate with her; but that when she came back from her visit—well, the matter should be settled."

"But surely a young fellow like you was not content with such an arrangement? You asked questions?"

"Content! I rejoiced over even that amount of comfort. Be quiet a minute, will you; I—I want to settle my nerves a bit—I want to think."

A few minutes later he spoke again.

"Killigrew," he said, "I am glad Mr. Gascoigne sent

for you. I saw how he took to you at the time, and I expect I was a bit jealous, but I am glad he sent for you. There's some devilry at the bottom of this, but we'll probe it to the very bottom. Of course, I'm going to work with you. It is my right."

"Yes," I said, "it is your right."

"Then let's mark out our plan of action."

CHAPTER IX

DREAM-PICTURES

"THERE'S one person whom, so far, you have apparently left out of your considerations," he said presently.

"Yes?"

"Miss Grant."

"Not entirely."

"No; but is it not rather strange that her leaving should so nearly synchronise with Eve's disappearance?"

"That may mean nothing."

"Or a great deal. Let me think."

Again he was silent for a time.

"When do you return to London?" he said at length.

"I thought of going back to-morrow morning."

"And then?"

"Well, as you will have noticed, I have been trying to understand this business by a sort of—well, process of exhaustion. I have considered every alternative, and, whatever may be the ulterior cause of her leaving, the man Breen seems to be immediately associated with it."

"Well, go on."

"My plan was to go to London, arrange about my parliamentary duties for a few days, and then, if I can discover nothing there, go to Ireland."

"Why Ireland?"

"Because I should be able to obtain a full knowledge of Breen's doings."

"You know his address?"

"Yes."

"What train do you think of going by?"

"The 11.6 from Gascon."

"I'll go with you, if I may."

I looked at him questioningly.

"You're working on the 'knock-out' system, as we do in a golf tournament," said George Fanshawe. "I think it is a sound principle, but, as you know, sometimes the unlikely man not only gets into the finals, but carries off the cup."

"You are thinking of Miss Grant. You must have a reason for it."

"Nothing tangible. But, as you may imagine, I have been visiting the house for years, and while I'm not a talking man, I have a habit of keeping my eyes open."

"Well?"

"Oh, nothing definite; nothing but vague suspicions. Still, I'll go with you, if I may."

"You have knowledge which you do not wish to communicate to me?"

"No—not knowledge."

"But she's gone abroad, my dear fellow."

"Still, I'll go to London."

"Right," I said; but, seeing that he did not wish to speak further, I did not ask him any more questions.

The next morning we met at Gascon station. I had promised old Morton Gascoigne that I would write to him daily reporting progress, but urged him not to expect too much.

"Do you know, Killigrew," he said, as we sat at breakfast, "I have been haunted with a ghastly thought all the night, and I can't get rid of it even now."

"Don't give way to morbid fears," I urged; "but what is it?"

"You remember what I told you when you first visited me here. I explained to you why I held to the strong Protestant position, and described to you the means whereby the Romanists tried to rob me of my little maid."

"Yes; but what has that to do with the matter?"

"Oh, I know you think I see a Romanist plot beneath every bramble bush; but I can't help thinking of what that governess said when I found her out and dismissed her. She not only declared that she had received

dispensation to pose as a Protestant, but declared that Eve would remain a Romanist for all I could do."

"The natural retort of an angry woman."

"Yes; but if there is any truth in it?"

I laughed aloud. "I am surprised at a man of your strength of mind giving way to such fancies," I said. "It is this kind of thing that gives the Romanists the whip hand of extreme Protestants. Don't you see what such a suspicion leads to? It means that your granddaughter has deliberately deceived you for years. You told me last night that her life for years has been as open as the day, and yet now you suspect her of carrying on an underhand system of deceit. The thing is impossible."

"She is no longer a child of my child if she has deceived me!" he cried, with flashing eyes. "No, I could not forgive that! Never!"

I tried to laugh away his fears, but although he admitted that his fancies seemed absurd, I could see that the thought haunted him.

"At any rate, you will come and see me soon," he said. "I know there can be little pleasure for a young fellow like you to visit an old fogey like me, but come out of pity, Killigrew. You don't know what your visits will mean to me."

George Fanshawe and I talked but little during our journey to town. I could see that he was thinking deeply. He had bought a number of papers and periodicals at the Gascon bookstall, but he did not read one of them. His eyes had a far-away look; his brows were knitted.

"He does not trust me," I reflected. "Why?"

"Where do you put up?" he asked, as we drew near the terminus.

"The Celtic," I answered. "I have rooms there."

"I shall stay at The University," he said. "You might let me know before you start for Ireland, or, if you like, I'll look you up."

"Which you please," I said, for his taciturnity had somewhat nettled me.

"I'm going to work out a little thought of my own," he said; "but it is so shadowy and, even if it were tangible, it is so apparently absurd, that I'll not trouble you by explaining it. Still, I'll get it off my mind one way or another."

"Do you hold Morton Gascoigne's strong Protestant views?" I asked.

"I'm certainly a Protestant," he said. "And you?"

"Oh, I care very little about such matters," I replied. "My father was a Protestant, a strong, upright, honest man; my mother was a Romanist, a lovely, pure-minded woman. I respect both faiths. It is merely a matter of temperament and upbringing as to which faith you hold."

"Just so," was his answer. "I am not of your opinion; but of course you have reasons for holding your views. By the way, you'll not leave for Ireland till Saturday, I suppose?"

"Certainly not before then."

"Then shall I call at your club to-morrow night—say at nine o'clock?"

"If there is nothing special at the House, I'll be at The Celtic at that hour."

All that afternoon I was in attendance at the House of Commons, but I am afraid I paid but little attention to what was going on. Besides, I had slept but little for two nights, and felt very weary. At seven o'clock I left the House for dinner, and was on my way to my club when I felt a hand upon my arm.

I turned and saw Mr. Gabriel O'Hara, who had introduced me to Kathleen Castlereagh.

"It's you I was looking for all yesterday," he said.

"Well, you've found me," I said. "What can I do for you?"

"I'd like a long serious chat with you."

"What about?"

"An important matter—a vitally important matter."

"Political?"

"Yes, you might call it so. No, it's not about Kathleen—I see what is in your mind."

I was angry with myself as I felt the blood rush into my face. I was glad, however, that the lobby of the House of Commons was dark that evening.

"It could hardly be about her, could it?" I said. "She told me she was leaving London yesterday morning."

"Ah! she told you that, did she? No, it is not about her, although it is about something that's very near her heart."

"Well, come and dine with me now. I expect my club will be nearly empty to-night, and we can easily find a quiet corner."

"No, not now. I want you to meet two or three other men."

"Well, name the time suitable to you."

"Say Saturday."

"I can't promise for Saturday. I may be going out of town."

He looked at me keenly. "Business out of town?" he asked.

I rather resented the question, for the man was nearly a stranger to me, and it savoured of impertinence. Still, as I reflected, he was an Irishman who was not strong on the *convenances*.

"It's no uncommon thing for men in our position to get away for the week-end," I suggested.

"Oh, golf or something of that sort, I suppose?"

"Anyhow, it's not quite settled what I shall do yet," I said. "It will depend on—other things."

"I'll look out for you to-morrow," he said. "I really want an important chat with you, but—but—well, the matter is not quite in order yet."

I went back to my club, and ate my dinner thoughtfully. It seemed to me as though during the last few days my life had been changed. New interests had taken the place of old, and I felt as though I were about to travel into unknown paths. The face of Kathleen Castlereagh haunted me. Her voice kept constantly ringing in my ears. In spite of myself, I knew that I had become deeply interested in her, and although

I had promised old Morton Gascoigne to go to Ireland to discover all that could be known about the man Breen, I could not hide from myself the fact that I should not have been so eager to go there but for her.

What a wonderful face hers was! There was nothing in the world like it. That mass of shining hair, the colour of which I was unable to decide, and was yet like a nimbus crowning the glory of her face. Her voice, too, was like music, and as softly caressing as a south wind on a moonlit night in summer. I became lost to everything else as I thought of her. The flash of her laughing, sad, passionate, tender eyes seemed to endow everything with a new meaning, while her perfect complexion, and the parted lips, revealing the pearly whiteness of her teeth, made a picture, to describe which I could find no words.

I was fast approaching thirty years of age, and up to now no woman had cast a spell upon me; but this wild Irish girl, with her irresponsible talk about religion and politics, had somehow broken the crust of my nature and destroyed my one-time indifference. The fires of my Celtic nature had begun to burn, fires kindled by the eyes of this Irish child.

I went into the smoke-room and lit a cigar. The room seemed very quiet, and the air, which had become warm, had a somnolent effect on me. I did not go to sleep, but I entered that dim region which lies between the world of dreams and the world of realities. The events of the last few days became strangely mingled. Old Morton Gascoigne and his brother Robert became in some way connected with Gabriel O'Hara, and Kathleen Castlereagh; while the man who had so interested himself in my election, the quiet, mysterious Mr. Maynooth, whom I had neither seen nor heard of since the polling day, became intimately associated with Eve Gascoigne. Even at that time I knew that my fancies were playing tricks with me; nevertheless, these people seemed to be actors in the drama upon which the curtain was lifted. I felt, too, that I was to play a leading part in the drama, and that there was not only comedy,

but tragedy ; that elemental passions were to be aroused, and that there was to be a struggle amidst forces which were entirely unknown to me.

In my fancy, too, I saw the face of Miss Grant, who had so favourably impressed me on the only occasion on which I had seen her, but she seemed enshrouded in mystery.

I knew I was only half-awake, and yet I had an eager interest in the shadowy figures which were appearing and disappearing on my life's stage. I wandered, too, as I saw the scenes constantly changing. Sometimes they were in the busy London streets ; at others, beneath the lofty domes of some great cathedral, or under the vaulted ceilings of the Houses of Parliament ; and still again I seemed to see wild moorland, craggy peaks, and great deserted halls.

But ever and always I saw the glorious face of Kathleen Castlereagh, whose eyes beckoned me on, I knew not where ; while old Morton Gascoigne and George Fanshawe, with stern and almost scowling looks, bade me stand still.

As I reclined in the great easy chair in this semi-comatose condition I seemed to see Kathleen away among misty clouds beckoning me to come to her side ; I saw a look of love shining from her eyes as she beckoned ; and while I longed to go to her, some power which I could not explain held me back.

"Come to me, Kerry—come!" I heard her say ; but I could not go to her, for, as it appeared to me, I should leave that behind me which would alone give me the right of going to her.

Then I heard a voice calling me by name which aroused me to a sense of reality ; but the awakening caused me pain, for I knew that Kathleen longed for me to go to her, but I could not go. Moreover, I knew she would not come to me.

"Killigrew!"

"Yes."

"Been having a nap?"

"I suppose so."

"Sorry to have awakened you, but I wanted to know if you would join a golfing party for the week-end. We are going to play Government against Opposition, and I want steady players. I think your handicap is two, isn't it?"

"I'm sorry, Tremain," I said, "but I'm afraid I can't. First, I don't know whether I ought to play with the Government or the Opposition; and, second, my arrangements for Saturday are so uncertain that I can't be reckoned on."

"Oh yes, I forgot. You are a sort of independent member, aren't you? Still, you are quite sound enough to play with the Government. However, if your affairs aren't settled, I must look out for another man."

I don't know why it was, but it seemed to me as though even this casual request to play golf had some distant connection with the dream-pictures which had been flitting before my mind.

"Going down to the House?"

"Not for an hour or so. I want to hear Graymantle on the Church Discipline Bill; not that I'm so much interested in the subject as in Graymantle. I hear he's a very fine speaker, and will come on about ten o'clock."

"Yes; he's going to be another Sir William Harcourt. Good night."

I left the club and went into the street. As I passed the House of Commons I saw several Members of Parliament going back to the House, but I did not follow them; instead, I walked in an aimless way towards Victoria station. As I went I thought of Morton Gascoigne, and of his grief at the loss of his granddaughter, and I reflected on what he said to me just before I left him.

"Of course, he has a bee in his bonnet," I said to myself. "All these ultra-Protestants are ever on the look-out for Jesuit plots; still, he's a man of great intellectual powers and of sane judgment. Besides, the fact of that governess being foisted upon him, who in an underhanded way tried to make Eve a Romanist, is

enough to make him suspicious. I wonder, now—I wonder——”

I stopped in my musings, for I had turned into a side-street, and saw before me the huge pile of buildings known as the Westminster Cathedral. I saw the high tower, which reminded me of an Eastern minaret, and I noticed that people were passing in and out of the peculiar-shaped entrance of the great church.

Without knowing why, I decided to enter. I reflected that Cardinal Manning wanted to erect a great cathedral for those belonging to his adopted faith, but did not commence the work because of the number of poor and starving members of his communion. He would not spend hundreds of thousands of pounds in bricks and mortar while so many wanted bread. But his successor had no such scruples, and accordingly he appealed to the whole Catholic world for support.

I entered the great cathedral.

At first the place repelled me. It had a gaunt, cold, ugly appearance. The great spaces of grey brick, unrelieved by any suggestion of beauty, reminded me of a factory rather than a church. Presently, however, this feeling passed away. Its very size and height gave it a sense of majesty; moreover, the grandeur of the architect's design presently appealed to me. The place was not at present suggestive of worship, but its possibilities appealed to me.

A number of people were scattered around. Some, like myself, had come in out of curiosity; while others had doubtless come either for confession or to join in the services of the church. It was all strange to me, for while my mother was a Roman Catholic, I had never taken a deep interest in her faith. Besides, although, being a Celt, I was easily appealed to through the imagination, I was never attracted by the Romanists' somewhat sensuous form of worship.

I therefore remained a spectator, and quietly walked around examining the great building. Presently, however, I heard a voice that seemed familiar, although I could not tell where I had heard it before. I looked

towards the spot from whence the voice came, but could recognise no one. I saw a man and two women standing talking together, but the women were veiled, and even if they had not been, I could not have seen their faces plainly in the dim light of the church.

Nevertheless, while keeping my face away from them, I drew a little nearer to them. The familiarity of the voice attracted me.

Was I mistaken, or did I hear the name "Gascoigne"? It seemed to me as though I heard it, and yet, amidst the hum of voices I was not sure. But this I did hear plainly:

"Well, the matter must be settled by to-morrow, Miss Lakeman."

My heart gave a great leap, not because of the words, but because of the voice. I eagerly tried to scan the faces of the group, but could discern nothing. I was about to take a step nearer when the service was concluded, and the people I had been watching were lost in the crowd.

"Of course, it was the purest fancy," I said to myself, "just the purest fancy. All the same, it seemed to me——"

"Ah, Mr. Killigrew, I am pleased to see you."

I looked and saw the man who had been so interested in my election.

"Mr. Maynooth," I said.

"Ah, you remember my name, do you? I hardly thought you would. Are you busy?"

"I thought of getting back to the House in an hour."

"Anything important?"

"No—o, I suppose not. Why do you ask?"

"The sight of you reminded me of a promise you made me when we last met," he said slowly and quietly. "I have rooms close by here. Do you feel like a chat?"

The words were simple enough, and yet it seemed to me as though there were something sinister in them.

"I could manage half an hour, I dare say."

"Ah, the House of Commons' routine must be very wearying."

He took my arm as he spoke, and although he put no pressure on me, I felt as though he were leading me against my will.

CHAPTER X

THE SPIDER AND THE FLY

WE walked together for perhaps five minutes, when we stopped before a great block of buildings. It was one of the many flats which have grown up in London during the last quarter of a century.

As we entered one of the doorways a man in uniform touched his cap to my companion.

"Going up, sir?"

"Yes, please, Patrick."

We entered a lift, which stopped at the third floor. The man opened the door and we passed along a corridor which was brilliantly lighted. The door at the end of the corridor he opened, and, the electric light having been switched on, I saw a large and well-appointed room.

"Come in, will you?" he said in his quiet, detached sort of manner. "I rather pride myself that this is the quietest room in London."

I must confess that when I had entered, and he had shut the door, I was surprised at the silence. We might have been out in the country instead of in the very heart of London.

"I suppose Carlyle got a sort of iron-cased room on the top of his house in order to be rid of noise," he said. "I have managed to get it without going to so much trouble. Will you have some refreshments?"

"I have just had dinner, thank you," I said. Although I did not know why, I felt as though I had been led into a kind of trap, and I did not feel inclined to accept any hospitality at his hands.

He pushed an easy chair towards me and then sat down with a sigh.

"Well, how do you like parliamentary life?"

"Oh, very well."

"Disappointing, eh?"

"No, I don't think so."

"That is well. I notice that you have become the acknowledged head of a coterie."

"That scarcely describes it."

"No? Well, call it what you like. Of course, I am a very superficial observer, but I have noticed that you have voiced the feelings of a good many. You occupy a half-way house. You will not be tied to the apron-strings of either party, and because you have had individuality enough and courage enough to occupy this position, a good many others have followed in your train."

"Say rather that a few men sympathise with me."

"Anyhow, your attitude has given you a distinct position. Although you are new to the House, your name counts for something."

"You are inclined to be generous."

"I am inclined to congratulate myself on having had something to do with your election. Why, it makes even me feel a little important."

I turned on him suddenly. "Mr. Maynooth," I said, "may I ask you a question?"

"Why not?" And he looked at me curiously out of his half-closed eyes.

"Why did you take such interest in my election?"

"Suppose you put it down to the fact that I am a faddist," he said quietly, and with the ghost of a smile hovering around his thin lips.

"Even a faddist must have his reasons for taking so much interest in an entire stranger."

"Do you think so? Well, perhaps he must. But didn't I attend your meetings regularly, eh? You can't say I don't know your views."

"No; you listened like a dog."

"The simile of a farmer, but a good one. Yes, I did."

"But why?"

"Because I believed in you; because—well, yes, I

felt the time would come when you would be invaluable in a great cause of justice and righteousness."

"What cause?"

"You'll know when the time is ripe. Ah, I see I have set you wondering. But don't be uneasy. I have no sympathy with Russian nihilism or anarchy. What little rag-tags of politics I have are all on the constitutional side."

I looked at him for a few seconds with a somewhat uneasy feeling at my heart. Of what was he thinking?

"I have often thought of your words on the day the votes were counted," he said presently. "You remember them, eh?"

"I said many things that day," I answered. "To what do you refer?"

"Oh, you had an exaggerated idea of what I was able to do for you," he replied, "and you said some kind things about wanting to repay me. Of course, I did nothing; but I suggested that the time might come when I should tax your gratitude greatly, and your reply was that I should never be able to tax it too much. If Providence throws us in each other's way very much you will find I have a tremendous memory. It is one of my few gifts. I never forget."

Was there something like a threat in these words? I was not sure; and yet why should there be? The man was evidently trying to be friendly.

"I have no gift of speech myself," he said, "but I admire those who have. But, more than that, I admire those who have broad, charitable and just principles, and it's something to be able to admire such things, eh?"

Again I was silent. I was trying to read the man's mind.

"What do you think of Westminster Cathedral, eh?"

His face was averted as he spoke, and he stooped to pick up some grain of dust from the carpet.

"It's very big," I said.

"Ah, yes. Well, it represents a big idea. Don't you think so?"

"I suppose so,"

"You are not a Catholic, I think you told me?"

I shook my head.

"But you have great sympathy with the faith, eh?"

"My mother was a Catholic," I replied.

"Just so. I am a Catholic."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. That was why your speeches attracted me. You don't think so, eh?"

"My speeches had nothing to do with theological questions."

"I happened to read a report of the first you gave, and it appealed to me. It was so broad-minded, so charitable, so tolerant. And if there is anything a Catholic loves it is a great charity. Don't you think so?"

"He should do so," I replied. "Catholic means universal, doesn't it?"

"Ah, you grasp the thought. Because I am a Catholic I hate anything narrow, intolerant, hedged in by little sectarian ideas. And—well, your speeches breathed the spirit of a broad charity. Do you not think it hateful that any man should suffer disability because of his creed? I think it is hellish!"

His words revealed him in a new light. There was a savage snarl in his closing words. Still I did not speak, and, try as I would, I could not understand him.

"We Catholics have been vilely misrepresented by Protestant bigots," he went on presently. "They have falsified history, they have embittered the minds of the children. We have been painted as narrow and persecuting, whereas the very genius of our life is universality, infinite compassion, eternal love. Don't you think so?"

"I have never given any attention to the subject," I said; "but I respect the Catholic faith because of my mother. There was never a better woman."

"And her faith made her what she was. There is nothing so broad as the Catholic faith; that is why I love it so. And yet we are misunderstood. What could be viler than Gladstone's contention in his 'Vatican Decrees'? He said it was impossible for a papist to be a

patriot. What truer patriots are there in England to-day than are to be found among the Catholics?"

"I am utterly ignorant of the question," I said. "I hate the wrangle of creeds, and I have never thought it worth while to consider why the sects have quarrelled."

"I could see your love of justice, your desire that all classes should have equal chances," he said almost passionately. "That was why I followed you from meeting to meeting; that was why I wanted to help you."

"You haven't told me yet how I can pay the debt of gratitude I owe you," I said.

"But I will, I will."

"Yes, tell me."

"Promise me this: promise me, on your honour as an English gentleman, that if ever you have an opportunity of striking a blow at injustice you'll strike it."

"I surely will," I replied.

"That if ever the time comes," he went on without noticing my words, "when you have an opportunity of destroying any disabilities which people suffer because of their religious creed, you'll do your utmost to use it well and wisely. That you will not be enslaved by the ignorant prejudices of the past, but that you will be faithful to the call of justice."

"I have no difficulty in promising that. I do with all my heart. But give me a concrete example."

"Swear it! Swear it!" he cried.

I should not have recognised the quiet, hesitating individual who had come to see me in Blenheim in the almost frenzied man who now caught my arm.

"There is no need of an oath," I said. "I hope my word is enough."

The wild flash passed out of his eyes and he again became the almost apologetic and tentative individual I had seen months before.

"Of course," he said, "there is no need of an oath; but you have given me your word, and I never forget, never. You have a good memory, too, eh, Mr. Killigrew? That is well. Neither of us will have need to recall this conversation to the other."

He was silent for a few seconds, then he said:

"Your promise will be claimed, Mr. Killigrew."

"In what way?" I asked.

"Who knows?" was his reply. "But it will surely come. Ah, it is a great thing to live for justice, to fight for equal treatment of all classes, to break the chains of slavery which have bound our fathers."

What did the man mean? I tried to read his mind, but in vain. What he had made me promise was the merest commonplace, and yet I felt that behind his words was a meaning of great import.

"You'll want to be going now?" he said suddenly.

"Yes, you'll want to be going now. Many are watching your career, Mr. Killigrew. Many expect you to do a great work. Do you mind taking a word of advice from me, eh?"

"Wise advice is always good," I said, venturing on a platitude.

"Then have nothing to do with faddists. Keep up your reputation as a man who weighs his words well before he speaks. Don't be looked upon as a partisan. Be true to your position of independent thought. You will carry ten times more weight that way than by becoming a party hack, even although you might get a seat in the Cabinet. And remember this:

He stopped and for some moments seemed to be looking into vacancy.

"The eyes of many in high places are upon you," he said; "remember that. You will not work unobserved. Those who watch you expect greatly, even as they can reward greatly."

"You are speaking in riddles," I said, "and I was never any good at solving riddles."

"What is it you desire?" he said. "Is it position, is it power, is it the love of the most beautiful woman in a land of beautiful women?"

He laughed uneasily. "No, you do not care for these things. For you the success of a noble cause is sufficient reward. I saw this months ago. Still, remember this: Many in high places are watching you with anxious yet

hopeful eyes. There, I know you long to be gone. Good night."

He almost pushed me out of the room, while I, like a man in a dream, made my way to the lift and from thence into the street.

It is no use denying it, the man had exercised a great influence over me. He possessed a power which I could not understand. Perhaps his quick transition from one mood to another had something to do with it. Indeed, it seemed more than this. There was a suggestion of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde about him. The hesitating, self-deprecating Mr. Maynooth of the inn at Blenheim was not the same Mr. Maynooth who grasped me almost savagely by the arm and bade me swear to a kind of abstraction.

Then his words were mysterious. What did he mean by telling me that many in high places were watching me? What was the meaning of his appeal to my desire for position, for fame, for love?

"The most beautiful woman in a land noted for beautiful women."

I remembered his words plainly. Did he know Kathleen Castlereagh? Did he guess at the feelings which, in spite of myself, I knew had come into my heart?

By the time I had reached the House of Commons the impression which the man had made upon me had somewhat passed away, and I had become more calm and critical. I remembered not only my interview with Mr. Maynooth, but I thought of the familiar voice I had heard in the cathedral; I remembered certain words with great distinction. Was I mistaken in the voice, or had my fancy played me some trick?

There was no subject of especial importance in the House, and I listened with only a partially aroused interest to the speeches. As I write I cannot remember a single word that was spoken. I do not even remember the subject of debate. I left early and made my way to my club.

There was only one letter for me there, and it had been delivered by hand. I broke the seal without even

noting the handwriting. The contents of the envelope, however, quickly aroused my attention. On a sheet of paper was a hastily drawn picture representing the story of the spider and the fly. It was hastily drawn, as I have said, but it was evidently done by a master-hand. The head of the spider must have cost the artist some care, for it plainly suggested the features of Mr. Maynooth, and the features had a somewhat sinister expression. I imagined that the fly was supposed to represent myself, although there was no suggestion of a likeness to me.

Underneath the sketch were the words :

“ ‘Will you walk into my parlour,’ said the spider to the fly.”

I looked at the thing for a few moments, and then a thought struck me. I had seen the handwriting before. Where? Opening my pocket-book I extracted the note I had received at Blenheim on the night the man Maynooth had first visited me.

The writing on the two pieces of paper had evidently been penned by the same person.

“ I suppose some one has a grudge against Maynooth,” I said to myself presently. “ But why should these things be sent to me? ”

I thought over the whole matter until I was tired, then I went to bed and fell into a dreamless sleep.

When I woke it was nearly ten o'clock. I had evidently slept ten hours, and what was more, my mind was clear, I felt strong and vigorous.

“ William,” I said to the servant who answered the bell, and who always prepared my bath, “ bring me a telegram form.”

When he brought one I wrote the following words : “ Wire the name of the woman you discharged some years ago because of her deceit.”

This I sent to old Morton Gascoigne.

The morning was fine and clear, and even in the heart of London the air was breezy and exhilarating. When I had had my bath I felt much refreshed and exhilarated. My spirits became buoyant, and I laughed at the feeling

of depression which had possessed me the previous night. My mind, too, I remember was clear, and I was able to see things plainly.

Of course, the subject uppermost in my thoughts was the disappearance of Eve Gascoigne. I thought of what I had heard at the Westminster Cathedral on the previous evening, and waited somewhat impatiently for the reply to the telegram I had sent to her grandfather. I dared not name, even to myself, the possessor of the voice I had heard beneath the roof of the great Byzantine building; nevertheless, I felt myself to be on the brink of a discovery, and I knew that old Morton Gascoigne's wire would either confirm or dispel my fancies.

While I sat at breakfast the man who had asked me to join him in a golfing party on the following Saturday again came to me.

"Just the man I wanted to see, Killigrew," he said. "Do you know, I can't find a suitable man for the Government side. I am anxious to beat the Opposition, and all the good players are booked. I wish you could play, my dear fellow. I want you to play against Kinglake; he's a scratch man, but I believe you could beat him. You are a terrifically long driver, and whenever he has a long driver against him he presses, and pressing leads to fozzling. Come, Killigrew, do say I may book you for Saturday."

Well, why not? I longed for a game of golf, and the thought of a day in the pure air attracted me. It is true I had planned to go to Ireland, but there seemed no hurry, and the fellow was certainly very pressing.

And yet I hesitated.

"Come, say you will, there's a good chap, and I'll make arrangements right away."

I lifted the cover of the dish before me and helped myself to another piece of bacon. I was on the point of accepting when my elbow touched a loaf of bread and knocked it on the floor.

"What a clumsy fellow I am," I said, and I did not speak again until the waiter had put matters straight.

"Say you will, Killigrew."

But, as will be seen, the fact that I had knocked the bread on the floor altered my plans, for before I could give him the promise he required I heard a boy shouting my name.

I beckoned to him and he brought me a telegram.

"Excuse me, Tremain," I said, as I tore open the envelope. "I have an idea that this wire is important."

This was what I read:

"Eliza Lakeman, age about thirty-five, birth-mark under left ear; please inform me of everything before you start for Ireland.

"GASCOIGNE."

There seemed not the slightest reason why I could not play golf on the Saturday, but without a second's hesitation I said:

"This wire settles the matter, Tremain. I am very sorry, but I can't join you."

My visitor had barely left me when I heard my name again.

"You are wanted on the telephone, sir; a Mr. Fanshawe wants to speak to you very urgently."

I left my breakfast and hurried to the telephone box.

"Yes, Fanshawe, what is it?"

"I want to see you this morning, at once if I may. Can I come over to you?"

"Certainly. I'll wait till you come. Anything important?"

"I think so. I'll tell you everything when I come."

I went back to my breakfast, which I finished with a very good appetite. Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that my nerves were very steady, I awaited George Fanshawe's coming with a great deal of interest.

CHAPTER XI

THE PLOT THICKENS

"YOU'VE discovered something important?"

"I think so, although you may not regard what I am going to tell you as of very great consequence."

We had gone into my private room at the club, and George Fanshawe, after noticing that the door was closed, spoke very earnestly.

"I regard it as of very great importance," I said quietly.

"Why, you do not know what I am going to tell you? I have not breathed it to a soul."

"I think I know," I said; "and, to prove that I am right, I am going to tell you what it is. Miss Grant is in London."

"Ah, you have found out that, too!" and he started to his feet. "But how did you discover it?"

"I saw that she was uppermost in your mind when we came up from Gascon together," I said. "You do not like her; you do not trust her."

"No," he said; "to be frank—I don't."

"You have your reasons?"

"Yes, I think I have; but you would call them intangible, insufficient. Nevertheless, I want to talk with you about them. But let us understand. You told me that you had spoken to Mr. Gascoigne about Miss Grant, and he told you that she had left England?"

"Yes; she was very explicit about it. She told him that she was leaving England for some months, and that she could give him no address because she would be moving from place to place. She was on her way when she wrote."

"Well, as you said, Miss Grant is in London."

"How did you find out?"

"I'll come to that presently; the important thing is that she's here in London."

"But may that mean anything?"

George Fanshawe looked at me steadily for some seconds; then he said:

"Of course, you think I'm a crank, a bigot, and that I suffer from old Morton Gascoigne's complaint."

"You believe that Miss Grant is an impostor?"

"I have had my suspicions aroused, but I can prove nothing. Of course, you know old Mr. Gascoigne's strong Protestant views, and of his hatred of anything like popery. That is a commonplace in our neighbourhood. I saw, too, that you regarded his convictions as an old man's fad."

I shrugged my shoulders. "Something like it, I confess," I admitted.

"Did he tell you his experiences with a previous governess?"

"He did."

"And that he had taken every precaution to prevent a repetition of such an experience when he secured Miss Grant?"

"Yes."

"Well, I've no doubt he did. He placed the matter very largely in the hands of his brother, who in his way is a stronger Protestant than old Morton Gascoigne; but I never trusted his judgment. You saw him. Did he appeal to you as a man to whom you would trust a delicate business?"

"Yes, I think so. Of course, he is a great contrast to the older man, but he struck me as very sane and very wary."

George Fanshawe was silent for a few seconds; then he said:

"It may be you are right, but—well, I've never trusted that woman."

"Perhaps that was because she did not help you towards your desire—in relation to Miss Eve Gascoigne," I said.

"No, I don't think it was that. But did you not notice that she sought to flatter old Morton Gascoigne by applauding his very strong Protestant views?"

"I noticed it at the meeting—certainly."

"She often acted as his secretary, too, and no red-hot Orangeman from Belfast could say bitterer things about Catholics than she."

"Well, what then? Perhaps she had her reasons for that. Besides, you must remember that she was engaged because of her strong anti-popish proclivities, and one of her duties was to eradicate any influences made by her predecessor. I tell you, Fanshawe, all this seems very silly to me, but those are the facts as I understand them."

"You do not believe that the Catholics desire to convert Eve in order to get her money?"

"My dear fellow, can't you see how absurd your theory is? What could the Romanists gain by converting Eve? They would know that her grandfather would disinherit her, and give his property to some one else. Whatever else they are, they are not fools, and they would not play such a silly game. Mind you, I have no sympathy with old Morton Gascoigne's fears. Doubtless, the Catholics want to make converts; but so do all the other religious bodies. The Romanists think they are right, and so do the Protestants. But what then? Each and all of them are honourable people. Surely you are not so foolish as to believe the stories of these ultra-Protestants?"

George Fanshawe was silent for a few seconds; then he said:

"My views are utterly different from yours; but that is not the question just now. This we do know: Eve Gascoigne's first governess was deliberately sent to pervert her pupil, and that she very largely succeeded. You admit that?"

"I admit that there is *prima facie* evidence to that effect. But there may be another side of which I have heard nothing."

"You admit also that Miss Grant was taken as

a governess because of her very strong Protestant views?"

"Yes, there can be no doubt about that."

"Well, then there are two things I want you to explain. A few months ago I was in Excheater, and I took it into my head to drop into the Roman Catholic church there. The place was quite empty, and as I had to wait for a train I walked around examining the place. I was standing behind a pillar when I heard a footstep, and, turning, I saw a lady. She was closely veiled, but I felt sure it was Miss Grant; the height, the carriage, the face, which was only partially hidden by her veil—everything reminded me of her. I was about to speak to her when I saw her genuflect before the altar and cross herself. This so surprised me that I took a step forward to obtain a clearer view. Whether she saw me or not I cannot say, but she hurriedly left the church by a side door."

"Well?" I said.

"Surely the inference is plain."

"Could you take your oath in a court of law that it was she?" I asked.

"No—o," he said slowly. "You see, the light was rather bad."

"Exactly," I replied.

"All the same, I felt sure it was she. I feel sure of it now."

"Did you tell Mr. Gascoigne your suspicions?"

"No. I was going to do so, but—well, I thought I would put the matter to a test. I called at Gascon Hall the next day, and was going to ask her whether she had been to Excheater, when she forestalled me by saying she had not left the grounds during the whole of the previous day."

"Well there, you see," I said.

"No, I don't quite see. But that is not all. Of course, I said nothing to arouse any suspicions, but I thought a good deal about it. Well, less than a month ago I was in Excheater again, and I saw Miss Grant coming out of a house. This time, mark you, I could

swear that it was she. I took care that she did not see me, but immediately she was out of sight I made inquiries as to who lived in the house."

"Well?"

"I discovered that Father Halloween, the Catholic priest, lodged there."

"What did you infer from that?"

"What could I infer?"

"Was Father Halloween the only lodger in the house?" I asked.

"No," he replied, "a dressmaker also had rooms in the same house."

I laughed aloud.

"I repeat," said George Fanshawe quietly, "that a dressmaker, a Madame René, had rooms there; but that does not quite justify your laugh. Less than two months ago I heard Miss Grant declare to some people at the house that neither she nor Eve ever went to Exchester for clothes, and that what they did not get in Gascon they got in London."

"As though a woman is not always changing her dress-makers," I said.

"That is all right," he replied quietly. "As I said, I have no proofs that she has been deceiving old Mr. Gascoigne, although there is strong circumstantial evidence. But that is not quite all."

"By the way," I interrupted, "you said nothing to Mr. Gascoigne?"

"I was on the point of doing so," he replied, "but just then she left the Hall, and as I had no positive proof of anything, I decided that I had better say nothing. Still, my suspicions led me to think a great deal, and led me also to make some inquiries about Father Halloween."

"And you discovered——?"

"That he was regarded as a very worthy priest; that he was a member of the Society of Jesus, and that he often came to London and stayed at a certain house in Westminster. Well, as I admitted to you yesterday, I had nothing absolutely tangible upon which to go, but

I determined to come to London. You told me that Miss Grant had left England for the Continent; last night I saw her, a very rabid Protestant on her own confession, coming out of Westminster Cathedral."

I was silent. I thought of the voice I had heard there the previous night, and I remembered the telegram which I had just received from old Morton Gascoigne. Still, to be perfectly frank, I was so much out of sympathy with the thoughts I knew were in George Fanshawe's mind that I would not admit the importance of what he had said.

"It is nothing uncommon for a Protestant to go into a Roman Catholic church," I suggested. "Besides, the Westminster Cathedral has become one of the show places of London. I suppose it was intended to be so by the originators of the building."

"Yes, to an ordinary Protestant that is true," he replied; "but I have heard Miss Grant say in old Mr. Gascoigne's presence that she avoided Roman Catholic churches as she avoided a pestilence, and that under no circumstance would she enter one. Of course, Mr. Gascoigne laughed at what he called her fanatical notions; but she held to them. Oh, I know what is in your mind. You think I am bitten by the old gentleman's ultra-Protestant views, and that I am always on the look-out for a Jesuit plot. Still, I am trying to face facts as they stand. Miss Grant was a close friend and confidante of Eve's; they were constantly together. She is an avowed anti-Romanist of the most bitter type; she goes even farther than either old Morton or Robert Gascoigne, who are two of the most rigid Protestants I ever met, and more than once is rebuked by them. In spite of this, however, I have seen what I have just told you. Then, to follow up my line of thought, she leaves a few days before Eve disappears, urging that her mother has died, and soon after writes to say that she is going on the Continent, and that her address will be very uncertain. Last night, however, I saw her coming out of Westminster Cathedral. What do you suppose I infer?"

He spoke quietly; and, try as I might, I could find no flaw in his train of reasoning.

"You haven't come to the end of your story yet," I said at length. "Of course, you followed this woman?"

"I tried to. I kept her in sight some distance; then, amidst a number of people, I missed her."

"Had she any idea that you were following her?"

"No, I think not; in fact, I am sure not. Still, I was very careful not to get too near to her. Had I been less careful about this, I don't think I should have lost her. However——"

He hesitated, but I knew by the flash of intelligence in his eyes that he had more to tell.

"Yes," I said, after a few seconds' silence, "what is it?"

"Nothing," he said, "except this: I missed her close to the place to which Father Halloween comes when he pays a visit to London."

Again I was silent. I was as much out of sympathy with his theories as ever, but I could not deny that he had reasons for his conclusions. Besides, what of the facts I had in my own mind? Would they not confirm what he had said? Would they not indeed add a new element?"

"Well," I said at length, "and what are your deductions?"

"There I fail," he replied. "I have made a dozen deductions, but they do not agree with probabilities. Of this I feel sure, however, Miss Grant is connected with Eve's disappearance."

"Do you think there is a Jesuit plot at the back of it all?" I asked, with a smile.

"I am afraid I can't," he replied.

"No?"

"I am afraid I can't," he repeated. "Of course, I have considered it. Naturally, it would be a great thing to convert the granddaughter of old Morton Gascoigne, the militant Protestant, the hater of popery, and the owner of millions. But by publicly converting her,

they would frustrate their own ends. If they converted her, and persuaded her to keep her conversion a secret until she were the possessor of the old man's millions, then I could understand."

"But might they not try and convert her for her soul's sake?" I urged, more for the sake of argument than because I had any belief in it, "believing, as the Catholics do, it is their bounden duty to save a soul from hell. Besides, if what Mr. Gascoigne told me is true, Eve, under the other governess's influence, was baptised into the Roman Catholic Church, and is therefore of their fold. Dare they do otherwise than to try to keep her from you?"

"I don't believe they care so much about her soul as about old Morton Gascoigne's millions," he replied. "That is why I can't believe that they desire her to announce her apostasy. As you said a little time ago, if she were publicly to embrace Romanism, she wouldn't have a penny of her grandfather's money."

"And yet you labour to prove that Miss Grant has acted as a tool, and you connect her with Miss Gascoigne's disappearance."

"I am simply stating facts as far as I see them. There is something behind all this which I can't penetrate."

George Fanshawe became more interesting to me from that moment. I had regarded him as a fine specimen of an old county family, but I had not looked upon him as one who reasoned carefully or as one who was interested in life's deeper issues. It is true he had said nothing of importance, but the look on his face and his large grey, thoughtful eyes revealed a bigger man than I had taken him for.

"Have you drawn any conclusions as to where Miss Gascoigne is now?" I asked.

"I believe she is in London."

"A prisoner?"

"Not in your sense of the word. If she is a prisoner, I believe she is a willing prisoner."

"Do you believe her to be a Roman Catholic, then?"

"I can't say that I do. Eve is a strong-minded girl; she has a will of her own. And yet——"

Again he hesitated, as though he were afraid of telling me what he had in his mind.

"By the way," he said presently, "you anticipated my discovery. You said you knew that Miss Grant was in London. How did you find out?"

"I thought I heard her voice in Westminster Cathedral," I said.

"When?"

"Last night."

"That goes to confirm what I saw." Then he looked at me steadily. "There is something else," he said. "What is it?"

"I don't know that there is anything," was my answer. "It might have been a mistake on my part."

"But what was it?"

"I repeat that it may amount to nothing," I said, "but while I was in the cathedral I stood near a group of people. I heard, or thought I heard, the name of 'Gascoigne' mentioned; then I heard a voice which I took to be that of Miss Grant, saying, 'Well, the matter must be settled by to-morrow, Miss Lakeman.' That was all. They left the church immediately after, and I did not see them again."

"What time was that?"

I told him as nearly as I could.

"That exactly corresponds with the time I saw her come out of the cathedral," said George Fanshawe. "But there is something else you want to say."

"This morning I telegraphed to old Morton Gascoigne," I went on. "I asked him to tell me the name of the governess he discharged some years ago."

"And?" he cried eagerly.

"Eliza Lakeman!" I answered, handing him the telegram.

He nodded his head quietly, but I could not mistake the flash in his large grey eyes.

"That is all?"

"That is all."

"You think just as I think in spite of your professed scepticism," he said.

"No, I don't," I said. "Your theories don't correspond with probabilities; besides, I am not an anti-Romanist, as you are. I believe Romanists to be just as honourable as Protestants."

"All right," he said almost impatiently, "think what you like; but surely you don't believe old Morton Gascoigne to be either a fool or a liar. Here is an undoubted fact. This woman Eliza Lakeman got into his house professing to be a Protestant. When she was found out, she declared that she had a dispensation to avow herself a Protestant, so that she might pervert Eve. She did pervert her; and boasted that, in spite of all he could do, she would remain a Catholic. You can call such an act honourable if you like; I hold a different view. But that is not the point. It is evident that Miss Grant and Miss Lakeman are in London together."

"However that may be, I have a feeling that Miss Gascoigne's married to the man Breen," I said.

I saw his lips tremble.

"No," he said quietly. Then he rose to his feet. "I must be off," he said.

"Where?"

"To test this thing to the bottom."

"You have your plans?"

"I am going to find out—that's all."

"And I'm going to Ireland," I said. "I promised Mr. Gascoigne I would."

"When?"

"To-morrow. I shall catch the early train from Euston."

"I think I shall prove to you before to-morrow that Eve Gascoigne is in London," he said.

CHAPTER XII

I GO TO IRELAND

THROUGHOUT the rest of the day I was busy with my various duties; nevertheless, I had fully made up my mind to leave for Ireland the following morning. Moreover, if I must be absolutely truthful, I almost hoped that George Fanshawe should prove wrong in his declaration. If he were right, I should have no excuse for going, and I wanted to go more than words can say. It is true I said I was going there for the ostensible purpose of finding out whether Titus Breen had taken Eve Gascoigne with him, but it was not of Eve Gascoigne that I was chiefly thinking. Kathleen Castlereagh's flashing eyes seemed like a magnet drawing me across the Irish Channel, and any excuse was good enough for me if I could only get to her side.

Half an hour after George Fanshawe had left me, I laughed at the thought of his theories. Kathleen Castlereagh was a Catholic of Catholics, and she was incapable of deceit. She was bigoted, even to fanaticism, but a lie was foreign to her nature. And she was a child of the Romanist Church. A tree was known by its fruits, and what purer fruit could be borne than such a nature as Kathleen's? Then I thought of my mother, whose memory I revered.

I scorned Morton Gascoigne's prejudices. After all, what did it matter if Eve had changed her faith? Probably the old man's story was coloured by his sectarian hatred, and it was doubtless the duty of Catholics to win converts if they could. As for there being anything dishonourable, I did not believe it. I forgot all my former conclusions and theories. I believed Eve loved the sunny-hearted Irishman, and had

eloped with him. As for the fact of Miss Grant and Miss Lakeman being in London together—well, was not the whole business hypothetical?

By seven o'clock that evening I had made arrangements whereby I could be away from London for a few days, and went back to my club for dinner. On my arrival there I found George Fanshawe awaiting me.

"Well," I said, "have you discovered anything?"

"We were right," he said. "Miss Grant and Miss Lakeman are in London together."

"You are certain?"

"Absolutely."

"Well—go on."

"Eve is not with them; I do not think she has been with them. Of course, Miss Grant has been a liar. She has never been to the Continent."

"That goes for nothing. There is no reason why she could not alter her mind at the last moment."

"Nevertheless, she is a liar. She went to Mass with Miss Lakeman this morning."

"How did you find out?"

"That's not to the point. I did find out, and there is not the slightest doubt about the matter. But Eve has not been with them—of that I am absolutely certain. I believe she is in London; but she is not with them—she has not been with them."

"Fanshawe," I said, "hadn't you better admit the fact that she is probably in love with Breen, and has perhaps married him?"

"No," he said; "it's not true."

"But——"

"It's not true," he said quietly; "and I'll tell you why it's not true. She loves me."

I did not think it best to speak.

"I am going to tell you what, under other circumstances, I should never think of mentioning," he said. "She loves me. I know it, because she told me so. She also told me that she would rather die than marry the man Breen, and that, come what might, she could never love any one but me."

"Then why has she left you?" I said.

"That is what I am going to fathom," he cried, with flashing eyes. "Oh, yes"—and now he seemed speaking to himself—"I know. For months she has been living in a state of fear; I have seen it, and wondered at it. Somebody, something, has thrown a shadow over the poor girl's life, but what that shadow is I don't know yet. But I will know!"

"You still believe her to be in London?"

"I feel sure of it. I am going to find her."

"But, my dear fellow, there are six millions of people in London, and you say that Miss Grant and the other woman have nothing to do with her."

"I do not say that. I say she is not with them; that she has not been seen with them in their comings and goings from the house where they have been staying; that the woman who keeps the house has never seen nor heard of her. Never mind how I found this out, I am absolutely sure of it. Still, I am glad you are going to Ireland. You will find out that you are wrong; and then you will come back here, and we shall work together. After all, you are no tool of the priests, and you are an English gentleman."

"You still believe that the priests have something to do with it?"

"How can I help believing it? I can't explain it, and, as you say, probabilities do not square with my theories, but these black-coated gentry have been at work."

"Why, you are getting as fanatical as old Morton Gascoigne, or his brother Robert. Don't you see that you are imputing the basest of motives to men who are giving their lives for the welfare of the people. You believe that priests are conscientious men?"

"I feel sure they are. That's the whole trouble."

"I say, Fanshawe."

"I repeat it. Old Morton Gascoigne is doubtless right in his belief that the Romanists mean to convert England. Mark you, it is their avowed purpose to do so; on peril of their souls' salvation, they must try to

succeed. It's no secret. They mean to regain power in England. It's their last hope. They are dying in other nations, and if they fail in our land, the land which, with America, is destined to rule the world, they are threatened with death. To the faithful Catholic this is a passion; and, to do it, ordinary standards of morals are discarded. The old saying, 'No faith with heretics,' is still an article of their creed, and they will move heaven and earth to gain their ends."

I laughed aloud; I could not help it. What was in his mind was absurd. He had brooded over his trouble to such an extent that he was ready to chase any will o' th' wisp of a disordered imagination.

"My dear fellow," I said, "I have thought out the whole matter again, and the thing is absurd. Even if what you say is true, it is still absurd. Do you think the Romanists are going to put themselves in a false position in order to gain a single convert? If they could obtain old Mr. Gascoigne's millions by it, it would be a different matter; but they can't. If they converted Miss Gascoigne, and then persuaded her to keep the matter secret until her grandfather's death—well then, admitting your premises, there would be reason in your contention, but as it is—I repeat it is absurd."

"I called here that you might know how matters stood," said George Fanshawe quietly. "Miss Lakeman, who admitted herself an impostor, and who professed to be a Protestant in order to gain an entrance into Mr. Gascoigne's house, and to convert Eve, is in London, the companion of Miss Grant, whose professions you know. They both went to Mass this morning. That I know. I shall be glad to know when you return to England. I will be going now. I have a good deal to do."

He left soon after, while I delighted in the thought of going to Ireland.

I arrived in Dublin the following evening, and after spending the night in that city I started for the County of Kerry, the county in which not only Titus Breen lived, but where the home of Kathleen Castlereagh was situated. Did I believe I was going to find Eve Gascoigne? I can

hardly say that I thought very much about it. My ostensible purpose in coming to Ireland was submerged in my desire to see the Irish girl who had so much impressed me.

Nevertheless, my first endeavour was to find Titus Breen. Moreover, when I had arrived at the little railway station which was situated only a couple of miles from Ballysheen, the name of Breen's house, I began to reflect that it behoved me to move with caution. As far as I knew, no one save George Fanshawe and old Morton Gascoigne knew of my purpose in coming to Ireland, nor for that matter, of my presence there at all. At first I was simply carried away by the beauty of the scenery and the pure exhilarating air. No wonder Kathleen Castlereagh was so enthusiastic about her country. It is not my purpose to give many impressions of Ireland or of the Irish people, for the simple reason that the impressions of a man who spends only a few days in any vicinity are not of great value. Of course, the poverty of the people was apparent. No one could help noticing the squalor and discomfort of the huts in which the peasants lived. Even although the severity of the winter was past, and nature did its utmost to alleviate the wants of the people, their hopeless condition was pitiable. Moreover, what had struck so many visitors to the Emerald Isle was apparent to me. Side by side with ignorance, squalor, dirt, and poverty were stately and costly churches and monasteries. The people had been kept in poverty that costly ecclesiastical buildings might be erected. The day schools were in the main, poor and badly staffed, but the churches were magnificent, while the presbyteries and monastic buildings evidenced comfort and wealth.

But it is not of these things that I wish to write, especially as they do not fall within the scope of this story.

The inn at which I stayed cannot be recommended for its comfort or cleanliness; but the innkeeper was polite, and seemed desirous to make my visit agreeable. Indeed, I found Timothy Tralee not only pleased to see

me, but anxious to retain me for his guest as long as possible.

"It's glad I am to see you, yer honour," was his greeting, "and it's glorious the weather is going to be. The fishen will be splendid, while the counthry is glorious. You'll be engagin' your room for a long time, no doubt."

"That depends on several things," I said.

"And what might the things be, yer honour?"

"For one thing it depends on whether your hotel is comfortable and your charges reasonable," I replied with a laugh.

"There is not a chaaper or better hotel in Oireland," was his eager reply. "Your bedroom will be fit for his Holiness himself, while the cookin' will be done wid Biddy's own hands."

"Then I have come here without fishing tackle," I went on.

"And it's fishin' tackle I can provide," replied Timothy; "and if your honour is a good fishernian, it's not St. Peter himself would have better luck than you."

"Then there's another thing," I said, anxious to get to the point I had at heart. "I am a lonely bachelor, and the length of my stay will naturally depend on the kind of people I find in the neighbourhood."

"What would ye be manen, the visitors or the gentry of the neighbourhood?" asked Timothy.

"Both," I replied.

"Ah! but there are no visitors in the district at all," replied Timothy, "it's early ye've come, but seein' ye are a gentleman and perhaps a nobleman related to the King, ye'll find the gentry 'll be glad to make ye welcome."

"Are there many gentry who live in the neighbourhood?" I asked.

"Ah, but ye've put yer finger on the curse of the country," said the man, his eyes flashing. "For the landlords suck the country dry and spend the money in England."

"But surely there are some who live on their estates," I urged. "I noticed some good houses from the railway, and they looked as though they were inhabited."

"Yes, but those who live here are not the rich men," cried the landlord. "Why, take his honour Jimmy McTurk, he's as poor as Job's turkey, and although his family's as ould as Methuselah, it's money he's always wantin'. Then there's Titus Breen, as nice a lad as ever stepped in shoe-leather, and who offen and offen comes in for a drap o' th' crater, has to sell his harvests afore they are cut, so badly is he off for money."

"And does he live far from here?" I asked.

"Less than two miles, and glad he'd be to see you, yer honour. Nothin' is more likely than that he'll drop in to-morrow or the next day for a drink."

"Is he an old man?" I asked.

"Ould! no oulder than yerself, and glad he'll be to fish wid ye, and to ride wid ye, ay, and to play cards wid ye, though I advise ye to take care when ye play gards wid young Mr. Titus, for he has a way wid 'im."

"You don't say that he cheats?"

"The Holy Virgin and all the Saints forbid that I should hint at sich a thing, but he's sure and lucky at cards, is Mister Titus."

"Did you say he was married?" I asked.

"No, I didn't, sor, although I 'ave heard that he's fixed his eyes on a beautiful lady in England who's rollin' in gold. And it was said only last week that he was seen in Dublin with her, but it's me that can't find out the truth about it. But what makes me think there may be something in it, is that he hasn't been here for a wake or more."

After this Timothy and I talked sometime, but I found that he had little to tell me about Titus Breen but what I already knew.

The next day I spent in taking a survey of the country and in trying to obtain information on matters of interest. I found that Titus Breen was well known, and on the whole respected, although more than one confessed that "he had a quare way wid him lately."

"A queer way?" I queried. "Does he show any signs of going out of his mind?"

"In a way, yer honour. Why, think, here is poor

Titus who sold his oats last July before it was cut, buyin' as beautiful a mare as ivver a man rode, yis, and payin' ready-money fer it. Besides, he's been waastin' money in doin' up Ballysheen."

"But why shouldn't he?"

"Waaste money on a house! And he who has no money!"

"Perhaps some one has left him a fortune," I suggested; "or perhaps he's going to be married."

"But he hasn't the money to be married, nor to do up the house; and if he had, Titus is not the boy to do it. I tell ye, he's got a quare way wid him."

"Is there any lady he's likely to marry?" I asked.

"There isn't a young lady of family for miles around, except it's the blessed Kathleen Castlereagh, and she wouldn't look at him!"

"No, why?"

"She's as proud as Lucifer, and has allus looked down upon poor Titus. All the same, it was only yesterday that he rode to Castlereagh Castle."

"And how far is that away?"

"It's nearly eight miles over the hills yonder."

From such scraps of conversation I discovered that Titus Breen had returned from England and that he had somewhat mystified the neighbours by what he called his "quare ways." But more, I found out that I was only a few miles from the woman I had really come to see.

On my return to the inn that evening I sent a telegram to Kathleen. "I am taking you at your word," I said, "and as I am in your neighbourhood I shall ride over to see you to-morrow morning."

I also hired the best horse that Timothy Tralee could obtain in the village of Ballysheen, and went to bed with all sorts of wild fancies in my mind.

"There isn't a better horse in Oireland," said Timothy, as next morning I prepared to mount a gaunt, bony, but evidently strong nag which stood at the door of the inn. "See the fire in his eye! Ah, but it's like a bird he'll take you! And where will your honour be goin'?"

"You'd better ask me when I return," I replied. "This nag you've got me has an ugly look in his eye, and no one knows where he'll take me."

"It's oats, not vice," said Timothy; "sure, and he'll be as gentle as a lamb when once you are on his back."

I had some little difficulty in getting Patrick under way, for he was an ill-trained brute, but presently I mastered him, and then I found him tractable enough.

The morning was bright and beautiful, and at every mile my spirits rose. It is true that I upbraided myself for neglecting the ostensible purpose for which I had come to Ireland, but I reflected that a day's delay could do no harm, while the thought of Kathleen's eyes charmed away everything unpleasant.

After an hour's ride I seemed to recognise the country which had been described to me. I thought I saw the great heather-covered hills of which Kathleen had spoken, but I could not see the old house she called her home. Still, I knew I must be nearing the vicinity of which she had spoken, and my heart beat rapidly.

Presently my spirits began to droop. I realised that I was doing a foolish thing.

What right had I, Kerry Killigrew, to come to Ireland on such a mad quest? Why should I be so eager to see the unlettered and irresponsible Irish girl whom I had happened to meet in a London drawing-room? Besides, in all probability she would refuse to see me. I was but a passing stranger to whom she was kind for a moment, but whom she had by this time, doubtless, forgotten.

"Had I not better turn back and discover if Titus Breen knows anything of Eve Gascoigne?" I reflected. "That is my real business. Then, if he knows nothing of her, I can get back to my work without delay."

But I did not turn back. Instead, I rode along beneath an avenue of tall elm trees, through which the sunshine darted and made the scene like some beautiful fairy glen. I had gone but a short distance beneath the trees when I saw on my right a grass-grown road, which evidently led to some house. Here also was a dilapidated lodge and a broken-down gate.

"I wonder if——"

But at that moment a form emerged from behind a huge tree, and coming towards me on the grass-grown drive I saw the beautiful creature, to meet whom I would have crossed the world.

"I thought you might be losing your way, Mr. Killigrew, so I came to meet you."

This was her greeting as I leapt from my horse and hurried to her side.

CHAPTER XIII

KATHLEEN CASTLEREAGH'S HOME

It was the same Kathleen I had seen in London, and yet she was different. In spite of her wondrous beauty she seemed almost out of place in a palace of fashion; but here she was in her own native element. She was a part of that glorious spring day, a part of the beauty of the country-side.

I close my eyes and her picture comes back to me, and yet I have no words wherewith to describe her. In London she had worn a kind of evening dress, unconventional it is true, but still an evening dress. Now she was clothed in homespun. I don't recollect anything about colours, I only know that her dress suited her to perfection. I know, too, that her toque-like hat looked like a crown upon her head. But the clothes had little attraction for me. I was fascinated by her face, flushed with health and the morning air; by her sensitive mouth, her slightly parted lips which revealed two rows of pearly teeth; but more than all by her great, deep, wondrous eyes through which her soul shone. I had thought her lovely when I had seen her in London, but now she was more than ever the child of nature. It seemed to me that every fibre of her being was instinct with health and life and beauty. She was as perfect as the wild flowers which abounded, she was as gay as the birds which sang among the trees, she was as pure as the rivulet that purred its way down to the river, she was as healthful as the wind which caressed the heather-covered hills.

No doubt this will be called the foolish rhapsody of a Celtic youth, but it seems to me as though I am impelled to place my thoughts on record, especially in view of what took place afterwards. For there came a time

when I was led to doubt her truthfulness, when facts pointed to her as a living lie, when——

But this is not the place to set down these things. Perhaps, indeed, I have been premature in saying so much, and have been wrong in suggesting what should only appear in its true place in this story. But as I have set these things down I will let them stay. They go to show, at all events, that it is not wise to judge hastily. For little did I think when I saw her that day as fair as the glorious morning on which we met, and looking as pure as the blue of the sky above, that I should be led to—— But again my pen is running away with me, and there is much to be told before I come to those dark things. Rather let me linger over the hours when I saw nothing in her eyes save the true and the beautiful, and when her voice was as caressing as a south wind on a June night.

“Am I welcome?” I asked.

“Why do you ask that?” she cried. “Didn’t I tell you when we met in London that you must and would come to Ireland? Didn’t I say that it was my father who would be glad to welcome you at our home? What could I do then when I got your telegram but come and meet you? For sure, you might have been lost in this wild country. Now tell me, isn’t Ireland better than I said? Did you ever see anything so beautiful?”

“Never,” I cried fervently. “And what is more, I never expect to see anything as beautiful again.”

“And sure, you’re talking sense,” she said. “And it is friends we’ll be, I’m sure. Ah, but it’s because you’re half Irish and the other half is Irish, too, in a way. But tell me why you came?”

“Why should I come?” I asked. “Didn’t you tell me to come? Didn’t you tell me it was my duty?”

“Ah, it’s your mother’s home you’ve come to see, and it’s right you should. It’s what you should have done long years ago. And what did you think of it?”

“I’ve not been there yet,” I said.

“Not been? Then what are ye doing here? It’s there you should have gone first of all.”

"I came here first because I wanted to ask you a favour," I said.

"A favour!" she cried. "Ah, but it's little I can do. But what is it?"

"I want to ask you to go with me," I said. "If you will go with me I shall be able to see my mother's home as I ought. If you are there I shall be able to see through your eyes, and then it will be beautiful—as it ought to be."

"Ay, but it's the blarney-stone you've been kissin', Mr. Killigrew, and it's flatterin' me you are. All the same, I cannot go with you."

"But why?"

"Because of my duties. It would take me away a whole day, for the trains are slow to Virgin's Dell, and I must not be away a whole day."

"What duties?" I asked. "I thought when you were in London you told me that you were just an idle, useless girl."

"Never trust an Irish woman's words," she said, after a moment's hesitation. "Never, never. Why, my tongue runs away with me at times. 'Sure, and I'll be decavin' yez all day long,' as Biddy Murphy says when I ask her to promise never to drink whisky again."

"But I shall believe you whatever you tell me," I said, "even though I know you'll be decavin' me all day long."

She laughed like the child she was. "That's Irish! that's Irish!" she cried. "You'll believe me although you know I'm decavin' you."

"Yes, I shall!" I cried, "and so I shall believe that you'll go with me to Virgin's Dell although you say you can't."

"Ah, but I'd like to," she cried, her face becoming grave. "But can I? Ought I? But sure, I'll ask my father. He told me to make your visit to Ireland pleasant. And oh, I forgot, you must go down to the village and see the church and Father Shannon."

"Is it far from here?"

"It's a mile or so, but surely you are not tired?"

"I was only wondering what I should do with this horse."

"Ah, but it's ride with ye I will this very day after lunch," she cried. "I'll take you to see the fairy glen beyond the mountain, and if you don't love Castlereagh Lake I'll never speak to you again. And then coming home I'll race with ye, and my pony will run away from that great long-legged thing. But now we must take him to the stable and then we'll walk through the fields to the church."

We walked together up the neglected drive, and even although I thought of but little save the girl by my side, I could not help seeing that the land was badly cared for, and that the fences and gates were broken down in every direction.

"I told you old Ireland was poor," she said, as if divining the thoughts in my mind. "Sometimes I think the Holy Virgin is angry with us for our unfaithfulness."

"I thought you were a very faithful country," I said.

"Ah, but it's little you know about it. For why is it that England, which is a heretic country, should be so rich and prosperous while we are so poor? And why is it that we who have the true religion should be so down-trodden and ignorant, while England, which is at enmity with God, should be so contented and strong? Why is it that the country where false religion keeps out the true faith should rule over us?"

The plaintive look in her eyes and the sad tones in her voice made me sorry for her in spite of myself.

"Still," she went on, "it's we that have what you can't have. If we are not rich and prosperous we have the blessing of the Holy Mother and the comforts of the true religion. Besides, a change is coming. It's soon that England will give up her false faith and come back to the old and the true, and then we'll be happy altogether."

She left my side as she spoke and picked a violet that appeared in the hedge.

"Ah, but why should we care for riches when we have the flowers?" she cried. "And Ireland is beautiful whatever the world may say. Many's the time I've got up at

sunrise just to worship the beauty of it all. For is not beauty the mantle of God? Look, there is my home. You can just see it through the trees."

A grey castle-like building revealed itself to me as we turned a corner of the drive. In its way it was fine, and great wealth must have been bestowed on it in the past. Moreover, although the grounds were overgrown with weeds, and were in every way uncared for, they were still fine and imposing. They were designed by some one who was skilled in the work, while the giant trees and luxuriant undergrowth gave them a beauty which no ordered care could obtain.

"Ah, I know what you are thinking," she cried, "and it's worried me much, especially since I've seen some of your English houses; but what can my father do? The tenants don't pay their rent, and what with the churches he has to help to build, and the money he has to give to the faith, besides what the cause of Ireland's independence costs him, he has nothing to give to the house. But what then? Are we not Castlereaghs of Castlereagh, and can't we scorn the rich parvenus who live amidst gilt and gold? There, we'll not go to the house now. Mike, come here!"

A peasant came and took my horse and led him towards the stable-yard.

"Groom him and feed him, Mike," she cried, "and steal a pottle of oats for my Beatrice, for it's I who am going to ride her this afternoon, and I'm going to race Mr. Killigrew, and if I don't beat him it'll be your fault."

We turned towards a valley where I saw the steeple of a church, and sauntered through the fields together. I felt like a man in a dream. The world of London and politics was far away. I never thought once of my ostensible purpose in coming to Ireland; everything was lost in the fact that this Irish child was by my side.

"Is that the church to which you go on Sundays?" I asked.

"Yes, and on week-days too, for do I not go to daily

Mass? Ah, Mr. Killigrew, it's but little you Protestants know about religion. But we have a religion for every day, for have we not our Blessed Lord Himself on the altar?"

There was a far-away look in her eyes as she spoke, such a look as Catherine of Siena might have had when she saw her visions. But the mood lasted only for a moment.

"We'll not wait till this afternoon for our race," she cried. "It's race now we will, and it's the first bit of shamrock that I find that I'll give ye if ye catch me before I get to the first stile."

She fled from me as she spoke and sped swiftly across the field, and I, who had been lately elected a member of the Mother of Parliaments, forgot the dignity associated with such a position, and fled after her.

It was all I could do, long of leg and fleet of foot as I was, to keep her from outrunning me, but I just managed to catch her before she reached the stile.

"Ah, but I slipped my foot, or you'd never have caught me," she panted. Her lips were parted, her face was flushed, her eyes sparkled, and her hair, which had escaped from its fastenings, fell in glorious profusion down over her neck and shoulders. What wonder that my heart beat wildly? What wonder that I forgot everything else in my thought of her?

"But you mustn't forget the shamrock?" I cried.

"And what will ye do with it?" she asked.

"I shall keep it as long as I have eyes to see and a heart to feel," I cried.

"What, a bit of shamrock! Ah, but it's nonsense you are talking. And now we must go quietly to church. Do you know, Mr. Killigrew, that at one time this part of Ireland was filled with evil spirits which appeared under the guise of wolves. All sorts of things were tried to kill them, but everything failed, until one night a poor woman had a dream, and she dreamed that if an altar was built where Mass could be said every day the wolves would be afraid and would run away. Well, the people built an altar, just in the open air, and then, no sooner

did the priest consecrate the bread and the wine than the wolves went away howling."

"And where is the altar now?"

"It's in the church. It's the same altar, for the church was built over it, and it's there the Blessed Host is kept."

We went into the little church, and when Kathleen prayed before the altar I thought it was the most beautiful sight I had ever seen.

"Ah, but you must become a Catholic," she cried, as she left the church. "Promise me now, here in the churchyard, that you'll be a Catholic." Then before I had time to reply she went on. "No, I'll not ask ye to promise anything, but it's a Catholic ye'll be, and until ye become a Catholic ye'll be a friend to the Catholic religion?"

"How can I be a friend to the Catholic religion?" I asked.

"By being a friend to Ireland," was her answer. Just think of it! the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland must be a Protestant and yet Ireland is a Catholic country. Isn't it a shame?"

"It does seem hard," I said, scarcely knowing what I was saying.

"Ah, you feel that!" she cried, "you feel that! But there is worse than that. When King Edward came to the throne he had to swear to things that insulted our faith. He had to swear that the Mass was Idolatrous and Superstitious! Wasn't it a shame, when Irish Catholics have shed their blood for the King's country?"

I was carried away by the girl's personality. The witchery, the charm of her presence, the wondrous beauty of her face, the flash of her unfathomable eyes made me speak without weighing my words.

"It's a shame," I cried; "yes, it is a shame."

"Why must our faith be insulted?" she cried. "It's the old faith, it was the faith of England before Protestantism was ever heard of, and it's the faith that will remain when Protestantism is dead and forgotten. Why, then, must England's King be Protestant? Why, if he is

converted to the true faith should he cease to be King? Is that right?"

"It does seem unfair," I cried, as her eyes flashed into mine.

"And you are a Member of Parliament, Mr. Killigrew; won't ye fight for fair play to Catholics in Parliament?"

"Yes," I said, "I will. How can I help doing so when you are a Catholic, and my mother was a Catholic?"

"Ah, and didn't I say we'd be friends, and I've your promise to fight for destroying the King's Coronation Oath. And an Englishman boasts that he never breaks his word. Why—and here's Father Shannon! And did you hear what we've been talking about, Father Shannon?"

"Every word."

I turned and saw a man in clerical attire. He was apparently about fifty years of age, and was evidently a son of the people. His peasants' origin and association were plainly written on his face and on his attire. His hands were coarse and somewhat dirty; his feet were encased in heavy, clumsy shoes. But although the marks of the peasant were upon him, it was also evident that he possessed the characteristics of his race. His eyes told of humour, his fleshy face spoke of good health and contentment.

"Ah, it's Miss Kathleen 'll convert you, whoever you are," he said, with a laugh. "I've not a single Protestant in the parish. Either they git converted or they run away."

"Ah, Father Shannon, Mr. Killigrew is an English Member of Parliament; but he's half Irish and he's half Catholic, and he's just promised me to fight for doing away with the King's Coronation Oath, which is the promise you've heard."

"And do you think you'll succeed, Mr. Killigrew?" asked the priest.

I shook my head. "Not in this generation," I replied.

"Why, is Protestantism so strong in England?"

"It's a bit asleep just now," I said.

"Nay, but it's dyin'," said Father Shannon.

"No; only asleep," I said.

"And now we'll go back to lunch," cried Kathleen, after we had been talking some time, "for my father 'll be angry if we are late. He wants to show Mr. Killigrew that we are hospitable, if we are poor."

She caught my arm as she spoke, and I, feeling my nerves quiver at the touch of her hand, gladly went back with her. Nevertheless, I wondered at the warmth of her welcome, and looked forward with some apprehension to my meeting with her father.

CHAPTER XIV

MICHAEL CASTLEREAGH

THE great house into which Kathleen led me was empty and barn-like, while a feeling of neglect prevailed everywhere. It was true that, in the brightness of the day, gloom was next to impossible; but I could not help reflecting that in the winter it must be terrible. Beyond a few tumble-down labourers' huts, it stood alone. Even Castlereagh village was only a cluster of dirty hovels, and a church. The district was lonely beyond words. The house was a mile away from the high road, and as far as I could judge there were no other dwellings of importance for miles.

And yet I could not help reflecting that to the man who had a thousand pounds or two to spend, it could be made a perfect paradise. The situation was unique, the views from some of the windows were superb; besides, the castle itself was a magnificent pile—indeed, an architect would have raved at the splendid proportions of the many rooms and at the costly material which had been bestowed upon them. Never had I seen such exquisite carving in oak, such splendid panelling, such perfect doors, or such fine specimens of mantelpieces in any house, as I saw that day. The place was a perfect treasury of beautiful and costly workmanship; and yet it was falling to rack and ruin for want of care.

“Ah, I know of what you are thinking,” cried Kathleen, “and it's I that's feeling it as much as you—aye, and more. Many's the quarrel I've had with my dad about it, but what can I do? 'If the people can't pay their rent, Kathy, my girl,' he says, 'how can I spend money on the house?' And, of course, he's right, for

he must support the church, and he must stand by the cause of the country."

"Ah, but it's very beautiful as it is," I said, as I walked to the window and looked out on the great heather-covered hill which sloped away to the horizon.

"You like it?" she cried eagerly.

"Else I had no sense of beauty at all."

"Father says that it just suits me," she went on. "It's wild and unkempt, just as I am. All the same," she added plaintively, "I hope I'm not just like the garden," and she cast a despairing glance at the weed-grown paths and the ragged, uncared-for flower-beds. "And yet I am afraid it's all like I am. We need clipping, and pruning, and training. But here comes father."

A man about fifty years of age approached me, a typical Irish gentleman. He was carelessly, almost slovenly, dressed; but no one would have passed him by as a common man. He was tall and well-built, and had an air of command. On the other hand, one could not help being impressed by what, for want of better terms, I must call a lack of definiteness. In spite of the merry sparkle in his eyes, there was a look of uncertainty. I knew in a moment that he could be deceived as easily as a child. He was one who would be governed by passing emotions rather than by reasoned judgment. I felt then, as I came to know afterwards, that in him the Celt had run wild.

"It's Mr. Killigrew, that my Kathy has been tellin' me about," he cried, as he held out his hand. "Ah! but she was full of you the day she came home from England. She said that your mother was an Irishwoman and a Catholic, and that you yourself were a friend of Ireland and of the Holy Church. An' it's welcome you are, Mr. Killigrew. It's but a poor people we are, but not so poor but we can give a meal to a friend, a drop o' th' crater to wash it down, and a warm welcome into the bargain. And it's hungry I am, too. Come, man, come!"

Without waiting for any reply from me, he led the way into the dining-room, where a leg of mutton was

steaming on the table, with an abundance of seasonable vegetables.

"I hope you don't mind plain fare, Mr. Killigrew," he said, as he steeled his knife; "but fancy Biddy O'Niel cookin' a meal after the order of a London restaurant! Why, she'd think I'd lost my senses if I asked her. But never mind, the plainer the fare, the warmer the welcome."

Altogether the first part of our meal was very gay. Mr. Castlereagh's lack of conventionality, his unreserved geniality, his freedom in discussing men and matters, and his unfailing good-humour charmed me. He was full of good stories, and both he and Kathleen made it impossible for me to feel strange. I discovered, moreover, that Mr. Castlereagh's interests were confined to three objects: his daughter's happiness, the advancement of his Church, and his desire for the independence of his country.

Of his love for Kathleen there could be no doubt. She was his only child, and as her mother had died years before, they were knit together by no common bonds of affection.

"We are all in all to each other," he said, and there were tears in his clear grey eyes. "The saints know how lonely I am when we are away from each other, and although we've had a little more company lately, it's a poor thing I am when my Kathy's away."

"And what will you do when Miss Castlereagh gets married?" I asked almost involuntarily.

"I shall never leave father!" cried Kathleen, before her father had time to speak. "As for marrying, why he knows that I've told him again and again that I never saw the man I could love a quarter as well as I could love him."

"But you must necessarily be a good deal away from home," I said. "I wonder Miss Castlereagh does not secure a young lady as companion."

They exchanged glances at this, and then Mr. Castlereagh laughed heartily.

"Ah, it's often we've talked of this, Mr. Killigrew;

but we are a queer couple. I'm afraid any companion would run away in a week. Still, it's glad I should be if Kathy had some one to stay with her when I'm away."

"You do a good deal of public work, I suppose?" I said.

"I work for the Church," he said, "and I take a deal of interest in tryin' to spread the holy religion. Ah, I don't suppose you understand, Mr. Killigrew. I hear that you are a Protestant, although you feel kindly to us Catholics. As a consequence, you don't know what we have to contend with. We have but few rich people in Ireland belongin' to the old faith, and hard work we find it to keep the light burning."

"But the south of Ireland is almost totally Catholic, isn't it?" I asked. "Besides, I've never heard of much heresy in your midst."

"Ah, there's truth in what you say; all the same, things are not in a good way. Many of the young people are rebelling against the priests; but what bothers us most of all is that, even where there's no heresy, and where the people go to confession and to Mass regularly, they are just as drunken and thriftless and lyin' as where they don't partake of the sacraments. I must confess it worried me a good deal some months ago. I was staying in a country village in England; there wasn't a Catholic in the place, and yet I never saw a drunken man, I never saw a shoeless child, I did not see a neglected home. Then I came back here, where there isn't a single Protestant, and the first thing I saw was four drunken men fighting. 'We must build more churches, and have more priests and more Masses,' says Father Shannon; 'we must have more convents, with more nuns praying for the souls of the people,' says he; and doubtless he's right. All the same, it makes me sad."

"Then I suppose you are interested in the independence of Ireland?" I suggested.

Instantly his eyes flashed with a new interest.

"I'd die for it!" he cried, and his Irish accent became stronger; "gladly would I die for ut. Why should we,

faithful Catholics, be governed by heretics? I beg your pardon, Mr. Killigrew, you are not a Catholic, but I must spake the truth. Why should we have a King that must swear that what is most sacred to us is superstition and idolatry? Why is it, supposin' the King should be converted and join the Holy Church, that he could no longer be King? That's what makes Irish Catholics disloyal and discontented. It's not because the English are English that faithful Irish Catholics hate the English Government, it's because we love our faith, and our faith is insulted."

"Then do you believe that if the Bill of Rights were annulled, and the King's Declaration and Coronation Oath were done away with, it would destroy much of the bitterness which the Irish feel towards England?"

"Do you mane that if we could have a Catholic King we should be better friends?" he cried. "And it's truth you are saying, Mr. Killigrew. It's the feelin' that we of the true faith are put in an inferior position that hurts us, angers us, makes us mad. It's the feelin' that we must be loyal to a King who, when he becomes King, has to insult our faith by Act of Parliament, that makes us curse England, and swear that we'll drive every Protestant out of Ireland."

I turned and saw Kathleen's eyes upon me. Her lips were slightly parted, her face was flushed, her eyes shone with a wild light, and her presence, her youth, her eagerness, her beauty held me spellbound.

"It is a shame!" I cried.

"Ah, you feel it!" she cried. "And, father, Mr. Killigrew has promised me that he'll fight for the removal of these things. He has quite a following in the House of Commons, Mr. O'Hara told me so, and he can do a great deal for us."

Michael Castlereagh caught my hand. "And it's nothin' I wouldn't do for you, Mr. Killigrew, if you'll stand up for Ireland and the old faith!" he cried. "Ah, but it's your mother's Irish blood that runs warm in your veins, and it's you that can do more for Ireland than the Irishmen."

"There you are mistaken, Mr. Castlereagh," I said. "I am only a private member of the independent order. I do not pay allegiance to either party, and, as a consequence, I am a suspect."

"Yes, but, on the other hand, it's because you have strong independent views that you carry weight," he cried. "For didn't I myself see the leader in the great London paper about you, sayin' that you were a man that would have to be reckoned with?"

In spite of myself, I felt myself drawn into a strange atmosphere. This Irishman was leading me farther than I wanted to go.

"Now tell me, Mr. Killigrew, that Kathy isn't mistaken," he cried; "let me hear with my own ears that you mane to fight for destroyin' this insult to Catholics; tell me that when you go back to London you'll use what the papers call your wonderful powers of speech to do justice to our faith. For, if you'll promise this, faith, there's nothing I wouldn't do for you or give you."

Again I felt that the spell of Kathleen's wonderful eyes were upon me. They shone with a wondrous light; they were plaintive and eager and sad and joyous all in the same moment. It seemed to me, moreover, that Michael Castlereagh knew of the love that was in my heart, and was telling me of the conditions by which my heart could be satisfied. It seemed to me, too, that Kathleen was upholding what he had said.

Before I could answer, however, an Irish girl came into the room with a look of fear in her eyes.

"Miss Kathleen," she said half in a whisper, "it's wanted ye are upstairs—quick," and then she said something which I could not hear.

Without a word of apology, Kathleen hurried from the room, while an anxious look came into Michael Castlereagh's eyes.

"Ah, but it's unfair of me to talk with you in this way," he said, "and it's quietness you'll be wantin' for a few minutes."

He took a box of cigars from a cupboard and placed it before me, and then excused himself for leaving me alone.

"What's wrong?" I said to myself. "Possibly a servant is ill. Anyhow, it is no business of mine," whereupon, after lighting a cigar, I went out into the grounds.

An hour later Kathleen and I were riding towards a wonderful valley, called the "Fairy Glen," which lay beyond the high heather-covered hill I have mentioned. For the first few minutes of the ride she seemed sad and worried, but whatever troubled her quickly passed away, and by the time we had ridden a couple of miles she was as gay and light-hearted as ever.

As long as I live I shall never forget that afternoon! It seemed to me that there was not a cloud in the sky of my life. The heavens were a great dome of blue, save for a few light, fleecy clouds which floated swiftly by; the birds sang among the trees in the valleys, while all nature responded to the great joy of my heart.

Especially was this true when, after we had reached the Fairy Glen, we dismounted, and, having given our horses into the care of the ostler of a tiny wayside inn, we walked together amidst the most wonderful scenery it had ever been my lot to behold. As for Kathleen, she was just the pure child of nature that she had appeared to be—first in the London drawing-room, and afterwards in our walk to Castlereagh village. Never for five minutes together was she quite in the same humour. At one moment she was as gay and frolicsome as the lambs which sported in the meadows, and at another, touched by some passing remark or the purling of a brook, she betrayed a depth of thought and feeling which made me wonder. She loved nature, she loved the poets, she loved all things beautiful; and, being gifted with the Celtic imagination and the power of speech for which her country-people are noted, she clothed her thoughts in such beautiful imagery and glowing words that I, under the spell of her wondrous beauty, felt like Romeo must have felt when the eyes of Juliet first flashed into his. Even when her mood changed, and she became unreasonable, irresponsible, and when her eyes flashed with anger at something which did not please her, her charm was only enhanced.

More than once I was on the point of telling her I loved her, yet no words of love passed my lips. Perhaps this was because her mood changed so often; perhaps it was because that, to me, she seemed too much a child to know the meaning of love, save such a love as a child feels for her father or a girl for a brother.

The afternoon passed away all too quickly for me, for the hours seemed but minutes; and when, towards evening, we rode back to Castlereagh Castle together, it seemed to me as though it were only a few minutes before that she met me near the tumble-down lodge which stood at the entrance of her father's grounds.

"And when will you be returning to London again?" she asked, as we approached her father's house.

"I don't quite know," I replied; "but not before you go with me to my mother's birthplace."

She shook her head.

"No," she said, "I cannot go with you." There was a strange note in her voice which I had not heard before.

I began to ask her why, but the look on her face stopped me.

"I came with you this afternoon because I promised you," she said; "but I cannot go with you to Virgin's Dell."

"Are you going away?" I asked.

"I do not know," she replied. "Everything is uncertain."

"But if I ask your father?" I urged.

I thought I saw a look of eager assent on her face, but it changed in a second.

"No," she said, "it would be no use. My father allowed me to come with you this afternoon because I promised; but—but I have duties, Mr. Killigrew."

I was silent, for in truth it seemed to me as though a cold weight had been pressed on my heart.

"Faith, and are ye disappointed?" and again the old merry, mischievous look came into her eyes.

"More than words can say," I answered. "I have been building on your coming with me. I wanted you to be by my side as I looked on the house where my

mother was born. It is occupied by strangers now, but if you were with me——”

“Ah, but I cannot, Mr. Killigrew.”

“But I shall see you again before I return to London?”

“No,” she replied, “you will not see me again,” and I am sure there was a tremor in her voice.

“But I must,” I protested. “I shall ride over and——”

“No, you must not,” she replied.

“Do you mean that your father will not be at home?”

“I do not know. He will be often away during the next few days. But you must not come. If you do, you will not see me.”

“But why?” I urged.

“Because I do not wish it, Mr. Killigrew,” she answered. “And now, good night.”

We were at the gate where we had met in the morning, and she held out her hand as she spoke.

“But you will let me ride up to the house with you. You will at least allow me the pleasure of seeing you safe in your home.”

“And do you think I cannot take care of myself?” she cried. “Do you think any one would harm me? There is not a man, woman or child for miles around who would see a hair of my head harmed.”

She silenced me in spite of myself, for indeed what could I say?

“Good night,” she repeated. Our horses were side by side, and I could touch her hand easily.

“But when shall we meet again?” I asked eagerly.

“Do you want to see me again?” she said quickly.

“Not only do I want, but I will,” I said, my feelings getting the better of me.

She caught my outstretched hand. “Good night and good-bye,” she said; and then, before I could speak again, she cried out, with a laugh:

“Faith, and be careful of the banshees which haunt the roads between here and Ballysheen!” A moment

later she was galloping towards her father's house, leaving me alone in the lonely road.

Of what I thought during my ride to the inn at which I was staying I am not going to try and set down. That my meditations were gloomy, none will doubt; nevertheless, I determined that I would not return to England without seeing her again.

When I rode up to the inn Timothy Tralee awaited me.

"You were asking about Master Titus Breen only yesterday," he whispered confidentially, as he took my horse; "faith, and by jabbers, he is in the bar-parlour at this very moment."

CHAPTER XV

I MEET TITUS BREEN

I FELT in no humour to see Titus Breen, but the knowledge of his presence reminded me of my ostensible purpose in coming to Ireland, and I reflected that I might never have a more favourable opportunity for making his acquaintance. I accordingly made my way to the bar-parlour, where I saw a young man sitting alone. He eyed me curiously at my entrance, but quickly returned to his newspaper, as though he were reading a matter of great interest.

"Yer honour," said Timothy Tralee, "you'll be wantin' some supper?"

"Yes," I replied, "what have you got?"

"I'm afraid it's little we have," replied Timothy, "for two gentlemen have come in unexpected like, and they are at this very blessed moment in the coffee-room aitin' the ounly bit of mate in the house."

"Then you've nothing for me to eat?" I said.

"Plenty, yer honour."

"How's that?" I asked. "You've just told me that these two unexpected visitors are eating all you have in the house."

"No, yer honour. I said the ounly bit of *mate* in the house. But it's plenty of ham and eggs we have."

"Oh, very well; then get me some ham and eggs."

"Immejut, yer honour; but I've been wonderin', sor, whether you'll like to ait a male wid the strangers, or whether you'd like it here?"

"I'd rather have it here, if this gentleman doesn't object?"

"I?" said Titus Breen; "not in the slightest degree. Besides, I shall be going soon."

"Pray don't let me drive you away, sir," I said.

"Oh, and I'm sure it's Mister Breen that won't mind," said the innkeeper eagerly. "Rather he's a gentleman that'll be pleased to make your acquaintance. This, Mister Breen, is a Member of Parlyment from England; his name is Mr. Killigrew, and a friend of the King."

"Not Mr. Kerry Killigrew, member for Blenheim?" cried Titus Breen.

I nodded assent, whercupon he held out his hand.

"It's delighted I am to see you and know you," he cried. "It's much I've heard about you from men we both know. Every friend of Ireland is welcome to me, and it's a long time I hope you'll stay; and if it's in my power to make your visit a pleasant onc, then, if you please, let me know."

"You live in this neighbourhood?" I asked.

"My name is Titus Breen. I was born here and reared here. Ballysheen is the name of the shanty where I live, and I hope you'll come and see me."

"This is friendliness with a vengeance," I reflected. "I wonder whether all Irishmen offer an *entrée* to their houses on such short acquaintance?"

"And is it long you'll be staying?" he went on, throwing aside his newspaper.

"Not long," I replied. "I have to get back to London in a few days."

"Ah, you've come to have a peep at 'ould Oireland,' like other Members of Parlyment?" he said; "and it's a poor way you find us in."

"The truth is, my mother was an Irishwoman," I replied, "and I've come to see her birthplace."

"And where might it be?" he asked with apparent eagerness.

"Virgin's Dell."

"And her maiden name?"

"Kerry," I answered.

"There is still a family of Kerrys who live at Virgin's

Dell," he replied, "but I don't know them. But you'll have other reasons for coming to Ireland? Ah, but you can't deceive me. You are like other Members of Parlyment, you've come to spy out the land."

"Anyhow, Ireland is a beautiful country," I said, "and it's worth a visit on any score."

"Ah, and it's proud I am to hear you say so. But say you'll come to see me, Mr. Killigrew. It's a poor place is Ballysheen, but it's a warm welcome I'll give you."

It was evident that he desired to be friendly, and as it would be easier to ask the questions I had in my mind when paying a visit to his house than at a first meeting at an inn, I determined to accept.

"You've been out riding to-day?" he said presently.

I replied that I had.

"And what part, Mr. Killigrew?"

"I've been to Castlereagh Castle," I said.

"To Castlereagh Castle! Faith, and you had business with Michael Castlereagh?"

"No; I went to pay a visit to Miss Castlereagh."

My reply evidently surprised him, for he opened his eyes in astonishment.

"You know her!" he cried.

"I have met her several times in London."

"Ah," he cried, "it's years I've known her. Poor Kathleen!"

"Why poor?" I asked.

"Ah!" he replied, like one meditating, "you'll not be knowin'."

"Knowing what?"

"It's her father that's wanting her to go into a nunnery."

"Nunnery!"

"Yes; personally I think it's a shame, but as sure as anything it'll end in that. You see, she worships her father, and she does everything he asks her."

"But why should he wish her to go into a nunnery?"

"Why? Because there's not a prouder man in Ireland

than Michael Castlereagh, and because he's not a sixpence to bless himself with if he's sold up to-morrow. He's bled himself to death."

"Bled himself to death?" I repeated.

"Ay, for the sake of Holy Church and 'ould Oireland.' What the priests haven't had, the party has had, and that's why he can't provide for Kathleen. As I said, he's as proud as Lucifer, and he wouldn't marry her—no, not to a duke—unless he could provide for her according to her name and station. But if she went to a nunnery, then he'd know that her future would be settled. Ay, and more, he'd be happy in the knowledge that he'd have the prayers of a holy nun. He'd have the blessing of the Church, and he'd devote all his life to what his heart is set on."

I remembered the way in which Kathleen had parted from me an hour or so before, and I wondered whether Breen's words explained her behaviour to me. In all my wild fancies during my homeward journey I had never dreamt of this. Kathleen a nun! There and then I vowed that it should never be.

"How old is she?" I asked as carelessly as I could.

"Kathleen must be twenty," he replied.

"I—I wonder that some—some eligible Irishman has not——"

"Proposed to her?" Titus Breen broke in. "Ah, but many have. Perhaps she may have had her romance, young as she is. Who knows?"

I was about to ask him what he meant by this, but at that moment a maid entered with my supper.

"Ah, and I'll be going now," said Titus Breen. "But you'll come and see me to-morrow. Say you'll come and have some dinner with me to-morrow night. I'll ask a few friends to meet you. Jimmy McTurk and Pat Sullivan 'll be proud to know you."

"I'll come to-morrow night with pleasure," I answered, "but would you mind if we dined alone? I don't feel in the humour for meeting people now."

"Just as you will," and I thought he looked relieved.

"I'm afraid it's a poor dinner I'll be able to give you, but you shall have a warm welcome."

The day's events had given me a great deal to think about, although nothing of importance had taken place. Sleep did not visit me until far into the morning, and when I awoke I was unrefreshed, and still perplexed.

After breakfast I hurried away to catch the train for my mother's birthplace. Although the distance was not great, the journey was long and tedious, and I did not arrive there till noon.

It is not my purpose to describe my visit to Virgin's Dell in detail. It has but little to do with the story I am telling, and might not be of interest. And yet that day will be for ever a fragrant memory. To wander around the garden in which my mother played as a child, and to behold the objects upon which her eyes daily rested, uninteresting as it may be to the stranger, was to me of peculiar charm. Moreover, I met people who knew her as a child, and who told me stories of her girlhood.

"Ah, but she was jist like an angel sint down from heaven," said one old woman, who eyed me eagerly, and evidently expected a large gratuity for her information; then, forgetting her *rôle*, she proceeded: "not but she's gone to hell now, pore thing."

"To hell!" I repeated.

"Yes, to hell. For didn't she marry a heretic? And didn't she forsake the 'oly faith? And yet sometimes I think she's only gone to purgatory, and if I only had the money I'd have some Masses said for her soul."

Doubtless I was in a foolish humour. I put some coins in her outstretched hand and said, "Well, get some Masses said for her soul."

"Faith, and it's not many this 'ud buy," she replied after she'd counted the money; "and more, when I come to think about it, it 'ud be no use, for didn't the praste curse her, and say that she was no longer a child of the Church?"

"What priest?" I asked.

"Faith, and it was Father O'Connell."

"Is he still alive?"

"Yes, yer honour; and see him you can if you'll go down to the church. He'll be working in his garden at this blessed minit."

"And Father O'Connell cursed her, did he?"

"Faith, and he did, for, beautiful as she was, could he do other when she had married a heretic and become a Protestant?"

"Did she become a Protestant?"

"We heard so; and Father O'Connell hates Protestants. It's not one of them he'll allow in the parish. If a Protestant takes a farm, it's Catholics that are not allowed to trate with him, not even to buyin' a bit of butter. For that matter we are not allowed to make friends wid them. So, you see, a Protestant can't live in Virgin's Dell."

I did not go to see Father O'Connell, but just as I was passing the church I saw two priests in the road. One I judged to be the man of whom we had been speaking, but the other was Father Shannon.

When he saw me he gave a start, and then turning quickly away, he caught the other by the arm and the two walked quickly into the church.

I only stayed a few hours in Virgin's Dell, but even in that short time I felt that the atmosphere was utterly different from that of an English village. In spite of the natural beauty of the place, ignorance, squalor, and thriftlessness prevailed everywhere. It seemed to me as though the hands of the clock of life were placed back hundreds of years. Education was discouraged, reading was practically unknown, the free play of ideas was something unheard of, the people's lives were stagnant, and, to a very large extent, degraded.

Thus my visit to my mother's birthplace, while it charmed me, also made me feel sad and depressed; so much so, that it was with a sigh of relief that I entered the train and was taken back to Ballysheen.

Just before eight o'clock Titus Breen met me with outstretched hands.

"You're late, Mr. Killigrew," he said, "but are none the less welcome for that. The priest, Father Murphy, is dining with us, but he has to leave us at nine o'clock. I couldn't help it," he added. "I know you said you'd rather be alone, but he asked himself to stay."

I judged Father Murphy to be somewhat superior in intelligence to Father Shannon. He was better educated, and had more knowledge of current events. Moreover, he was inclined to be frank and genial, almost jubilant, in fact.

"And how 'll ye be liking Ireland?" he asked.

I told him that as far as I had seen of the Irish they were among the kindest, wittiest, and sunniest-hearted people I had ever met.

"You've not been to the North of Ireland?" he asked.

I shook my head.

"Ah, it's there you'll see gloom and long faces," he cried. "But they're not real Irish there. They're Scotch people, ay, and Protestants into the bargain."

"You've very few Protestants here?" I suggested.

"No; the saints be praised. The air doesn't agree with them. It's a warm place I make Ballysheen for every Protestant. Why, if we had many of them here they'd breed discontent and doubt. They'd be wantin' to have free libraries, and they'd be spreading what they call liberal ideas about education and religion."

"And you'll not have it?" I laughed.

"Not while I'm the praste," he replied, lapsing into the vernacular, for he was evidently of peasant origin. "I'll have no heresy in this parish; I'll have no readin' societies and debatin' clubs, and new-fangled notions about education. What do the people want of education? They're better without it. Readin' and education lades to doubt and discontent and the askin' of questions. No, no; if I had my way I'd drive every Protestant into the say. Ay, and the time will come when there shan't be a Protestant between Dublin and Cork."

"Of course, you know your parishioners well?" I said.

"Every mother's son of 'em. I've married and christened and buried people here for thirty years. I'm friendly with them, too. I have a glass of the crater with them at the feasts, and I'm always welcome at every house."

I did not encourage him to talk, for I was anxious for him to go, and as he became more and more communicative as the dinner proceeded, especially after he had taken a few glasses of wine, I was afraid that his evident love for conviviality would lead him to the determination to spend the evening with us.

He left us about ten o'clock, however, in high good humour, and Titus Breen and I were left alone.

"He's a good sort, is Father Murphy," remarked Breen when he had gone, "although he has his weaknesses. I was afraid he would hurt your feelings when he spoke so strongly about Protestants; but I was glad you took it in good part."

"Did he know I was a Protestant?"

"No. I told him you were a friend of Ireland and of the Church. That was why he spoke so freely."

He passed me a box of cigars as he spoke, and, having lit his own, lay back in his chair with great contentment. He had not a bad face, and I reflected that the impression I had formed of him on seeing his picture was confirmed by actual contact with him. He was not a bad fellow. He had a strong sense of humour, he was a lover of fun, but his receding chin and uncertain lips told me that Titus Breen would never be the leader of any movement.

"I've thought a great deal about you through the day," I said presently.

"Ah!" He turned towards me quickly.

"Yes," I said quietly, and keeping my eyes steadily upon him. "Some time ago I heard of you at Gascon. I was staying at the house of old Morton Gascoigne. His granddaughter, Eve Gascoigne, has run away from her home. Do you know where she is?"

I saw his face become pale as I spoke. His cheeks hung flabbily and his lips trembled.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"You know what I mean," I said. "Tell me where she is."

"I—I don't know," he replied. "That is—what can I know of—what did you say her name was—Eve Gascoigne?"

It was badly done. It was the answer of a weak man. I was as certain as that I sat in the chair opposite him that he knew much of Eve Gascoigne.

"You were a suitor for her hand," I went on. "Tell me what means you used to induce her to leave her home?"

He had by this time got over the suddenness of my attack, and he rose from his chair like a man in a passion.

"Do you mean to insult me?" he cried. "Did you come to my house for that?"

"How have I insulted you?" I went on quietly. "You do not deny that you were a suitor for Miss Gascoigne's hand. Your advances were declined. Mr. Gascoigne told you it was impossible. But you persuaded her to leave her home."

"It's a lie," he cried.

"It's the truth," I retorted. "You were in Gascon only a day or so before she was missing. You stayed at one of the hotels in the town."

"How do you know?" he gasped.

"By asking," I replied. "Where is Miss Gascoigne now?"

"Come, come," he cried. "Is this the way you treat a man's hospitality? Faith, and you'd better be careful, Mr. Killigrew."

But I had measured my man carefully before I had spoken, and his suggestion of a threat did not alarm me at all.

"It's possible you have ground for your complaint," I said; "but, believe me, I have no unfriendly feelings towards you. But I want to tell you this, Mr. Titus Breen. Mr. Gascoigne is a dangerous man when he's aroused, and at present he's aroused very much. Miss Gascoigne is under age. Do you know that you've put

yourself within the reach of the law by persuading a minor to run away with you?"

"I swear I didn't do it!" he cried.

"But you know where she is?"

"I am ready to swear on the Cross of our Blessed Lord that I don't!" was his answer.

CHAPTER XVI

BREEN UNDER EXAMINATION

I MUST confess that his reply somewhat staggered me. That the man was a coward I saw directly I had told him of Mr. Gascoigne's anger; but I also thought he was sincere in his denial that he was guilty of persuading Eve Gascoigne to leave her home. And yet I had my doubts. I could not quite understand the look upon his face. I felt sure that I had by no means got to the bottom of the business.

"You are ready to swear that you did not persuade her to run away from home, and that you don't know where she is now?" I said, watching him closely all the time. "Be careful what you say, Breen."

My note of warning had its effect on him. His lips hung loosely and the perspiration stood thickly upon his forehead.

"I—I am ready to swear that I don't know where she is now," he stammered.

"But not that you did not try to persuade her to leave home?"

"No—no—that is, not until——" The man stopped suddenly as if afraid to proceed.

I kept my eyes fixed steadily upon him. Evidently there was something at the back of his mind which he was trying to keep secret.

"You asked her to marry you?" I said. "You want to marry her still?"

"No—yes—that is, what business is it of yours?" He went to the sideboard and helped himself to some spirits.

"Look you, Mr. Killigrew," he went on, "I don't know what you mean by coming to Ireland in this way.

Why have you come? Oh, yes, I heard that you got very friendly with old Mr. Gascoigne; but what business is this of yours? Are you in love with Miss Gascoigne? Do you want to marry her? I can tell you you never will—never! Why——”

Again he checked himself, and seemed to be thinking deeply.

“Do your worst,” he went on. “Let old Morton Gascoigne do his worst! What can he prove? Suppose Miss Gascoigne is in love with me—is that your business? Yes, and”—here his eyes flashed, and he came close to me—“suppose I did persuade her to run away from home, supposing she’s hiding in London until she’s twenty-one, so that she can be free to marry me? Who’s to say anything? The law can’t touch me for that.”

“You confess to that?”

“I don’t confess to anything. Why should I? It’s not your business.”

“It may be it’s my business in a deeper way than you imagine,” I said, trying to play upon his fears. “It may be, too, that I know more than you think.”

“But you don’t know—you can’t know!” he cried; “that is,” he added quickly, “there’s nothing to know.”

“Then you think you’ll be able to marry her when she’s twenty-one?” I said.

He looked at me curiously, and I thought I was on the point of hearing something of importance.

“And what then?” he cried. “Is it not better that she should marry me than that young Protestant puppy with a proud stomach? He treated me as though I were dust; but I got the better of him, anyhow. Let George Fanshawe marry her if he can.”

“What have you got against George Fanshawe?” I said quietly.

“Isn’t he a Protestant?” he cried.

“And isn’t she?” I retorted. “And isn’t it natural that a Protestant girl should marry a Protestant, as he is, rather than a Catholic, like you?”

He laughed loudly. “Protestant!” he cried. “Of course. I see the whole plot now. I see now why you

wanted us to dine alone. You couldn't say anything if Jimmy McTurk or Pat Sullivan were here. Oh yes, I see. You came to Ballysheen to find out if Miss Gascoigne were here. You thought yourself very clever, Mr. Kerry Killigrew. You thought I should let everything out. You thought I was a kind of orange that you could suck dry."

"At least, I didn't ask to come here," I said. "It was not I who suggested dining with you."

"No, you didn't—no. But never mind, you'll not get anything out of me. You thought, by catching me on the ground hop, by speaking to me suddenly, that I should play into your hands, eh? A clever trick; but I saw through it, Mr. Kerry Killigrew, I saw through it."

He had again refreshed himself at the sideboard, and the spirits were getting into his head.

"It's a nice thing for a guest to do," he went on. "You accept a kindly invitation to a man's house to dinner, and then you insult him."

"Perhaps a listener would wonder where the insult came in," I suggested; "perhaps, too, he would think that the host had duties as well as the guest."

"But you've discovered nothing—nothing!" he cried.

"Excuse me, I've discovered a great deal!" I retorted.

"What—tell me what?" he cried.

"That you've nothing to tell," I replied.

"Nothing to tell!" And he laughed loudly.

"Nothing but what I knew before, Mr. Titus Breen," I said quietly. "I am sorry you've taken a few simple questions in such bad part. What do I care about Miss Eve Gascoigne? I never saw her but oncc. How, then, can she be anything to me?"

"Then why did you come to Ireland? Why did you make Ballysheen your headquarters?" And he spoke as though he thought he had been very clever.

I felt now that my business with Mr. Titus Breen was at an end. I was perfectly certain that he had had something to do with Eve Gascoigne's departure from her home, but I was just as certain that he knew nothing

of her present whereabouts. While under the influence of fear, he had declared himself ready to swear on the most sacred thing of which he could think that he did not know where she was. Another thing was also evident. Whatever part he took in Eve Gascoigne's escapade, it was a subordinate one. His every word revealed the fact. He had simply obeyed the bidding of those who had cleverer brains than he had. Titus Breen knew no more of what lay behind what had taken place than I did. Whatever he had done, he had done largely in the dark.

As I have said, he was not a bad fellow. There was no suggestion of meanness or vice in his face. But he was weak, and he was a coward. I could see he was angry at the turn events had taken; he was fearful, too; but it was a confused kind of fear. Whatever dread he had was almost nameless. As I watched him I saw the perspiration standing in beads upon his forehead, and I could not help pitying him. Whatever he had done, he had originated nothing. The head of Titus Breen was never guilty of plotting. He was simply incapable of it.

"Don't be angry with me, Breen," I said presently. "Suppose I did come to Ireland for the purpose of discovering whether you knew anything of the whereabouts of Eve Gascoigne, there is nothing to be angry about. If you knew where she was, it would be a different matter, for then Mr. Gascoigne would have the whip-hand over you. But you don't, and there's an end of the matter. You and I have nothing to quarrel about."

My words seemed to lift a load off his mind. His face cleared as if by magic.

"No," he said eagerly, "we've nothing to quarrel about. Besides, I've told you nothing, have I?"

I smiled at the fellow's simplicity. No; he was never guilty of plotting.

"And our conversation need not be known, need it?" he went on. "There's nothing to talk about? Nothing to make public?"

"Nothing," I replied; "and we can part friends."

"That's it. Won't you have a drink? Bless my soul! but you've touched nothing for the night."

"No, I must be going," I said. "It's getting late, and Timothy Tralee will think I'm killed by the Fenians if I don't turn up soon."

"I say, Killigrew," he said, "I'm sorry if I said anything to wound your feelings; 'pon my honour, I am."

"Don't mention it," I cried. "Besides, you've not wounded my feelings at all."

"That's right. Let us agree that we don't mention what's passed between us to anybody—not a word."

"Right!—not a word," I replied.

He was as light-hearted as a boy again, and pressed me to stay longer. I did not stay long, but long enough to hear from him a pretty full account of his boyhood, his neighbours, and of the general poverty of the people. On this last topic he was very pronounced.

"Why, I myself am in a continual state of being hard-up!" he cried. "I've been longing and longing for years that something would happen to lift my head above water; but—but—well, things are not quite as bad as they were, and perhaps they'll be better soon, 'but at present,' as Pat McGowrick says, 'when I take a retrospective view of the future, the sun seems sinkin' in the east.'"

When I returned to the inn I reflected for a long time over what had been said during the evening, and, to say the least of it, I was mystified more than ever. Try as I might, I could not solve the mystery of Eve Gascoigne's disappearance. Of one thing I was pretty sure: she was in London in hiding, but where and why I could not fathom.

There seemed no reason now why I should remain in Ireland. I had visited my mother's home, and I had had an interview with Titus Breen; but I did not immediately return to England. The truth was, I had made up my mind to see Kathleen Castlereagh again, and had determined not to leave Ireland without accomplishing my purpose. What Titus Breen had said concerning her father's desire that she should become a nun disturbed

me greatly. How much truth was there in it? And, if it was a fixed purpose in Michael Castlereagh's life, what steps could I take to frustrate him?

Throughout the whole of the next day I wandered around the neighbourhood of Ballysheen, pondering over what steps I should take, but, in the face of what she had told me, I felt helpless.

On the following morning, however, I again hired my sad-eyed charger, and rode for a second time to Castlereagh Castle.

The weather was still fine. Spring was in the air, and, as it seemed to me, I could see the earth clothing herself in her green mantle. In spite of myself I was in good spirits. I drove the thought of Kathleen entering a convent from my mind as though it were something impossible. I simply could not conceive of this girl, glorious in her youth and beauty, consenting to bury herself alive, even for her father's sake. Moreover, I felt sure she liked me. It was true I could not hope that she loved me at that time, but there was a possibility of winning her, and I vowed that I would.

When I entered the neglected drive which led to the house, however, a gloom fell upon me. I could not explain why, but it seemed to me as though I were entering a dark cloud—a cloud that was chilling, and blinding, and poisonous. I fought against the feeling, however, and tried to recall the experience of two days before, when Kathleen and I had walked this very grass-covered road together.

Not a soul was to be seen as I rode up to the house. I looked around for some servant who might come and take my horse, but no one appeared. I seized the rusty bell-pull, however, and heard a clanking noise echoing through the house.

After some time I heard the sound of footsteps, but no one opened the door. I therefore rang again, and presently a gaunt woman of about fifty years of age appeared.

"Is Mr. Castlereagh at home?" I asked.

"No, sor."

"Miss Castlereagh, then?"

"It's Miss Castlereagh that can't be seen."

"But she's at home?"

"No, sor."

"Are you sure?" I said.

"Yis, sor."

I detected not only a strangeness in her voice, but a merry twinkle in her eye. "Shure, sor, nobody's at home when they don't want to be home," she added.

"Certainly not," I said; "but she might change her mind any minute."

I took a half-crown from my pocket as I spoke.

"You see, she may have returned by this time," I went on, "and if you'll take me to her, why I'll give you this likeness of the King."

"I daren't, yer 'onour."

"I think you will," I said; "at any rate, you'll take this card to her."

She eyed the piece of money eagerly, and then looked at the card.

"It's take it to her room I could," she admitted presently.

"Of course you could," I said, handing her the card.

"You mane nothin' wrong? It's not a spy you are?" she asked anxiously.

"Spy?" I said. "Why, I had lunch here threc days ago. Didn't you see me?"

"Shure and I didn't, but I did hear that a gentleman was here."

She took the card, and left me standing on the doorstep. A few minutes later she returned.

"Faith, sor," she said, "but Miss Kathleen ses she's not at 'ome, sor, and she's very sorry, but she can't see ye."

I took another card from my pocket, and scribbled a few lines upon it. This was what I wrote: "I must see you. If you cannot see me this morning, I shall come in the afternoon; if you will not see me then, I shall keep on coming until you do. I have something to tell you which you must hear."

"Take her this," I said.

"How can I take it to her when she said wid her own swate lips that she's not at home?" she said.

"And how could she tell you she was not at home when she wasn't at home?" I urged.

"Faith, and I'll give it up," said the woman, "for it's the first lie Miss Kathleen ever told me, which is not a lie at all, seein' Miss Kathleen told it, not mentionin' the fact that I'm told it's what's done everyday in grand houses in Dublin."

"Perhaps she only said she couldn't see me," I urged.

"Faith, and I don't remimber 'er exact words, because she looked as if she'd seen a banshee. It's murder ye I will if ye harm Miss Kathleen."

"I wouldn't harm her for worlds," I cried.

Whether the woman guessed the state of my heart, I cannot say, but she took the card; and when she returned she said confidentially:

"It's persuaded her I have, yer honour. I tould 'er ye was tremblin' like a lafe, and that I believe ye'd fall down in a dead faint on the door-step if she didn't come. Will ye be pleased to stip this way?"

I fastened the horse to a ring which was fixed in the wall, and followed the woman through a long passage to a part of the house I had not hitherto seen.

"It's wate here ye must until she comes," said the woman, showing me into a room. "She'll not be long."

"If she's here in two minutes, I'll give you another likeness of the King," I said, handing her the half a crown, whereupon she hurried away as fast as her legs could carry her.

A few seconds later my heart gave a great bound, for I heard light footsteps coming along the passage. When she entered the room she looked eagerly around, as though she were not certain where I was. When she caught sight of me she took one step forward, and then stood still.

"Is this kind, Mr. Killigrew?" she said; and there

were tears as well as passion in her voice. "Is this kind to come here, when I told you plainly that you must not come?"

"I came because I could not help it," I said.

"Could not help it," she repeated. "What do you mean?"

"I mean exactly what I said," I replied. "I was simply obliged to come. I could not stay away."

A look of fear came into her eyes, or, at least, I thought it was fear. She glanced uneasily around the room, and seemed altogether unlike the frank child of Nature I had hitherto known.

"Then you've learnt something—you've discovered something?" she whispered.

"Yes, I have," I replied. "I've discovered that which will affect the whole of my life. I've learnt that which has made all life different."

"What—since I saw you the day before yesterday?"

"I think I knew it then," I said. "Now I am sure of it. I think it came to me the first time I saw you in London, for everything has been different to me since. That was why I came."

She looked at me wonderingly. I saw that her face, which had been pale when she entered, had become rosy-red, and, to my delight, the old look of childlike gladness came into her eyes.

"But I told you not to come," she repeated.

"How could I help it, when my heart was hungering to see you again?" I cried. "I went to Virgin's Dell, and I saw my mother's birthplace; but it was you I was thinking of all the time. Then, when I came back, I was told that you thought of going into a convent. I tell you I cannot allow you to do such a thing; you must not think of such a thing; you must drive such a thought from your mind."

Her face almost frightened me as I spoke, for I could not understand the changing expressions which flitted across it in swift succession.

"How dare you!" she cried.

"I dare anything," I said. "I dare because your

heart does not go with the thought; I dare because it would be a sin, a crime."

She did not speak, but I saw that her hands clenched and unclenched themselves nervously. There was passion in her eyes, and yet there was something piteous in them also, and it was this that almost carried me away.

"If my father——!" she cried; then she stopped, like one who could not find words to express her thoughts.

"I am sorry your father is not here," I said. "I am sure he would not be surprised at what I have told you. He is a man, and could understand how I love you."

"Love me—me!" she cried; then she threw herself on to a sofa and hid her face in her hands.

CHAPTER XVII

MY WOOING

I WATCHED her for some time in wonder. I could not, even although I had known her as a girl of many moods, understand why she treated me so strangely. Still, my heart was too much on fire to give serious attention to this.

"Kathleen," I cried, "you are not angry with me, are you? I could not help myself, Kathleen. I could not help loving you!"

Still she did not lift her head, and as her face was pillowed in her hands I could not guess what she was thinking. But I was in no humour for remaining in uncertainty. I felt that my hour had come, but whether it was the hour of light or darkness I could not tell.

I went to the sofa and sat down by her side. I tried to move her hands from her face, but failed. Her whole form was shaking with sobs.

Presently she became calmer, and I waited with fast-beating heart for her to speak. But minute after minute passed, and no words passed her lips. Her face was still pillowed in her hands, although presently her form became still.

"Forgive me, Kathleen, if I have been rough and rude," I said presently, "but I must go back to England soon, and I could not go without speaking to you again. How could I when I love you so? I have never ceased thinking of you since we first met. I could not tell why I was unable to drive you from my mind. But wherever I was, or whatever I was doing, your face was for ever appearing to me. My one desire has been to be in your presence, to hear your voice, to look at your face. Last night I could not sleep for thinking of you. Kathleen, give me some word of hope."

She shook her head. "It is impossible—impossible—impossible!"

She repeated the word again and again, and it seemed to me like a death-knell.

"Why is it impossible?" I asked. "Nay, it shall not be impossible. I will make you love me."

"No, no, never," she said.

"Why? No, there must be no 'why.' I love you, and you must love me."

Again she repeated the word with weary iteration.

"But you must, you will," I exclaimed, "unless," I added, "you love—you are betrothed to another. Is there another?"

"No, no—that is, yes."

"There is some other man?" I cried; "there is one whom you love better than you love me?"

"Yes—that is, I ought. Will you please go away. I ought not to have seen you; but I never dreamed that—that you cared for me."

"There is some one else," I said. "That is, there is some one you ought to love more than you love me. Is that it?"

"Yes, yes, I ought, I ought! Please go away, will you."

My heart became cold as she spoke.

"You wish me to go away?" I said. "Do you really mean that? If what you say is true, then, of course, I must go."

"Don't be cruel," she cried. "Don't you see? Can't you understand? You do understand; you told me just now."

"I understand!" I cried. "How can I understand when you are asking me to go away from everything I love? How can I understand when you are banishing me from hope, and from everything that will make my life beautiful?"

"Do you mean that—really?" she said, and she looked up at me through her tears, as a child might look into its mother's face.

"Should I have come here else?" I cried.

"But—but you came to Ireland to see your mother's birthplace!" she cried.

"I came to Ireland because you were here!" I cried. "If you had been living in Greenland or at the Antipodes I should have gone to you. No other hand has beckoned me but yours; no eyes have drawn me but yours; no voice has called me but yours. My other reasons for coming have been mere excuses for being near you. If you drive me away it will be into banishment, to misery. When you were in London I told you that the first time my father saw my mother he loved her, and you told me that it was as it should be. The first time I saw you I loved you. I am no longer a boy. I have not been one who has been fascinated by pretty faces, and I have not flitted from flower to flower. But I love you, Kathleen, and I would give my life to make you happy."

All this I told her and more. I cannot put here on this cold page the burning words which my heart prompted. Besides, as I spoke her eyes met mine, and then I felt at no loss for words to tell her what my heart felt. For did I not see her sorrow fade away as I spoke? Slowly the anguish died out of her eyes, and in its place was light, joy, love!

"You love me like that—that!" she said.

"That and a thousand times more!" I cried. "I would cross a thousand seas to come to you. I would brave a thousand dangers to be by your side. I would sacrifice all I have that you might love me!"

"I do, I do!" she cried, as artlessly and as frankly as a child. Then, realising what she had said, her face crimsoned as if for shame.

I caught her in my arms and held her close to me. I laughed aloud in my joy. I had won her!

"Kathleen, my love! my love!" I cried. "Oh, thank God, thank God for his goodness to me."

For a few moments we lived in a world of rapture. No thought of sorrow entered my heart, no shadow of care rested upon my life. This child of Nature, she who was as beautiful as a flower and pure as the mountain air, loved me! And in the realisation of that fact earth

became heaven, and everything else—past, present and future—became as nothing to me.

Perhaps to some my language may seem like the confession of a love-sick boy, but I write truly. Besides, I came of a race that cannot help being intense in their love and in their hate. And I loved. I had seen the flash of this Irish maid's eyes; like wild-fire it had enkindled the dormant passions of years, and now all the hopes and aspirations of a lifetime were centred in one thought. I loved and was loved.

We had no thoughts of the past or the future. We lived in the present. Had I thought her beautiful when I had seen her first? Had she bewildered me with her virgin childlike loveliness? Had her eyes been like lights from heaven, and her voice like the music of a summer night? All this seemed as nothing to the beauty I saw then. For was she not mine for ever and ever? I had seen into the beauty of her soul, of which her face was but a mirror. God had given her to me, and, as it seemed to me, my happiness was complete.

"And you love me, Kathleen?"

"Yes, yes," she whispered.

"It came to you that night in London, as it came to me?"

"I do not know. I did not know I loved you till—till you told me you loved me; and then—then——"

"Yes, then——" I said.

"I do not know; I cannot put it into words. But it doesn't matter how or when, does it?"

Nothing mattered. What was there to matter? We were young, and we loved. At that hour no thought of the hard realities came into our minds. Storm might rage, lightnings might flash, kingdoms might rise and fall. What cared we? We loved.

For this I have found. In the last analysis of men and things nothing matters but love. It is the key that unlocks all mysteries; it is the magic wand that sweeps the clouds from the sky of life and makes the heavens of God a great dome of blue. It is the most selfish thing in the world, and yet it is unsullied by thought of self.

It hurls a man into hell, but it lifts him to heaven. It is the cause of the most poignant misery, and yet it is the inner secret of heaven.

This I write in the memory of what took place in later days, when all life was black, when no angels' songs were to be heard, but only the croak of the raven saying "never more." In that blest hour of love, unsullied, unclouded love, I lived a lifetime of happiness; I entered into eternal life. So great and so divine is the love which God implants in the human heart.

"Whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder."

So says our marriage service, and all who hear it feel it to be right. When the hearts of man and maid join in love, no man has the right to interfere; it is the call of heaven, and should be obeyed. And writing these words now I say: "Cursed be the thing, whatever it is, that blights pure love, that raises its unholy barriers between the lives destined by heaven for each other, that makes man-made conventions seem like divine mandates."

The cloud appeared suddenly. The heavens were made black as if by a blast from the mouth of hell.

"I hope your father will come home soon," I said. "I must tell him."

Kathleen tore herself from me. "Oh, what have I done! What have I done!" she cried. "Leave me; you must not stay here."

"But I shall stay here," I cried with a laugh; "no power shall drive me away."

"But you must go away. Holy Mother, forgive me for the wrong I have done you. Besides—oh, you do not know, you do not know!"

"Kathleen," I said, "something is on your mind; tell me what it is. Do not be afraid, my queen; I am going to stand by you and fight your battles."

But she took no heed of my words. "Oh, Holy Mary, forgive me," she cried again. "I forgot, I forgot!"

"Forgot what?" I asked.

She turned upon me angrily. "How dare you!" she

cried. "I commanded you not to come. Why did you? Why did you make me forget who I am and what I am to be?"

I caught her hands and held them firmly.

"You are overwrought, Kathleen, and you are saying things you do not mean," I said.

"But I do mean them!" she cried. "Are you not a heretic? And even if—if thoughts of love ever entered my mind they should never be devoted to you! Oh, yes, I know; your mother died out of the faith! You are a heretic. Please leave me."

"No, I shall not leave you, Kathleen," I replied. "But tell me, is it because I am a Protestant that you speak like this? If I were a Catholic, if I were to be received into your Church, would all be well?"

A look came into her eyes such as I had never seen before. It was a mingling of wild wonder, of fear, and of hope.

"But will you?" she cried. "Will you go to Father Shannon and be received into Holy Church? Will you live and die for the faith?"

"And if I did?" I said. "Then would all your scruples be removed, would your fears be gone, would you be my wife?"

"And you would give your life for the Church?" she cried. "You would fight her battles, you would seek to advance her claim every day and everywhere? You would fight against Protestantism, wouldn't you? You'd curse it every day?"

"Do you realise what you are asking, Kathleen?" I asked. "Why should I curse Protestantism? It is my father's faith; it has been the faith of my people for generations."

"Because it is an enemy of the faith, because it was born in darkness and sin," she cried. "I could never love a man who was a Protestant; even if I did I would tear that love from my heart. But for Protestantism Ireland would be happy. I was dedicated to God at my birth to destroy it. No, no, do not hold my hands. Go away, go away!"

A feeling half of anger, half of pity rose within me. If I had loved Kathleen less my anger would have been greater; but I had given my heart to her. All my life was at her feet.

"But you do accept my faith, don't you?" she cried. "You do! You do!"

I tried to reason with her, but in vain. She seemed overwhelmed by some great fear; some nameless horror appeared to have made her incapable of calm thought.

"Kathleen," I said at length, "all that I have and am are yours. I love you so that I will do all in my power for you. As I told you, I cannot help thinking kindly of your faith, for my mother was a Catholic, and you are a Catholic. Every interest I have cries out and tells me to do what you bid me to do. But such matters cannot be settled in a moment. I must examine evidences, I must use my judgment, I must follow my conscience. You would not respect me if I did otherwise; I could not respect myself. But I love you, my queen, and if my reason, my conscience, will allow me, nay, if the balance on either side seems equal, my love shall make it yield on your side."

"And then?"

"Then I will embrace your faith," I cried.

A great look of hope, or joy, came into her eyes. "It may be possible," she whispered, as if to herself. "It may be possible."

At that moment there was the sound of horses' hoofs in the yard, and, turning, I saw Michael Castlereagh.

"It is your father," I said. "I will tell him at once."

"You must not! You dare not!" she cried. "He will kill me; he will kill you!"

I laughed at her fears, even although I could not understand her.

"Nay, nay," I said, "he must know. It would not be honourable to be silent."

"Yes," she said, "that is right. It would not be honourable to be silent. Forgive me for being a coward, but I am so afraid. And oh, my love, my love, you will be patient with him, as you have been with me, won't

you? You'll not mind his anger? You'll not answer him back, and you'll tell him that you are going to be a Catholic, won't you?"

Both of us heard his footsteps as he entered the house, and the sound of his voice as he spoke to some one.

She clung to me as if in great dread.

"You'll plead very hard, won't you?" she whispered. "You'll tell him I'm true to the faith. You'll tell him it's not because I love him the less that I love you so much, and it may be—oh, it may be that—that— Don't let him take you from me, my love! Fight for me, won't you? Kiss me! Kiss me! There!"

She threw herself in my arms as she spoke and rained kisses of love upon me. I felt her heart beating against mine, and if ever man knew the meaning of heaven it was I. Then suddenly she tore herself from me and fled from the room.

A minute later Michael Castlereagh came into the room, and I saw by the look in his eyes that I had to deal with an angry man.

"Mr. Killigrew," he said, "I did not expect to see you here."

"No," I replied; "nevertheless I came to see you. I came to tell you that I love your daughter Kathleen, and to ask you to give her to me as my wife."

I saw the blood mount to his cheek; I saw his lips quiver and his hands tremble.

"I did not find you at home," I continued, "but I have spoken to Kathleen. I could not help myself. I love her, and I have told her so."

Still he did not speak, and I saw that he was trying to master himself.

"I meant no disrespect to you," I went on, "and I think you will understand me. You are a man, and you know what it is to have loved. I love Kathleen like my own life. I will give my life to make her happy."

"And she?" he said presently. "What did she say? Does she return your love? Did she promise you anything?"

"No—that is, no."

A look of relief came into his eyes. It seemed to me that some pressure was removed from his feelings.

"She promised you nothing?"

"Nothing," I answered. "She was afraid."

"Afraid! Afraid of what!"

"Of you—and of other things."

"What other things?"

"I do not know. I think they were religious fears."

"Ah!" he cried suddenly. Then he walked towards the window and for some time looked out upon a yard and a wilderness of a garden beyond. That he was thinking deeply I could not doubt, but he gave me no hint as to the nature of his thoughts.

Presently he turned round. "Sit down, Mr. Killigrew," he said. "I want to talk with you."

CHAPTER XVIII

GEORGE FANSHAWE'S DISCOVERY

"I CANNOT give my consent," he said presently. He spoke very quietly, and I saw that he had so far conquered his feelings that the look of anger had gone from his eyes.

"It is my purpose to try to persuade you to alter your mind," I said confidently. "You have nothing against me?"

"Personally—no. How can I? I have only seen you once before?"

"Then," I said, "I shall hope to persuade you to alter your mind."

"You cannot do that," he said confidently.

"At least, you will tell me what your objections are?"

"Oh, yes, I can do that. First, you are a stranger to me. You are a stranger to Kathleen; she has only seen you a few times. Irishman that I am, and apt to act on impulse, I cannot help seeing that such knowledge as you have of each other is insufficient to warrant you in becoming betrothed."

"I will answer that at once," I replied. "What you say is true; but then, I, like you, am a Celt. I have never been a woman's man, but I loved your daughter from the first. My father fell in love with my mother in the same way, and it was a happy marriage. It is true you do not know me, but that lack of knowledge can be remedied. Postpone your consent to an engagement for, say, three months—six months, even—but allow me to pay my addresses to Kathleen, and then, at the end of a given time, let me speak again."

"You may be all I desire in a man," he replied.

"Personally, I like you, but I have not yet given you my real objections. Let me tell you this: I have dedicated Kathleen to Heaven."

"But——" I interrupted.

"Wait a minute," he continued. "Even if I were convinced that—well, suppose I felt justified in altering my decision on this matter, there is still a third objection. You are not a Catholic."

"No," I replied, "I am not a Catholic. The truth is, I was never reared to consider the niceties of religious belief. But my mother was a Catholic, and, because of it, I have been led to think of Catholics with kindness. You know that."

"Yes; but the roots of heresy are in you," he said, "and I would never consent for Kathleen, even if I could be persuaded to allow her to marry at all, to have a Protestant for a husband. I would a thousand times rather bury her."

"No matter how honourable, how loving, how true a man he might be?"

"Heaven's blessing could never rest on such an union!" he cried. "Oh, yes, I know the Church has permitted such marriages on certain conditions, but I never would—never, never. Neither would Kathleen ever consent to marrying a heretic. Did she not tell you so?"

"Yes," I answered, "she did."

"And you?" he cried. "Are you prepared to join the true Church, to accept the true faith?"

"I would do anything—everything in my power," I said; "but, honestly, I have given no attention to differences of faith. I trust I was reared a good Christian, and I have tried to live a clean, honourable life."

"That is not enough!" he cried. "How could I consent for a child of mine to be wedded to a man who was not in the Church. Outside her there is no blessing, no salvation."

His words jarred upon me, even although he was Kathleen's father, and I was ready to sacrifice all a man may sacrifice to win her.

"Mind you, I promise nothing," he went on; "nothing, nothing; let that be plain. How can I, when the very thought of marrying her stings me like scorpions? I have dedicated her to Heaven, in my own heart; I have given her to the Holy Mother—to God. But—but—however, we'll not talk of that, and I come back to where I was just now. I would never dream of giving Kathleen to any man if he were a Protestant. Let that be clear, Mr. Killigrew. You must never speak to Kathleen again—nay, never dream of her—until you hate every enemy of the holy faith. Do you not see, man—do you not see?—I have dedicated her to the Holy Church; how, then, could I consent to her marrying, unless the man was a child of the Holy Church? Nay, more, I would never give her in marriage unless the man took a solemn vow to live and die for the religion. Whatever the religion demands, he must promise to do. Else let him never look at Kathleen Castlereagh with eyes of love. Will ye promise this, Mr. Kerry Killigrew?"

The man's passion carried me away. For the moment I saw everything with his eyes; I thought with his mind. Besides, Kathleen's words rung in my ears; Kathleen's kisses were warm upon my lips, and all my heart, my life, had gone out to her.

"If I can accept the Catholic faith, I will!" I cried. "If I can promise to live for, and serve, and even die for your Church, I will!"

"You mane that?" he said excitedly, and lapsing into the Irish brogue.

"I do mean it!" I cried. "I love her like my own life, and all that I can promise I do."

"But I promise nothing!" he cried, "mind that; and Kathleen promises nothing. I have dedicated her to God in my heart, and it may be that I should not be allowed to—— But enough of that! Do not come here again, Mr. Killigrew, until you can come fulfilling my condition. Nay, do not come again until you have shown by your acts that you mean what you have said."

"I do not quite understand what you mean by your last sentence," I said.

"The faith is languishing for want of friends. The cause of Ireland and the cause of the Church is suffering because Parlyment is held in a land of heretics. Ireland is governed by heretics, and the King, when he was crowned, had to insult our faith. You know what I mean. Let me see whether you are worthy of Kathleen before you show your face here again."

"You will let me see her again before I go?" I said.

"No, Mr. Killigrew—no; you must not see her. If I'd been at home you should not have seen her to-day. If—if—but never mind. Good day, and never show your face at Castlereagh again until you can come as a child of the Church."

He led the way to the door as he spoke, and a few minutes later I was riding away from the house like a man in a dream. For some time my mind refused to work; I could see nothing plainly, the events which had taken place seemed to have no meaning. Presently, however, I could not help seeing that there was something behind Kathleen's fears and Michael Castlereagh's behaviour. They were both thinking of things which were unknown to me. Kathleen's father was evidently under two sets of influences, the one of which seemed to be fighting against the other.

I was neither dejected nor downhearted, however. How could I be? The love which had so suddenly come into my own heart had also entered hers. If the thought of losing her gave me anguish untold, she also was sorely troubled by the fear that we might never meet again. As for the conditions which both of them made, they troubled me not one whit. Could I not be as good a man and as good a Christian if I became a Catholic as if I remained a Protestant? Protestantism meant but little to me. It is true I had been reared in that faith; but what then? I was no theologian, and knew nothing of the barriers which cleft the religious world asunder. Neither had I any sympathy with them. The age for religious strife was over, and I thought I could belong to one faith as easily as to the other.

Besides, I could not help admiring and being moved

by Kathleen's ardour for her faith. As far as I could judge, Protestants cared very little for their distinctive tenets, while Catholics were ready to die for theirs. Was it not likely then that they were right?

It is true I was not altogether pleased at the thought of changing my beliefs, even to win a woman's hand; there was a suggestion of barter and of cowardice in it; but I was deeply in love, and I banished these uncomfortable impressions from my mind.

On returning to Ballysheen I wrote a letter to Kathleen telling her of what had taken place between her father and myself, and assuring her of my undying love, after which I started for England.

I spent that night in Dublin, and by the next evening I was in London. I had scarcely arrived at my club when one of the servants came to me.

"A gentleman asked me to give you this the moment you returned, sir," he said, handing me a letter.

I tore open the envelope and read it at once. It was from George Fanshawe.

"Please ring me up the moment you return," he wrote, "I want to have a chat with you about your discoveries in Ireland."

Of course, I knew what was in his mind, nevertheless, the letter came to me almost like a shock. For days I had scarcely given a thought to Eve Gascoigne. I had discovered that Titus Breen knew nothing of her whereabouts, and after that nothing in Ireland seemed of importance to me, save my love for Kathleen Castlereagh. All the fears and sorrows of old Morton Gascoigne had been placed in the background of my life, while, so selfish was my own love, that the love of George Fanshawe seemed of no importance whatever.

His letter made me realise the situation, however. After all, I had ostensibly gone to Ireland at Morton Gascoigne's behest, and naturally I must make my report.

"Will you ring up the University Club and tell whoever answers you to inform Mr. Fanshawe that I shall be pleased to see him in half an hour," I said.

The servant left me, while I went to the dining-room

for a hasty meal. I had scarcely finished it when I was informed that Mr. Fanshawe awaited me in my room.

"Evidently he is eager to know what has taken place," I said to myself. "I do hope, however, that he'll not trot out his theories about popish plots or I am afraid I shall be rude."

I had believed but little in such things, even when talking to Morton and Robert Gascoigne; indeed I had a sort of belief, even in spite of what I had seen and heard, that the plot of getting a Romanist governess into the house to convert Eve Gascoigne only existed in the imagination of these ultra-Protestants. Now, after having been in the company of Kathleen, I had no sympathy whatever with such fancies. Kathleen was the most ardent Catholic I had ever known, and she was the noblest of God's creatures. The faith which had nourished a nature like hers, a nature to which lies and dishonour were utterly alien, could not be associated with such a contemptible plot. Whatever had become of Eve Gascoigne that theory must be ruled out of court. It was opposed to the faith which was the light of Kathleen's life.

I made my way to my room, however, and found George Fanshawe awaiting me. I thought he looked pale and thin, but the light of resolution was in his eyes.

"Well, Killigrew," he said quietly. "You have returned?"

"Yes, I got back less than an hour ago."

I passed him a box of cigars, but he took no notice of them.

"Have you discovered anything?" he asked.

"Nothing."

"Ah, Breen was not at home, then?"

"Oh, yes, he was."

"Did you see him?"

"Yes, I spent an evening at his house."

"Then you discovered that he was utterly ignorant of Eve's whereabouts?"

"Indeed," I said; "how did you find out that?"

"Because I know where she is."

I opened my eyes in astonishment.

"You know where she is!" I repeated.

"Yes, that is up to a point."

I waited for him to continue. I saw that his knowledge was by no means definite or complete, but he had evidently discovered something of importance. His face told me that plainly.

"She has gone to some sort of convent," he said, presently.

"You are sure?"

"Yes, morally sure."

"But you must have some proof?"

"Yes, I have. I have been told by one who knows."

"But where is this convent?"

"I don't know."

Cruel as it was, I could not help laughing aloud.

"I see nothing to laugh about," he said quietly.

"Forgive me, I was unkind," I replied; "but aren't you obsessed by a foolish idea? You have evidently got possessed with the thought that Eve is the victim of some Jesuit plot, and everything you hear of or discover is coloured by this idea. Such mad fancy may do for some anti-Romanist novelist, but for sane, sober men, is it not a little bit far-fetched?"

"You seem to have altered your own views somewhat," he said quietly.

"Very little," I replied. "It is true I did discuss it with you, -but I could not help being convinced even at that time that there was nothing in it. Since then I have come into contact with some ultramontane Catholics in Ireland. They are the most ardent people concerning their faith I ever met, but it would be impossible to associate people who are the children of such faith with anything in the slightest degree dishonourable."

"Well, this is dishonourable," he said in the same low distinct tones; "in fact, it is, in my opinion, devilish."

"Well, tell me what you have discovered?"

"I have seen the governess whom Morton Gascoigne kicked out of his house years ago," he replied. "I have talked with her."

In spite of myself I was interested. The evidence of this woman must be valuable.

"I need not relate the circumstances under which we met," he went on; "suffice to say, I did a great deal to create the circumstances, and they favoured my obtaining information. I knew her years ago as a woman with an almost ungovernable temper, and I turned this weakness of hers to account."

"And——?"

"She admitted that Eve left her grandfather because her faith was in danger. She declared that Eve had never ceased being a Catholic from the time she had been a governess there."

"Did she tell you that she had received a dispensation from her Church to pretend to be a Protestant in order to convert Eve to her faith?" I asked somewhat satirically, because I believed that old Morton Gascoigne's prejudices had coloured his recital of this circumstance.

"She did not deny it."

"Well, what then?"

"She was very angry with me at the time because I had gained, for the moment, the whip-hand of her. But her statement was categorical and very distinct. She declared that she had told Mr. Gascoigne that her work would never be undone, and boasted the seed she had sown in secret had taken root and had brought forth fruit."

"But Miss Grant, is she also in the plot?"

"I don't know. But I am inclined to think Miss Grant was what she professed to be."

"Then do you mean to say that Miss Gascoigne deceived Miss Grant for all those years, to say nothing of her grandfather? Think what you are urging, Fanshawe. You say you are in love with Miss Gascoigne, and that you hope to make her your wife. Can you still cherish the thought of marrying a person who for years has been a living lie?"

"You put it strongly, Killigrew," he said; "but not more strongly than I have put it to myself. What you have said, however, does not alter my determination."

Yes, I would marry Eve if she would have me. At heart she is truthfulness itself, but she is under influences which neither you nor I can understand."

I admired his unalterable faith in the woman he loved, even while I had but little sympathy with his prejudices.

"There is another thing," I went on. "You say that Miss Grant is a Protestant. How then do you explain what you told me about her visiting the priest in Ex-chester."

"I do not explain. I have been led to the conclusion that I have been mistaken. For that matter, are you sure that you saw her in the cathedral some days ago?"

"No," I said, "I am not sure; but——"

"Yes, but what?"

I did not reply. Certainly, he had given me food for thought, even although I was not inclined to agree with his conclusions.

"You say that Miss Gascoigne is in some kind of nunnery?"

"That is my conviction."

"But you must have reasons for that conviction."

"Yes, I have my reasons, but they might not convince you, therefore it is no use enlarging upon them."

"At any rate, if your convictions are based upon fact, they explode one fallacy," I urged.

"What fallacy?"

"That the Romanists have designs upon Morton Gascoigne's millions. They would know that if he knew she had done such a thing he would disinherit her. On your own showing, therefore, their interest in her is purely religious; their desire to convert her to their faith has nothing whatever to do with money considerations."

"Yes," he admitted quietly, "as far as I can see, there is no doubt about that."

"Then what do you propose doing?"

"I am going to find her, wherever she is," he replied quietly.

I could not help seeing that a change had come over him. He was more thoughtful, more reserved. What was more, I felt that he did not trust me. A barrier

had grown up between us, for while he seemed friendly, and had been anxious to see me, I could not feel that he in any sense made me his confidant.

"I am afraid I cannot help you," I said.

"Perhaps you can," was his reply. "At any rate, you can give me an account of your interview with Mr. Titus Breen."

"Yes," I replied, "I will do that with pleasure, although I am afraid it will not help you much."

I therefore repeated what had passed between the young Irishman and myself, while George Fanshawe listened quietly and intently, but never offering any remark whatever.

CHAPTER XIX

A VISIT FROM SIMON MAYNOOTH

NO sooner had the young squire left me than I wrote a long letter to Mr. Gascoigne, telling him of what I had tried to do, as well as giving an account of my conversation with Fanshawe. I am afraid it was not a very cheerful epistle, but I had to be truthful, and it was useless to buoy him up with hopes which might never be realised. This done, I tried to settle down to my parliamentary work, although I found it very hard to compose my mind into anything like a condition of consecutive thought.

A month passed away, during which time I received three letters from Morton Gascoigne, all of which spoke of vain efforts to discover the whereabouts of his granddaughter, and all of which urged me to do all that lay in my power to obtain information concerning her. Of course, I wrote as cheerfully as I could to the old man, but, as I was powerless to make any other voyages of discovery, I could send him but little comfort. The truth was that a question which lay near my heart was brought before Parliament, and I became for the time a central figure in the House of Commons. Moreover, as the question was one in which the country as a whole was greatly interested, and as I took a leading part in its advocacy, the Press devoted a great deal of space to my sayings and doings. More than one leading article was devoted to me, and I became overwhelmed with correspondence. I was acclaimed as one who, untrammelled by party ties, occupied a powerful position, so powerful that the leaders on both sides of the House had to consider my influence and my wishes in any measure that they might bring forward.

This fact added greatly to my labours, and while it gave me a position that I had never anticipated, it hindered me from devoting any time to Morton Gascoigne's affairs.

I wrote several times to Kathleen, but whether she received my letters or not I did not know. Certain it is, she never acknowledged them in any form whatever. As may be imagined, this fretted me sorely, but I comforted myself with the thought that as soon as the stress of my work was over, I would find my way to Castle-reagh Castle, her father's edicts notwithstanding.

As for George Fanshawe, I neither saw nor heard anything from him after the night on which I returned from Ireland. Of what he was doing, I knew nothing, although I felt sure he was devoting all his energies to the discovery of the whereabouts of the woman he loved.

At the end of the month, however, events bearing on that part of my history which I am trying to write as faithfully as possible happened with some rapidity. One night—it was in the beginning of June, I remember—I was sitting alone in my room in the club. The matter in which I was so much interested had, from my standpoint, been brought to a successful issue that day, and, being entirely fagged out by long and continuous labours, I had left the House early, promising myself that, after spending a quiet night alone, I would indulge in a few days' rest. I contemplated going to Ireland, even although I had been strictly forbidden to seek an audience with the woman the picture of whose face was ever before me. I had barely finished dinner, however, when a servant entered bearing a card.

"Simon Maynooth," I read.

"He's just outside, sir, and says that he wants to see you petikler, sir."

"I told you I did not wish to see any one to-night, James," I said somewhat severely.

"I know, sir; but—but—well, sir, he seemed very pressing, sir, and said he was sure that if I brought his card you would see him."

I felt sure the man had been bribed, but although

I felt angry at having my peace disturbed, I decided to tell him to show my visitor in. I reflected that he had been of great assistance to me at my election, and more than that, I felt, although I did not like admitting it, even to myself, that I was anxious not to offend him.

He came in very quietly and almost apologetically.

"I am almost ashamed of myself," he said. "You have been working like a galley-slave these last few weeks, and I know you must be worn out."

"I have a good constitution," I said.

"Yes; and, upon my word, you do not look any the worse for your laborious days and weary nights. Ah, but the man who has a physique and a constitution like yours has a tremendous pull over the weaker men."

I did not speak, but fell to studying his face. I thought he looked slightly more robust than on the night when he first visited me. He was faultlessly attired, and looked more like the careful, well-preserved lawyer than ever.

"Well," he said at length, "I have come to congratulate you."

"On what?"

"On fulfilling your promises."

"What promises?"

At this he laughed quietly. "The promises of your youth, the promises which the calibre of your speeches at Blenheim made months ago. Do you look on me as a vain man?"

"A vain man?" I repeated. "That depends."

"Parliamentary caution," he said, drawing off his gloves and placing them in his hat. "Yes, in a way, I am a vain man. I am vain enough to believe I am a good judge of men, that I have the power to measure a man's capabilities and powers, that I can prophesy correctly as to his future. And my vanity is gratified. I prophesied things about you, Mr. Killigrew. I saw, when I met you last, that my prophecies would be fulfilled. But not so soon—not so soon. Have you seen

this?" and he handed me one of the most influential of the evening newspapers.

"I have not seen an evening newspaper," I replied.

"No? A very correct attitude for a rising politician. There's an article devoted to you."

"Indeed?"

"It enlarges on your phenomenal success. It speaks of you as one who, six months ago, was utterly unknown, and who now figures so largely in the public eye. Most politicians have to wait longer for recognition, my young friend. To be the leader of a movement, to be discussed in journals all over the country, and to be able practically to hold the balance between two historic parties in six months is simply phenomenal. Some have said that it is political suicide to adopt an independent position in Parliament; but you have proved the contrary. This article speaks of you as a man to be reckoned with; one who, because of the peculiar constitution of the House and because of the position you have made, can compel the Government to give serious attention to any question you may espouse."

"Surely that paper never says such a thing?"

"Not in so many words, but in effect. I congratulate you."

He sat back in his chair and closed his eyes, as though he had nothing more to say.

I watched his face closely. I noted the thin lips, which, although drawn down at the corners, suggested a somewhat cynical smile. His presence was not at all pleasing to me. Perhaps this was because, although he appeared to be frank, I still had the impression that he was secretive and mysterious, and, in spite of myself, I felt somewhat uncomfortable.

"I think you told me you did not smoke?"

"No, thank you, I will not smoke."

Again there was a silence between us.

"I wonder what Sir John Bridgetown thinks of you by this time?" he said presently.

"Most likely he has forgotten me."

"I do not think so. He was terribly cut up on the

day the votes were counted. The surprise must have been almost as great as the disappointment."

"He did not realise that the literature for which you were responsible would be so effective."

I said this almost involuntarily. I did not mean to say it, and I was sorry that I had tacitly admitted his part in my election.

"Ah, you remember my interference, do you?" he said quietly. "Ah well, many men would have forgotten it. Promises made at elections do not weigh much, as a rule. But you are an exception to the rule—yes, you are an exception. I was sure you would be at the time."

"You are thinking of the promises I made to you?"

Again it seemed to me as though the words were dragged from me, and I was angry with myself as a consequence.

"Did you promise me anything? Ah yes, when I come to think about it, you did—yes, you did. You gave me a sort of *carte blanche*, didn't you? and I told you that the time might come when I might take you at your word. Yes, I remember."

He sighed as he spoke, and then put his hand before his mouth as if to stifle a yawn.

"I suppose you have come to claim the fulfilment of the promise?" I said.

He was silent for several seconds. Then he said quietly:

"People who know me look upon me as a solitary, silent individual. Well, perhaps I am. But in spite of all they say, I am not a misanthrope—no, I am not a misanthrope. I like the society of my fellows—at least, some of them. I like to see people happy, too, especially young people."

I was silent, for I could not understand what was in his mind.

"Especially young people," he repeated. "Your career has opened up wonderfully, Mr. Killigrew, and in course of time you may be what is called a great man; but I am not sure you are a happy man."

"I think I am," I said.

"Completely so?"

"Who is completely happy in this world?" I asked.

"Yes; but I do not think you are happy even as happiness goes even in a somewhat unhappy world. Shall I tell you why?"

"It would be very interesting to know."

"First of all, you are unhappy because you are in love."

I gave a start. I think I was a little angry.

"Forgive me," he went on. "I am a much older man than you—very much. How old should you think I am, now?"

"Impossible to say."

"Parliamentary caution again. Anyhow, I am getting an old man, and therefore may be forgiven for speaking plainly. Do you know, Mr. Killigrew, I am afraid your love is hopeless."

I did not speak. How did this man know of my affair?

"I happened to come across a man named Michael Castlereagh not long since," he went on, "and presently I discovered that he knew you. Michael Castlereagh has very strict notions about religion, Mr. Killigrew."

"Well, what has that to do with me?"

I know I was rude, but it seemed to me that the man had been interesting himself in me in a most unwarrantable way.

"It has this to do, my young friend: I am afraid he will never consent to grant you the desire of your heart, unless——"

"Unless what?" I interrupted, when I saw him hesitate.

"Unless certain influences can be—— But there, that leads me on to something else. I think I told you I was a Catholic?"

"Yes."

"I will tell you why. I, like you, was brought up a Protestant; but I never found peace, joy, satisfaction,

till I was received into the bosom of the Holy Church. It was then that I found a refuge in the storm and the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. Not until then did I find an answer to my questionings, or intellectual peace. But when the faith became mine, all became mine."

"I see," I said, "Mr. Castlereagh told you of our interview."

"He and I are old friends," he replied.

Both of us were silent for a few seconds. Then he went on:

"I should say your career is safe, Mr. Killigrew, but the two things to make you a happy man are, first, the faith and, second, the hand of the woman you love."

"You seem to think that the second is impossible," I said.

I was angry with myself for letting this escape me, for it seemed like sacrilege to talk of my love for Kathleen before this man, but when the words were uttered I could not withdraw them.

"Perhaps the two go together."

Again he put his hand before his mouth, as if to stifle a yawn, but I saw that he watched me keenly.

"Pardon me," he went on. "Do not imagine that the faith should be embraced because of—of—any reward whatever. No man should embrace it unless he is convinced that it is the only faith, the only way of full salvation. No, no; the faith admits of no conditions or compromises. It is final, it is absolute, it is everything. Moreover, it must not be thought that because I mentioned the two things together that I would have you accept it in order to win earthly happiness. The words slipped out, that is all. All the same, your complete happiness depends on it, Mr. Killigrew."

"You came here to-night to convert me to the Catholic faith?" I suggested.

"Ah, if I only could—if I only could!" he cried. "Did you ever give the subject close attention, my

young friend? Have you ever attended our Catholic services?"

"Yes, I have been to several during the last few weeks."

"Where?" he cried eagerly.

"To the cathedral here at Westminster and to the Oratory."

"And were they not beautiful? Did they not lead you into the realm of the spiritual, the mysterious, the Divine?"

"Some of the singing was very good."

"But the services themselves did not impress you? Surely they did?"

"I don't know," I replied; and I spoke truly, for although I went with the desire to be convinced of the beauty of the Catholic faith, I came away with a sense of the unreality of everything. I had seen gaudy ceremonials, I had witnessed ancient rites; but nothing had sounded the depths of life or made me feel that the mind of the great life of the Man of Nazareth was understood.

"Ah, that is because you have not been instructed; it is because you have not been able to get rid of the Protestant traditions of your country."

"That may be possible," I replied.

"Still, you will never be happy without the faith."

The words were simple enough, and yet I could not help feeling that they contained a double meaning.

"Besides," he went on, "you belong to the Church. Was not your mother a Catholic? And was she not a good woman?"

"The memory of my mother has always been sacred to me," I replied.

"My young friend," he said eagerly, "'the Spirit and the bride say, Come.' Ah, I wish I were wise, and could instruct you; but—but—look here, I know a most delightful man—a scholar, a gentleman, a priest. Let me arrange for a meeting between you?"

I shook my head. "No," I said, "not yet."

"But you'll think about it?"

"Yes, I shall think about it; but would you mind dropping that subject, Mr. Maynooth. I don't think I am quite in the mood to discuss it further."

"By all means we'll drop it, my friend. All the same, it is one of the subjects that won't be dropped. You'll never find the secret of life unless you come to us—never. I have been where you are now, and I know. But, as you say, we'll drop it; besides, I really came to speak to you about something else."

I waited for him to go on.

"Some time ago we were talking about your election at Blenheim. Do you know what drew me to you then?"

"Perhaps the fact that I was fighting a seemingly hopeless battle."

"Your breadth of view; your large charity; your desire that all religious creeds should have equal chance. Oh yes, I see you are thinking of the Protestant tradition, that we Catholics do not possess a large charity. Of course, things were done in the old days which we, in these modern days, must deprecate, and you would favour anything that would destroy sectarian strife or bitterness?"

"Certainly," I replied.

"You referred just now to the—what shall we call it?—the *carte blanche* promise you gave me at the election. May I presume upon that promise so far as to meet a few friends at my flat to-morrow morning?"

"I am very tired," I said, "and had looked forward to a few days' rest."

"This is very important," he said significantly, "very important. More things are bound up in it than you may believe. Whether Michael Castlereagh will be there or not, I can't tell. Certainly, I have asked him to come. It will be an informal gathering. I think Gabriel O'Hara will be there, and a few others. As I said, it will be quite informal; but I feel sure you will regret it if you are unable to be present."

"If it is only a morning meeting, I can get away in the afternoon," I reflected; besides, and although I

was angry as I thought of it, the man had made me want to comply with his wishes.

“Very well, I will come,” I said. “What time?”

“Eleven o’clock sharp,” and then, without waiting, except to hold out his hand for a formal good night, he left the room.

CHAPTER XX

A STRANGE MEETING

THE next morning I made my way to Mr. Simon Maynooth's flat in Westminster, and was immediately shown into the room I had previously visited. Although I arrived on the stroke of eleven several others were present, and I judged that my coming had made the company who had been expected, complete.

No formal introductions took place, although, with the exception of Simon Maynooth and two others, all were strangers to me. These two were Michael Castle-reagh and Gabriel O'Hara, who had introduced me to Kathleen Castlereagh. The latter held out his hand to me and spoke with great cordiality, but Kathleen's father seemed to be oblivious of my presence.

For the first quarter of an hour matters were discussed which, to say the most of them, were of utter indifference to me, and then suddenly Michael Castlereagh rose to his feet and spoke.

"I go back to Ireland to-night," he said, and I thought there was an angry tone in his voice, "and I should like to ask before I go whether anything has been done, or will be done by our Irish Members of Parliament on behalf of our faith?"

I saw several exchange glances, and I thought that more than one present turned his eyes towards me.

"There is only one cause for me," he went on. "All other causes are swallowed up in that. The welfare of Ireland is wrapped up in that. Years ago I dedicated my life to it, and I shall work for it as long as I live."

To me there was something incongruous in the way he spoke, and yet the others seemed to regard his words as natural.

"From what I can find out, the thing I have in my heart is but little regarded in this country; but with thousands of us in Ireland it is a matter of vital importance. For the present it is of more importance than the independence of our country, because while things remain as they are our faith is insulted, and Ireland and her faith are indissoluble. That insult to our faith must be removed. The Sovereign of England must no longer be compelled to insult the Catholic Church. For years the promise has been, 'Something shall be done.' But when is the promise to be fulfilled?"

He sat down at this, and a dead silence followed.

Then Gabriel O'Hara rose. "We have been working for years," he said, "but we have not been able to persuade any Government to deal with the matter. Both Liberals and Conservatives have been afraid to make it a Government question, and until it becomes a Government question nothing will be done. A private Bill would be useless. Suppose, for the sake of argument, that I, to-morrow, were able to bring in a Bill for altering or destroying the King's Declaration; it would fall to the ground. Each party is afraid of offending the Protestant feeling of the nation. The Protestants would say it was a move by the Romanists, and as a consequence they would fight like dogs. As far as I can see, our only hope is that some influential member, one who is regarded as a Protestant, shall take up the question and bring a Bill before the House. If, for example, our friend, Mr. Kerry Killigrew, could see his way to do this, he would accomplish what is impossible to us. He occupies an independent position, and yet he has a big following. We know what he has just accomplished, and I feel sure that he could do as much on this question. Public feeling is ripe for it, and he is the man to voice public feeling."

The whole company turned towards me as he spoke. I saw now why Simon Maynooth had been so anxious for me to be present at this gathering, and why he had uttered words the night before that seemed like a threat.

"Pardon me, but I am not sure what you want me to do," I said, and waited for an answer.

For a moment there was an awkward silence, and then Simon Maynooth spoke in slow, measured tones.

"This is an informal gathering," he said quietly. "We are not associated with any political party, but in the main we are Catholics. I may safely assert that. I have known Mr. Killigrew for some time. What struck me in his election speeches was his desire to do away with tests—religious tests of all sorts. Some tell me I am not a very orthodox Catholic, but he appeared to me as a man after my own heart. Mr. Killigrew, I will be perfectly frank with you. We want to make it possible that the Sovereign of England shall be relieved of religious tests on ascending the throne. Why should the Sovereign be a member of what is called the Established Church? Why should he not be what is called a Nonconformist or a Catholic? Why must any section of the community be insulted by being treated as though it were inferior to another section? When we regard the British Empire as a whole, I imagine there are less Episcopalians than there are Nonconformists or Catholics. Why, then, should the occupant of the British throne be obliged to belong to one section of the great Christian Church?"

"And what would you have?" I asked.

"We would have it made possible that the King or Queen should have liberty in such a matter. That the Declaration and Coronation oaths should be annulled."

"It could not be carried," I said.

"Such a Bill would carry the Free Church Members," he replied; "it would carry the Irish Members, it would carry the Labour Members. It would receive greater support than you think, and—and you are the man to introduce such a Bill."

I must confess I had never thought of the matter in this light. Moreover, it seemed so broad-minded and charitable that I was impressed favourably.

"You see," went on Simon Maynooth, "you occupy a unique position. You are a member of no party. You

have gained the reputation of being a safe and wise man, and the very fact of your having obtained a considerable following in the House makes both Government and Opposition pay great heed to any cause that you advocate. No one could speak of you as a bigoted Catholic, while the Catholics would support you to a man."

"But I thought that your main objection was the language in which the King's Declaration was couched," I urged.

"Of course we object to that," he replied, "and that is the open contention of the Irish party; but some of us are broader-minded. We maintain that both Non-conformists and Catholics are insulted by the fact that the reigning Sovereign must belong to any particular sect. Why should an Episcopalian be regarded as having privileges which cannot belong to a Congregationalist or a Methodist, or a Catholic? Why must the King be an Episcopalian and not a Presbyterian or a Baptist, or a Wesleyan. The Sovereign reigns over the whole people, and not any particular section of it. Why, then, should one particular church claim precedence?"

I looked around the room and saw what appeared to me a strange expression on several faces.

"The man who leads in such a cause will earn the nation's gratitude," said Michael Castlereagh; "the man who wins in such a cause, why—why—nothing should be impossible to him—nothing."

For the first time during the meeting he turned his face towards me, and our eyes met. My heart beat wildly, for if his words meant anything, they meant that Kathleen's hand was to be the reward of my action. At that moment I saw no difficulty in doing what had been asked of me. It was true there seemed no particular reason for bringing forward such a Bill immediately, but the plea that Simon Maynooth had made was reasonable, and it appealed to me as just and convincing.

"If," went on Michael Castlereagh, "Mr. Kerry Killigrew can give his promise to work for such a Bill,

to give his whole heart to it, I shall go back to Ireland a happy man. He is the man to do such a piece of work, and if he succeeds, it would in many ways be the crown and joy of his life."

Again I saw a double meaning in his words, and I longed to give the promise he required. Yet I did not give it. Why, I could not say, save that a kind of fear possessed me. From the silence in the room it was evident that all eagerly awaited my answer, and I saw that Simon Maynooth's eyes were fixed upon me.

"This we know," said that gentleman presently: "when Mr. Kerry Killigrew makes a promise, he will fulfil it. I know he regards the pledges he made at his election, as well as those given *immediately afterwards*, as sacred."

Of course, I saw what was in his mind, and for the first time a feeling of antagonism came into my heart. In spite of the flattering words which had been spoken, I felt as though I were being used as a kind of tool; as a necessary factor in a carefully thought out scheme.

"What has been said appeals to me very strongly," I replied at length. "If there is one thing I hate, it is that distinctions should be made by the State between men who conscientiously hold different faiths. Therefore, I feel myself with you. But I have given little or no thought to this particular question. I am not prepared to meet the objections which will certainly be raised. All I can say at present is, that I will give the matter careful consideration, and then, if my present impressions and feelings are confirmed, I will do what you ask."

I did not mean to make the promise contained in my last words, but they seemed drawn from me. I felt as though Simon Maynooth's eyes, which were fixed on me, had some mesmeric power.

The gathering broke up immediately afterwards, and I was about to leave the room with the others when Simon Maynooth came to my side.

"This morning's work means more to you than you imagine, my young friend," he said. "It has often been said in the past that fame, fortune, and a woman's love lay in the point of the soldier's sword. I am inclined to believe, my friend, that all you covet most, lies in the fulfilment of the promise you have just made."

"And if I feel myself unable to go forward in the matter?" I retorted.

"Then I wouldn't give two straws for your chances," he replied. "By the way, there is some one in the next room to whom I would like to introduce you. Can you spare five minutes?"

"I dare say," I replied, looking around in the hope that I should have a chance of speaking to Michael Castlereagh.

"My friend Michael is gone," said Maynooth, with a curious smile, as if he divined my thoughts. "But be patient, my friend; be patient—and faithful."

A few minutes later I followed Maynooth into an adjoining apartment, and was immediately met by a man in clerical attire. I saw at a glance that he was young—scarcely older than myself. Certainly, he was not thirty years of age, and might easily be much younger. He was a striking-looking man. His large, brilliant eyes and well-shaped head spoke volumes as to his mental calibre, while his clear-cut, handsome face suggested a frank, honourable gentleman.

"I am glad to meet you," he said, when Mr. Maynooth had introduced me. "I have for weeks been a close student of your doings, and I would like to congratulate you on what you have done. Not that I am much of a politician," he added, with a smile, "and, as a rule, men interest me far more than movements."

There was an inexpressible charm in Father Vernon's face, and never had I heard a sweeter voice. In five minutes the man had captivated me. His laugh was the laugh of a boy; his heart seemed as sunny as the heart of a youth who had never known trouble. He told humorous stories with the utmost gusto, and revealed

throughout all his love of fun, a kind, tender heart. Never before had I met a man who so impressed me. I had been greatly drawn to George Fanshawe, but I fell in love with Father Vernon. I forgot the flight of time as we spoke together, for I quickly discovered that I had come into contact with a student, and a man of no ordinary intellectual calibre. His large, grey eyes had a positive fascination for me. Not only did they suggest a more than ordinarily endowed nature, but they inspired love. Sometimes they sparkled with vivacity and joy, and again there was a look in them which made me inexpressibly sad. I said just now that his heart seemed as sunny as the heart of a youth who had never known trouble, but as I think of his eyes I must correct that. They were wonderful speaking eyes, and they told of things beyond my comprehension; they revealed a world of sympathy and yearning; they were eyes which told of unutterable longing, of vision, of infinite compassion, of tragedy. But only at times. During the greater part of our interview they shone with merriment and a great love for all that was best in life.

How long we spoke together I was not aware, neither did I take any heed to Simon Maynooth, who sat silently listening to every word that was uttered. Presently, however, that gentleman broke in upon our conversation.

"It is lunch-time," he said, "and I have had places set for you both in the next room."

"It surely can't be lunch-time?" I cried.

"It is half-past one."

"And I meant——" I hesitated here, for if I had said what was in my heart I should have said, "to be on the way to Ireland."

"I dare say you meant a great many things," said Maynooth. "But I knew my men. I was sure that when you two met you would have a lot to say to each other. That was why I took the liberty of ordering lunch for you."

Father Vernon laughed like a boy.

"I call this a plot, Mr. Killigrew," he cried, "just a

Jesuitical plot. Still, as the result of it seems all right, and as I have not the slightest objection to lunch, I propose that we accept."

I assented, although I confess it was with reluctance. I had never yet partaken of Maynooth's hospitality, and in spite of the fact that he interested me, I hesitated about doing so on this occasion. Had I been alone with him, I should certainly have refused, but I could not resist the temptation of spending a little time longer in Father Vernon's company. It was not that his conversation threw any special light upon any subject which he discussed, but his personality had such a rare charm that I desired to remain by his side.

"Do you know," said Simon Maynooth, when we had sat down to lunch, "that Father Vernon has one of the finest libraries of any clergyman in London. I should like you to see it."

"Maynooth is too kind," said Father Vernon. "It is not often that he exaggerates, but on this occasion he does. Still, I have a good library—that is to say, I have the custody of it."

I looked at him questioningly.

"I have no right to keep such a library to myself," he said, "and so I throw it open to my fellow priests. I call myself its custodian, that is all."

"Then your fellow priests have free access to your house?" I suggested.

"Oh, yes; why not? The truth is, I am a bit of a fraud. Of course, my family is a very old one. Some branches of it are ardent Protestants; mine, on the other hand, has always been Catholic, and, as chance would have it, my branch has been always, what the world calls, rich. As a consequence, and I say it with a kind of shame, I cannot repeat the words of St. Peter, 'Silver and gold have I none.'"

"But can you say, with him, to the lame man, 'Rise up and walk'?"

A look of unutterable yearning came into his eyes. "I hope so, I pray so," he replied; "and yet——" He hesitated a few seconds, and then went on: "I'll discuss

that with you some other time, Mr. Killigrew; but to return to my story, when my father died, the library which he prized so highly came to me, and it is a very good one. There are many rare books in it. Would you like to come and see it?"

"Do, Mr. Killigrew," urged Mr. Maynooth. "You are a lover of books; besides, the library will be of immense service to you. It will give you all the information you need on the question we were discussing before you met Father Vernon. It will help to answer all the questions which may be asked, as well as to meet all opposition to the Bill you have promised to introduce."

"That's going too far," I replied. "I promised to introduce no Bill."

"But you promised to do so provided your present impressions are confirmed, so I regard the matter as settled."

When we parted, an hour later, I had promised to visit Father Vernon, but I did not give him any date, as I wanted to keep myself free to go to Ireland.

"You like Father Vernon?" said Maynooth, keeping me back for a minute after the other had left the house.

"Very much."

"His society will be very congenial to you," said Maynooth quietly, "especially as you may feel lonely without it. By the way, Michael Castlereagh tells me that his daughter has left home for a few days. Good afternoon."

His words fell upon me like a blow. In a way I could not understand, the man seemed to read my thoughts and to frustrate my purposes.

When I reached my room at the club I saw a note marked "Urgent," and which, the servant told me, had just been brought. On opening it, I read the following words:

"As Mr. Killigrew values his future happiness, and everything that is dear to him in life, he is besought not

to leave London for the present. He is also urged to hold himself in readiness to avail himself of an opportunity which will surely occur whereby the request made to him this morning may be explained. Mr. Killigrew is also urged to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the story of the spider and the fly which was brought before his notice some time ago."

CHAPTER XXI

A VISIT FROM MORTON GASCOIGNE

I EXAMINED the writing closely, and then, on taking the slips of paper from my pocket-book which had been sent me on two different occasions, I saw that each missive was written by the same hand. Who, I wondered, was the writer? To say the least of it, the three communications, when taken together, were disturbing. The first, received at the inn at Blenheim on the same night that Simon Maynooth visited me, warned me against him; the second, containing the picture of the spider and the fly, came on the night when this man had first invited me to his flat; this letter which had just arrived had also come immediately after I had spent some time with the man against whom the first letter warned me.

Was this a coincidence, or was there some purpose behind it all? At any rate, the writer evidently desired to warn me against Simon Maynooth, and was probably his enemy. Not that I thought the less of the man. I had no faith in the warnings conveyed through anonymous letters. To say the least of it, to stab a man in the back in such a way was a cowardly thing to do. And yet the three letters, taken together, disturbed me. Who wrote them? And what was the purpose of the writer? The handwriting was that of a woman; every letter bore evidence of it. Then Simon Maynooth had, by some means, made an enemy of this woman. But why should I be singled out as the person to be warned against him? The woman must be interested in my welfare even as she was opposed to him.

I rang for a servant.

"James," I said, when he appeared, "do you know who brought this letter?"

"No, sir. It was taken in by the hall-porter, and sent up to me by a boy."

"Will you go and inquire of the hall-porter who brought it?"

A few minutes later the man appeared again, but he could give me no information of value. The letter was brought by a messenger boy, but beyond that nothing was known.

"Thank you, James," I said, and then fell to thinking. The porter was an intelligent fellow, and I determined to show him the envelope, and to request him, if another letter came for me in the same handwriting, to try and find out who sent it.

Whatever else was certain, it was clear that my unknown correspondent not only watched my goings out and my comings in, but she knew of what was taking place in Simon Maynooth's flat. She also regarded him as a man of evil intent. She warned me against him on the night of his first visit, and her second communication represented him as the spider, while I was the fly. Yes, I must, if possible, find out who the writer was, as well as her purpose in addressing herself to me.

Presently I began to connect her with the disappearance of Eve Gascoigne. Why, I did not know. But it occurred to me that she might possibly know something of her whereabouts. Perhaps this was because I had begun to upbraid myself for not taking more decisive steps to pursue my search for her. I had promised old Morton Gascoigne to do my best to find her, and yet since my return from Ireland I had done practically nothing. It is true I had, in a desultory sort of way, given the matter some attention, but my mind had been so full of Kathleen Castlereagh, and of my affairs in Parliament, that I had ceased to take any definite action in the matter. I had consoled myself that George Fanshawe was giving his whole time and attention to it, and that he would be far more likely to succeed than I. All the same, since the night of my return from Ireland I

had seen nothing of Fanshawe and knew nothing of the success which attended his labours.

"But I will," I said to myself. "I shall have some little leisure now, and if Simon Maynooth is right, I should not be able to see Kathleen if I went to Ireland. I'll ring up Fanshawe, and, if possible, arrange for an interview with him."

Without delaying the matter, I found my way to the telephone, and finding that he was still staying at his club, I asked the servant to tell Mr. Fanshawe to let me know when he would be at liberty to see me.

I had scarcely done this when I was informed that a gentleman wished to see me, and a minute later I found myself face to face with old Morton Gascoigne.

There was an anxious expression in his eyes, but otherwise he looked just the same as when I had first met him. He stood erect in spite of his more than four-score years, while his every movement suggested alertness and vigour.

"I happened to be in London, Killigrew," he said, "and called here on the off-chance that I might find you. I have better luck than I expected."

"Come to my room," I said heartily; and noted with admiration how briskly he walked by my side.

I was delighted to see him, even although I felt guilty of apathy in relation to the question that lay so near his heart. Besides, in spite of his great age, he seemed to inspire me with new energy, and he made me think of the sweet air of the country.

"I am an old-fashioned man, Killigrew," he said, when we were alone, "and while I congratulate you on the position you have taken, I don't know that I am altogether in sympathy with your views. You've been very busy, I expect?"

"Yes," I replied; "the affair has naturally meant a great deal of work."

"Of course, I could see that. Well, I congratulate you on having obtained such an influence in the debating club which goes under the name of the House of Commons. But there, nature has endowed you with

some brains, and you have the Celtic gift of speech. When I saw what you were doing I knew that you—you could not be helping me. Indeed, I had no right to expect it.”

“I have not been altogether idle,” I said apologetically, “but I’ve discovered nothing. Of course, I wrote and told you what Fanshawe said.”

“Yes,” he assented; and his great head sunk upon his chest.

“Have you heard from Fanshawe since?”

“No; not a word.”

“And you—have you discovered anything?”

“I don’t know. I think not.”

I looked at him questioningly.

“Sometimes I have fancied I have happened upon a clue, but I am certain of nothing. She has left me, and, since the letter you saw, I have heard nothing from her.”

“But you have taken steps?”

“Yes,” he replied, with a sigh. “I have done all that a man of my age may do. I have even swallowed my pride, and have set some paid spies and sleuth-hounds at work. Two private detectives, the cleverest men in London, I am told, have been at work for weeks.”

“Well?”

“Nothing, nothing. They say they have no definite data. Still, they pretend to be at work, and certainly they are spending my money.”

“Do you know that I rung up Fanshawe only a few minutes ago,” I said. “I have made arrangements to see him as soon as possible.”

“Yes,” said the old man, “Fanshawe is revealing qualities which I did not think he possessed. I say, Killigrew, are you much pressed for time?”

“No,” I replied; “as it happens I have nothing pressing for a few days. Why?”

He turned round on me suddenly. “You are not in any way in league with the Romanists, are you?” he said.

“What do you mean?” I asked.

“Oh, nothing much, and—well, I hate anonymous

letters; but I thought you wouldn't mind my mentioning it. I got this the other day."

He passed me a scrap of paper as he spoke. It contained the following words:

"Mr. Kerry Killigrew is an honest man, but he is in danger of being used as a tool by the Romanists. They recognise the influence he is gaining, and are seeking to use it for all it is worth. If they succeed in capturing him he will be worse than useless to you as a private detective."

It was the same writing. Evidently the woman believed that Simon Maynooth, against whom she had first warned me, had sinister designs against me, and believed that he might succeed in them.

"Do you know who wrote this?"

"No. It came by post a few days ago. The envelope bore a London postmark." And he looked at me steadily as he spoke.

"Do you know what the writer means?" he asked.

I was silent for a moment. I tried to think what it meant. In spite of myself I seemed to be drawn into a network of mysteries.

"Is there any truth in this?" he persisted.

"In the sense in which you evidently read it, none at all," I replied; "but I will be absolutely frank with you. I have little or no sympathy with your anti-Romanist prejudices. I am not in the slightest degree in league with the Catholics, but I believe in giving them fair play, and I do not believe in imputing unworthy motives to them."

The old man kept his keen, penetrating eyes upon me, and I wondered what he was thinking.

"I have told George Fanshawe exactly what I have told you," I continued.

"Then you do not believe that they have had anything to do with Eve's disappearance?"

"No, I do not." I said this a little warmly, for I thought his attitude unfair.

"Of course, you have not turned Romanist yourself?"

"No," I replied, "I have not; nevertheless, I do not see any 'of course' in the matter. My mother was a Romanist, for that matter, and there was never a purer woman who walked God's earth than she. Never one who hated lies more, never one who loved goodness more."

"No one denies the piety of many Romanists," said the old man quietly. "No one doubts that the Roman Church has given to the world its saints and its heroes. But I still say 'of course, you have not turned Romanist.'"

"Why?"

"Because you possess what I think Burke used to call the British passion for liberty.' You believe in freedom of mind; you claim the right to think for yourself on religion as well as other subjects. But I am not going to argue about religion with you just now. For the moment my chief interest is in finding my little maid. And I want to ask this, Killigrew: If the Romanists have nothing to do with her disappearance, will you explain Eve's history? You remember the story of the governess who came to my house as a Protestant in order to pervert her. You also remember her conversation with Fanshawe only a few weeks ago; she declared that Eve remained a Catholic all through the years Miss Grant was with us, and that she left me because she feared I should rob her of her faith."

"And yet Fanshawe, who at first declared that Miss Grant was also a Catholic, had to confess afterwards that she wasn't. If you were deceived in this, why may you not be deceived in other matters?"

"Even if I cannot explain everything, is that a reason why I should doubt my eyes and ears?" he replied. "I put it to you, Killigrew, who are no fool, supposing you were in my place, knowing all I know, what would you think?"

"What do you know?" I asked almost sullenly, for I was angered at the thought that the faith which Kathleen held so dearly should be regarded as responsible for something that appeared to me cruel and dastardly.

"I know what I have told you," he answered quietly. "I feel sure that the woman Lakeman received a dispensation to be a living lie in my house that she might pervert my little Eve. I know that, whatever Miss Grant may be, the poison which the woman Lakeman instilled has never been eradicated, and that Eve was led to deceive me for years. I know that, unless the woman Lakeman told another lie, Eve left home because her Romanist faith was in danger. I know that Titus Breen was used as an instrument to get her away."

"Have you any information on that question except what I told you?" I asked.

"I have," he replied. "The private detectives of whom I told you, if they have done nothing else, have proved that. They have also proved, and without a shadow of a doubt, that Breen is the tool of some priests, and is in their pay. Now then, have I no reason for believing that it is for religious purposes that Eve has been stolen from me?"

"You must at least admit, even if your conclusions are true, that it was for no sordid motives, at all events," I said. "If the priests have done this, it must be only for the purpose of saving her soul. They would know that if she became a Romanist she would no longer be your heiress."

He shook his head.

"I'm baffled there, I'll admit," he said.

"Because," I went on, "if money were their motive, their plan would have been for her to have kept on deceiving you until your death, and then to have become the possessor of your property."

"Whatever views I may have about that," he replied, "am I justified in believing that the priests are at the back of all this?"

I was silent, for, much as I might dislike his conclusions, I could not deny them.

"Do you think it wrong for them to try to make converts?" I broke out presently.

"I think they have a right to do it if they can," he replied; "but I think also that every Protestant has not

only the right, but that it is his bounden duty to fight every encroachment of Rome."

"Why? Are not Romanists Christians as well as we?"

"Doubtless many of them are; but Rome, as a system, is demoralising. And more, if Rome became a power in England, all freedom would be gone. Liberty of mind and soul would be destroyed, and then woe be to us as a people."

I shrugged my shoulders half scornfully, for the old man made me angry.

"There is not a country in the world, in which the Roman Church has had power, where she has not crushed out freedom," continued the old man, "and, because she has crushed out freedom, she has been the curse of the nations. I grant you that they have the right to win converts, and to gain power in England if they can. I go further, it is natural that they should try to do so. Their power in most of the so-called Roman Catholic countries is becoming less and less. In France and Italy the Church is ceasing to count. Those countries know what Rome really stands for, and have taken steps accordingly; but we in England have forgotten, and so they are fighting like grim death to gain a foothold here. Years ago Pius IX. sent Wiseman to take ecclesiastical possession of the country, and ever since then they have used all their machinery to conquer us. It is their last hope. If they fail here, the Roman Church is doomed; but if they gain power here, and rule here as they rule in Spain, we are doomed."

"Excuse me if I call that last remark of yours nonsense," I replied. "And more, I see very little Christian charity in this suspicion of Rome. I don't believe in speaking unkind words about her."

"Calling names is no use, anyhow," replied Morton Gascoigne quietly, "but facts are facts. I put it to you, Killigrew, what liberty should we as a nation possess if Rome gained power? Have you ever studied the matter? Rome demands every liberty and every privilege here in England, but directly she is in power she refuses liberty to others."

"You are thinking of the old persecuting days," I answered. "But those days are over. I know a good many Roman Catholics, and they are just as charitable and just as kind-hearted as Protestants."

"Very likely. But I am thinking of the Church as a Church. Do you know that when the Pope had power in Italy—that is, up to 1870—Protestant services were forbidden in Rome, and no English Bible, or translation of it, was allowed there? Do you know that in Spain the Church is fighting like grim death against allowing Protestants having a building that looks like a Church or advertising their services in any way? Do you know that Protestants are constantly suffering the most abominable of persecutions there? What would they be likely to do in England if they gained power?"

"But this is all morbid fancy," I cried, "and I fail to see why unworthy motives should be attributed to the Catholics and unkind things said about them."

"I deny that unkind things are said about Catholics as Catholics," replied the old man. "But even if there were, is it any wonder? Take the King's Declaration, for example. The Romanists profess to be very sensitive because the King was obliged to say that the Mass was superstition and idolatry. But do they show any sensitiveness about our feelings? Read the declaration which any Protestant has to make on being received into the Romanist Church; read what is constantly being said to-day about Protestants; think of the curses by which we have been cursed all through the centuries. Do Romanists ever express regret for them? Mark you, I have every respect for Romanists as Romanists; but as I love my country, as I love liberty, I must fight till I die against allowing the Roman system to have power here in our beloved land."

"They only seek to extend their religion, as they have a perfect right to do."

"They are seeking to possess dominant political power," he replied.

"Prove it."

"I can prove it from their history, and so can you

if you will take the trouble to read. Besides, what does this outcry against the King's Declaration mean? They are wanting to make it possible for a sovereign to be a Romanist."

"Well, and why not?" I asked.

He was about to reply when there was a knock at the door.

A few seconds later George Fanshawe entered the room.

CHAPTER XXII

THE FOURTH LETTER

GEORGE FANSHAWE'S eyes lit up with pleasure when he saw Morton Gascoigne, but I thought he greeted me rather coldly.

"You rang me up at my club and asked me to call," he said, as if in explanation of his presence.

"Yes," I replied; "I have a little leisure now, and I wanted to know how you were getting on and if I could assist you in your search."

He was silent for a few seconds; then he said, "Of course, I should be glad of your help, but I am afraid you will not offer it."

"Why?" I asked, not without a touch of resentment in my voice.

"Well, to be absolutely frank," he said quietly, "every inquiry I have made and every ray of light that has shone on this business has gone to prove that the priests have got hold of Eve, and that she is kept away from her grandfather for religious reasons, and that, if we are to get hold of her, we shall have to fight these gentlemen."

"I tell you frankly I don't believe this," I replied; "but, if it is so—what then?"

"Of course, I may have been misinformed," said George Fanshawe.

"Probably," I said. "I could tell you for certain if you tell me what your information has been; but one cannot deal with vague suggestions. Besides, there is an imputation in your remarks which, to say the least of it, is not pleasant. You seem to think that if Miss Gascoigne is kept from returning to her grandfather for religious reasons I can help you no further."

George Fanshawe was silent.

"Come, Fanshawe," I went on, "deal with me frankly."

"Very well," he replied, "I will be brutally frank. If I am wrong, I will apologise with all sincerity. But I am given to understand that you are hand in glove with a number of Jesuits; that you are admitted into their councils; that you are regarded as one of their chief allies. If that is so, while I do not doubt your honour, I cannot regard you as one whose help would be of great value—that is, supposing I am right in my surmises."

"Who told you I was hand in glove with Jesuits?" I asked.

"I do not think that matters," was his reply. "What matters is whether I am right in what I have said?"

I was silent, not because I regarded his imputation as correct, but because he puzzled me. I seemed to feel myself drawn into a kind of net. I was in a state of uncertainty. Was I working in conjunction with the Jesuits? Who was Simon Maynooth, and who were the men I had met at his flat?

"You do not speak," said Fanshawe presently; and I felt that not only he but old Morton Gascoigne kept their eyes upon me.

"Who your informant may be I know not," I replied, "but I want to be absolutely frank with you. I am not in league with Jesuits; I have no secret understanding with them. It is perfectly true I do not share your suspicions concerning the Roman Catholic Church; they seem to me to be unworthy and unkind. Moreover, I regard that Church as suffering great disabilities. I am enough of a Protestant to believe in absolute religious equality, and that no man should suffer because of his religious beliefs. At present Roman Catholics are forbidden the highest positions in the State. That, to me, is wrong. If a promise to try to remove all hindrances to their holding those positions, is to be in league with the Jesuits, then I am in league with them."

"You mean by that that you would remove hindrances to every position?" said Morton Gascoigne.

"Exactly."

"You would have a Roman Catholic as King?"

"Why not?"

"You would do away not only with the King's Declaration, but with the Bill of Rights, the Act of Settlement, and everything else which would hinder a Roman Catholic from occupying the British throne?"

"Again—why not? I put it to you, who are a strong Protestant, Mr. Gascoigne, and whose great plea is for religious liberty and religious equality: Supposing a Protestant monarch sits upon the British throne, and that monarch is led to change his religious opinions; he sincerely believes in the Catholic faith; he is conscientious in disavowing his former belief, and accepts those he has hitherto disavowed—why should he be deprived of his kingship? He is still a gentleman; he is still a Christian. At present there is one law for Protestants and another for Catholics. Is that just? Catholics pay taxes, just as Protestants do; they obey the laws, just as Protestants do; they fight for their country, just as Protestants do. Why, then, should they be prohibited from occupying the highest positions?"

"Then you would tear up the King's Declaration?"

"I think it is disgraceful," I replied. "It means offering an insult to the faith of others."

"In so far as it insults the Catholic faith, I would alter it," said Morton Gascoigne, "that is, if in altering it we do not weaken it's disavowal of Roman doctrines. But the alteration of the King's Declaration is but a stepping-stone to the Romanists' real desires. They desire the destruction of the Bill of Rights and the Act of Settlement; they desire to make it possible for a Catholic to sit on the throne."

"And what then? Is it not natural? Is it not right? A Catholic King is just as good a patriot as a Protestant."

"Then you would abolish all tests?"

"Certainly," I replied, and I thought of Kathleen Castlereagh as I spoke.

I knew I was alienating the old man's sympathies as I spoke, I knew he would find a difficulty in trusting me to take further steps in finding his granddaughter; but I spoke as I felt. I thought his position bigoted and unjust, and I did not hide the fact from him.

"I think I must be going," said Morton Gascoigne, rising. "Believing as you do, further talk would be useless; but your eyes will be opened, Mr. Killigrew, of that I am sure. Meanwhile, I must do my best to find Eve."

I did not try to prevent either of them from going, for George Fanshawe also rose to take his leave, and as I accompanied them to the door I knew that a dark shadow had fallen between us.

The next day I spent some hours with Father Vernon, who delighted me with his large charity and splendid idealism. Never had I met with a more fascinating man. He talked well on every subject; he seemed to have read every book of value, and was abreast of the thought of the age.

"And he is Catholic," I reflected after I had left him. "Here is a man who stands high in the councils of his Church, and yet he seems more broad-minded than any Protestant I ever met. If he, with his splendid training and wide reading, can be a Catholic, what is to hinder me from embracing that form of faith? Was not my mother a Catholic? And is not Kathleen, the purest and loveliest woman that God ever made, a child of that faith?"

After this I saw Father Vernon frequently. Sometimes I went to see him, and at others he came to me. More than once we discussed religion, and the more we discussed it the more I was drawn to the faith he advocated.

All this time I heard nothing from Kathleen, and knew nothing about her, except that she had not returned to Castlereagh Castle. But where she was I had not the slightest knowledge. More than once I saw Simon Maynooth, who on each occasion took care to inform me that she was no longer at her home. This was not done

ostensibly, but casually, in the ordinary course of conversation. On all other matters he was very reticent. He never once referred to the subject which had been discussed at his flat on the first occasion on which I met Father Vernon; indeed, he refrained from touching on subjects political, although, as I thought, he seemed anxious to know what Father Vernon and I had talked about during our meetings.

About ten days after my meeting with Mr. Morton Gascoigne and George Fanshawe I received a letter which set me wondering greatly. I had, I remember, just returned from Father Vernon's house, and was deep in thought over certain statements he had made concerning the acceptance of the Catholic faith; for, as I have hinted, I seriously considered avowing myself a Catholic, and had, during our conversation, asked him several close and searching questions concerning the attitude of mind which was necessary to a convert adopting that form of religion. Up to that day, while we had often discussed the subject, we had never got near the heart of it. Indeed, whenever I had endeavoured to do so, he had, I thought, answered me evasively and dealt with generalities rather than with certain specific things concerning which I desired information. That day, however, I would not be put off, and I had plied him with questions which could not be answered vaguely. I could not help feeling, moreover, that he was slightly uncomfortable. During my leisure hours I had read a good deal of literature on the subject which had disturbed my mind, and it was on these disturbing questions that I desired light.

As I have said, his answers had set me thinking furiously, and I was in this state of mind when the letter to which I have referred was brought to my notice. No sooner had I looked at the envelope than I saw that it was from my anonymous correspondent. It ran as follows:

“SIR,—I beseech you to follow the instructions here set down. Let nothing hinder you from doing so, other-

wise you will remain in darkness concerning matters which are of paramount importance to you. Do not hesitate because I urge you to take steps which may be unpleasant to you. If you obey the instructions implicitly there will be no danger ; but as you value your future, do not depart one iota from what is here written.

"To-night, precisely at nine o'clock, be at 274, Pilchard Street, Brompton. Do not be hindered from doing this because it is a poor street. Do not ring the bell, but give three knocks. There is an old-fashioned knocker on the door. Wait just one second between each knock. The door will be opened immediately, and you must follow the person whom you will see. Ask no questions. Make no noise under any circumstances. Listen attentively, and take careful heed to all you will see and hear. Have no fear. The one who writes this has your welfare at heart, and has taken great trouble to arrange everything for your benefit. Think of the other letters you have received, and then reflect whether they have not been sent by a friend. Let nothing hinder you from doing what I urge you to do. The time will come when you will thank me.

"A WELL-WISHER AND FRIEND."

At first I threw the letter from me. Did the writer think I was mad? Or did she think I was a boy of eighteen, who would pay heed to such an epistle? Surely it must be the production of some maniac, or else——

I turned to the letter again and read it a second time. What was the purpose of these epistles?

I opened my pocket-book and spread them all out before me. Yes, they were all written in that sharp Italian hand, so common thirty years ago, and in spite of myself I could not help feeling that they were all penned by some one in deadly earnest. But why? My curiosity, if nothing else, was aroused. I read the letter for the third time.

There was no address and no clue to the identity of the writer. I had always hated anonymous letters ; but still, anonymous letters were often penned in a friendly

spirit. What should I lose by following the instructions given? I laughed at the idea of danger. I was not a rich man, and no one could have an interest in kidnapping me; indeed, the idea was grotesque and absurd. Still, I did not like the idea of going to 274, Pilchard Street, Brompton. It was evidently in a poor neighbourhood, and there might be some evil plot on foot.

But again, why should there be? I had always wanted to learn more about the man Maynooth—might not this be an opportunity of gratifying my curiosity? Nay, more—might not my going help me to discover the whereabouts of Eve Gascoigne? I did not see why it should, but the thought haunted me. Besides, I was not a child. I could go armed, and I scarcely knew what personal fear meant. Still, the whole thing was absurd. Of course, I would not go. I looked at my watch. It was now half-past six. At any rate, I could have an early meal.

I accordingly went to the dining-room of my club. There was no one there to whom I cared to speak, and so I was, as it were, thrown back upon the letter I had received. After all, there seemed no sufficient reason why I should not go. There was nothing at the House of Commons which required my presence, and even if there were, my journey to Brompton could be accomplished in less than half an hour.

I need not describe my thoughts further. At five minutes before nine I dismissed my taxi at the top of Pilchard Street, and, carefully noting the numbers, walked towards 274.

Yes, it was a poor street. Not quite a slum, yet promising to be one in a few years. The streets adjoining were of a different nature, and were apparently occupied by well-to-do people. But Pilchard Street had evidently lost caste.

At length I came to No. 274; but before going to the door I looked around carefully. There was nothing whatever to arouse suspicion. Crowds of people, mostly belonging to the working-classes, walked aimlessly up and down. Lads and girls were flirting, after the

fashion of their order. Here and there were groups of women gossiping. Shopmen stood at their doors awaiting customers. No, there was nothing whatever different from what one might expect in a street of that nature. No one, I was sure, followed me or regarded me in any way with suspicion.

As I passed No. 274 I glanced at the house. It was apparently no different from a hundred other houses in the same street. It was four stories high; it was shabby in appearance. No. 272 was, I noticed, a green-grocer's shop, but No. 276 and 278 were private dwellings, just as was No. 274. I judged that each house was let in "flats." Twenty years before they would doubtless have been occupied by prosperous families, but now, as was the case with hosts of one-time well-to-do streets, six or seven families lived in the same house.

I did not at first stop at 274, but noticed it carefully in passing. Having walked along, perhaps, twenty paces, I turned suddenly, but, as far as I could see, no one was watching me.

"Surely I have come here on a fool's errand," I reflected. "What purpose can be gained by my coming to this slummy street? There is no suggestion of mystery."

In the near distance some hawker was shouting in a loud, raucous voice for people to come and buy his wares, while the unhealthy-looking youths received with evident pleasure the admonitory slaps of girls who wore huge hats and hideous fringes. It was all sordid and commonplace. Surely I had better return, either to my club or the House of Commons. What business had I here on such a wild-goose errand? What wise purpose could be served by going to that shabby-looking house?

Still, my curiosity was aroused, and there must be some meaning in the letter I had received.

A distant clock began to strike. Before the stroke of nine was reached I stood at the door.

I gave three knocks, as I had been instructed, and no sooner had I given the third rap than the door opened. I noticed a dimly-lit passage, but could not see the

opener of the door. I entered the house, and immediately the noise of the street ceased. The door had closed.

I have stated that the passage was dimly lit, but I ought to have said that it was almost dark. What light there was must have come through the fanlight of one of the doors that opened on to it. The air seemed musty, as though the place were badly ventilated.

"Please follow me."

The speaker, as far as I could judge, was a man of middle age, small in stature, but having no particular peculiarity in appearance. He spoke quietly, but with no suggestion of secrecy. I followed him along the passage, and presently we came to a fairly large and comfortably-furnished room. But we did not stop there. We passed through it, and came to another passage, which was lit only by a flickering candle placed by the side of the wall. This passage was long and narrow.

I followed my guide without a word.

Presently he came to a stairway, which he ascended without hesitation. We reached the first landing, but he did not stop there. A minute later we had reached a second landing. Here were several doors. He opened one of them, ushered me into a room, and left me.

CHAPTER XXIII

274, PILCHARD STREET

THE room was almost dark, yet enough light found its way there to enable me to take a survey of the place. It was very small, and beyond one straight-backed chair it had no furniture. It was deathly quiet, and no sound from the street reached me. What light it had came through a small window which stood perhaps five feet from the floor, and connected it with another apartment. This window was covered by a curtain, not on my side of the glass, but on the other.

For two or three minutes I listened intently, but heard nothing distinctly. It is true I could hear the roar of the great city, but it seemed to be deadened by thick walls. I judged that the long passage through which I had come connected the house which opened on to Pilchard Street with one that faced the street which ran parallel with it, and was, I judged, of a superior nature. I tried to look through the little window I have mentioned, but at first I could see nothing. Evidently there was a light behind it, but it was so dim that nothing was revealed. Presently, however, I was more fortunate. There was a small hole in the blind, and through it I saw a large room. As far as I could judge it was at least thirty feet long, and was very lofty.

I waited, I should think, ten minutes, but beyond an occasional footstep I could hear nothing. The place might be deserted.

"What a fool I am," I said to myself. "Fancy a full-grown man like myself coming to a place like this because he received an anonymous letter. Surely it would be better that I found my way out without more ado."

Still I stayed on. In spite of myself I was interested,

and the more I thought about it the more I realised that if the person who wrote me were mad there was method in her madness. For I felt sure it was a woman. The letters were all in a woman's handwriting, and every line suggested a woman. What was the motive which prompted her to write me?

I was perfectly calm, I remember, and went so far as to withdraw a cigar from my case. But I did not light it.

Presently it seemed to me that something was stirring. Footsteps became frequent, and once or twice I thought there was a murmur of voices. I heard a noise in the adjoining room, and a second later darkness had fled. Evidently some one had switched on electric light, and not only was the large room adjoining brightly illuminated, but even the ante-room in which I waited was no longer in gloom. I could see the large room plainly now, and it suggested a smoking-room in a good club, or it might have been the board-room of some company or public body. There were several tables in the room. That in the centre was large, and had evidently been used as a writing-table. The smaller ones were similar to those which one sees in the smoking-room of a club, or in the lounge of an hotel. Ash-trays and boxes of matches were plentiful, from which I concluded that it was mainly used by men. In the full glare of the electric light there was no suggestion of secrecy or mystery. In fact, but for the nature of my summons and the manner in which I had entered the room, everything was of the most ordinary and commonplace nature. And yet there was something at the back of it all which I could not understand. I seemed to be on the brink of a mystery, although nothing appeared mysterious.

I waited, it might have been five minutes, but no one appeared. The large room was lit and made ready for occupants, but no one came. I had not even seen the servant who, I assumed, had switched on the electric light. Presently I clearly heard the sound of footsteps. Evidently someone was climbing an uncarpeted stair-

way. The footsteps were firm, decided, and rapid. A moment later a door opened and I saw a man in clerical attire enter. I thought he was young, but I was not sure, for his face was hidden from me. A moment later my heart beat quickly. The man was Father Vernon.

I saw him look at his watch, and then he muttered something. He threw himself into one of the large arm-chairs and lit a cigar.

If a suggestion of foul play had entered my mind, Father Vernon's presence dispelled it. It was impossible to associate anything wrong with him. I thought of the many conversations we had had lately, and I felt I had a friend near. I wanted to make my presence known to him, but remembering the letter I had received I kept silent.

A little later I heard other footsteps and the murmur of voices. Then three more men entered. These also were in clerical attire.

"It must be some priests' club-room," I reflected. "Perhaps it is a room connected with some church-house, and these men are gathering after their day's work is over."

Father Vernon rose to greet them as they came, and there was a general handshaking. They talked freely, too, but as far as I could judge their talk was unimportant. It might have been an informal gathering in the smoke-room of a club.

Presently one of them said:

"He is late."

"Oh, but he'll be here."

"Do you know whether any advances have been made?"

"No, I know nothing. But we should know to-night. There, surely that's his voice."

As may be imagined, my senses were keenly alert now, and, forgetful of everything save the gathering of men in the room, I watched and listened attentively. I realised, too, that while I could see and hear plainly all that took place in the large room, I was entirely hidden from view. The little room was in semi-darkness,

and the thin curtain which hung before the window completely hid me.

A moment later several others entered, and then, after an interval of further waiting, I saw that some one of importance was expected. When the door opened next I saw the face of Simon Maynooth. But I was not prepared for what I detected immediately afterwards.

He was in clerical attire.

"He has been masquerading as a layman for all these months," I reflected, "and now I discover that he's a priest."

Still, why not? He had never told me that he was a layman, and he *had* told me that he was an ardent Catholic. Moreover, I saw no reason why a Catholic priest should not be clad as a layman if he felt so disposed. Nevertheless, I knew it was not ordinary for a priest to appear in layman's attire, although I had been given to understand that the custom was more common among priests belonging to the order of Jesuits than was generally supposed.

After this the room filled as if by magic. Possibly forty men had gathered together.

There was no suggestion of mystery, and yet it might have been a secret conclave. There was a look of expectation on every face, and all looked towards Maynooth as the chief personality of the gathering.

I was playing the part of an eavesdropper, and yet the fact did not strike me. Rather I seemed to be like some visitor to the strangers' gallery in the House of Commons, or a spectator in a theatre.

For some minutes the conversation was in subdued tones, and I heard nothing plainly; then I heard Maynooth say:

"Gentlemen, I may inform you with confidence that the King's Declaration, as it has been made since the time of the Stuarts, will never be made again."

At this announcement there was much excitement and eager murmuring. "But surely," said some one, after a few seconds, "that is a question to be decided in the House of Commons and in the House of Lords?"

"Yes, I know," said Simon Maynooth quietly; "but it is possible to feel the pulse of these bodies, and I have done it. Whenever a new King ascends the throne he will not have to insult our faith. I know that the leaders of both parties are in favour of its abolition."

"But there is the public to consider."

"The public is a flock of sheep," replied Simon Maynooth. "The public will follow its leaders."

"But there will be a row."

"Of course there will be. But the row will do good. It will prepare the way for the real thing. The time will soon come when it will be possible for a Catholic King to sit on the British throne again."

At this there were doubtful murmurs, but I saw that nearly all looked eagerly at Maynooth, and seemed to regard him as an oracle who might be believed under all circumstances.

"In the not distant future," went on Simon Maynooth, "I believe a Catholic King *will* sit on the British throne."

He spoke with quietness but with confidence. Indeed, he had the air of one who knew.

"Of course," he went on, "there is much to be done, very much to be done. There are difficulties which *seem* to be insurmountable, but they are not insurmountable. I have called you here to-night to explain certain matters to you, and to encourage you in the work you are doing, so that you in your turn can encourage all the other members of the society we represent."

There was a hush in the room as he spoke; every one listened eagerly to his words.

"I think it will be wise," went on Maynooth, "to look back a little to-night, as well as to glance at the future. It may also be wise to consider our position generally."

"Our one aim in life is, as you know, to make the Church supreme in Great Britain. For that we labour night and day. To that end we are all prepared to sacrifice everything, to do anything, to be anything, to suffer anything. One of the greatest converts that the Church has ever won in this island of heretics declared

our programme faithfully and nobly. Manning was a wise man. He told us that it was for us to subjugate and to subdue, to conquer and to rule, an imperial race. He urged that all the lines of heresy met here, and conquered here, it was conquered throughout the world.

“Let us pause a moment, reverend brethren, and consider how we stand. In the middle of the last century, when Pope Pius IX. fled like an escaped prisoner from the Vatican, and when he found that Catholic Europe was slipping from his grasp, he dreamed a great dream. He saw that the Anglo-Saxon race lay at the centre of the world's power, and he saw, too, that if the Church could gain influence in England it would more than atone for the power it was losing among the decaying Latin races. So he sent Wiseman to take ecclesiastical possession of England. It was a bold, daring, but masterly policy. It seized the imagination of the world. You know the spirit in which Wiseman was received. The old cry of ‘No popery’ was raised, and there were frenzied denunciations of our Church. But liberal laws had been passed, and Wiseman did as he was told. He found the Church in England a poor, despised thing. He left it a powerful Church.

“Presently the society to which we belong was formed. The purposes of our society I need not enumerate. They are engraven on your memories and on your hearts. But, as you know, one of the great works we had to accomplish was to destroy prejudice against us. Year in and year out our predecessors worked for that. They lived to foster the idea that to suspect the Catholic Church of seeking to gain anything but what a Church should legitimately gain was lack of charity. They played upon the Protestant fad of religious equality; they sought to fan into a flame any and every spark of feeling that should advance our position. They fostered the idea that we Catholics were broad and liberal, and that it would be a violation of Protestantism to refuse us the widest liberty.

“Of course, we know how pernicious the doctrine of religious liberty is. We have encouraged it here in

England, where we are in a minority, but where we have had power we have not allowed it. We could not allow it. It would violate the very genius of our faith. As one of our brethren in the Church has so wisely said: 'Tolerance to Protestants would be intolerance to Catholics.' Therefore, while we must profess tolerance, and urge it upon Protestants while we are in the minority, we dare not do so where we have entered into power. Thus, when we gain power in England we must ruthlessly destroy this poisonous fungus of so-called religious toleration and religious liberty. The Church must be supreme in every department of life. We must *subjugate* and *subdue*, we must *conquer* and *rule*.

"Well, reverend brethren, how have we succeeded? As far as numbers go, in spite of increased churches, and monasteries, and nunneries, and priests, our growth has been terribly disappointing. In spite of the great army of Catholics which has been imported from other countries, we have grown but little, very little. Considering the increase of the population, we have lost ground to an alarming extent.

"But we have gained in influence. And, more, we have created an atmosphere favourable to our purposes. We have made the Roman Catholic Church almost fashionable. We have appealed to the ear, to the eye, and to the imagination of the public. But there is something greater than all this, and from which I argue infinite things. Here in this so-called Protestant country we have laboured so successfully that even among people who avow themselves as Protestants, an aggressive Protestant is called a bigot. Think of it, brethren"—and Maynooth laughed as he spoke—"every advanced Protestant, every man who speaks or writes against us, is immediately pilloried even among Protestants as a bigot, as a fanatic, as a creature with a bee in his bonnet. That is the greatest victory of all. It has cleared the field for us, it has made people forget the undeniable facts of history, it has made everything possible.

"It is because of this that I know that the King's Declaration will be destroyed; it is because of this that

it will soon be possible for a Catholic King to sit on the British throne.

"Again let us consider. As you know, I looked upon Killigrew as a man who would be necessary to us in order to get the King's Declaration annulled. He is no longer necessary. It will be advocated by those in higher places. And, more, Nonconformists, who are supposed to be the backbone of Protestantism, will support its abolition. Logically, they can do no other. Of course, there will be a row among what this Protestant country is calling 'ultra-Protestants,' but that will do us good. They will call us names; we shall pose as martyrs, and the country will look on us more kindly than ever.

"But this is only the first step. The last vestige of opposition to our complete victory must be swept away. I do not say it will come in my day, but it will come. The Church does not work and legislate for a day, but for eternity. Nevertheless, it will come more speedily than some of us think. As you know, the emissaries of the Church are everywhere. What, I ask, is to hinder us from winning a future heir to the British throne to the Catholic faith? It may have to be done secretly, subtly, but what matters if it is done? Similar work has been accomplished, as you know, in the most unlikely places, done in the teeth of the most blatant Protestant opposition, and what can be done in one place can be done in another. And then, reverend brethren, with a Catholic King on the British throne—a *Catholic King, subservient to, obedient to, and taking his orders from Rome*—shall we not have fulfilled that commission which Manning sketched so eloquently? Shall we not have gone far to subjugate and subdue, to conquer and to rule, an imperial race?"

As may be imagined, I listened spellbound. I no longer considered why I was in this strange position. I even forgot the letter which had brought me there. Not that Simon Maynooth was an orator. He spoke in a hesitating fashion, never lifting his voice above conversational tones. He stood perfectly still, too, and never

emphasised his words by movement either of hand or body. And yet there was an incisiveness in his manner of speech that told, and, more, there was a subtle power of personality which made him a master of men.

"When will this Bill for the abolition of the King's Declaration be brought forward?" asked some one.

"At the proper time," was the sententious reply.

"And you believe it will be carried?"

"I am sure of it," was the reply.

"But it will be only a preliminary affair."

"A very big preliminary. It will be a preliminary skirmish that will win our battle. It will be a John the Baptist Bill preparing the way for—everything. The Bill of Rights, the Act of Settlement, and all the rest of it will soon be as dead as Queen Anne."

"Would it be possible for you to speak a little more plainly?"

"Wait, my son; wait and see."

"But," said another, "you say you have no further need for Killigrew."

"Pardon me, I did not say so. I said that he will not be needed to bring forward a Bill to destroy the present King's Declaration. His work will come later. It will be for him to deal with the other things I have mentioned. When I first heard him I determined to get him into my net, because I felt sure he would be the man for what some one has called a 'preliminary affair.' I recognised his capabilities, I foresaw the position he would make. I carefully studied my man. He was a strong Protestant at the start, but he has responded to treatment, as the doctors say. He will be invaluable later on, and he is well in hand."

"I have every reason to believe," said another, "that it is his purpose to 'come over' immediately."

"His 'coming over' must be delayed," said Simon Maynooth quietly. "That can be managed without difficulty."

I must confess to a strange feeling at my heart as I heard myself discussed in this way; indeed, I felt like trying to find my way into the room and telling them

what was in my heart. But at that moment Father Vernon rose to his feet.

“May I ask a few questions?” he inquired.

Maynooth nodded, while every man in the room looked eagerly towards the face of the handsome young priest.

CHAPTER XXIV

SIMON MAYNOOTH'S LOGIC

"I AM but a young member of our society," said Vernon quietly, "but, as you know, I joined it because of my passionate longing to extend the Catholic faith. My family have remained true to the Church through good and evil report, and no thought has been dearer to me than that of winning back the land of my birth, the land I love above all lands, to the great Catholic fold. But I seem to see things in a somewhat new light to-night. My dream has always been that in wielding the sword of St. Peter we should wield a spiritual sword."

"Yes," said Maynooth, "what then?"

"I have dreamt of winning England back to the Church because I have believed that England was poorer outside her pale, that the Church had been robbed from the people, and that, as a consequence, England had been robbed of the pearl of great price."

"That is true," replied Maynooth. "It is one of the commonplaces of our faith."

"I have believed that England, in coming back to the fold, would come back to a great peace, a great gladness, a fuller, gladder life."

"That also goes without saying," said Maynooth. "What do you mean, my son?"

"I want to have my mind cleared on certain questions," replied Father Vernon.

"Speak on, my son. As you know, I have always been one who has tried to remove difficulties and make the way plain."

"Is not the purpose of placing a Catholic King upon the British throne a new purpose?"

"It has been the dream of the Church ever since

that damnable thing called the Reformation," replied Maynooth, and there was a bitter incisiveness in his tones.

"Yes, I know; but has not that been because we have hoped to win the hearts of the people? And because they, being won back to the faith, would naturally demand a Catholic King?"

"Has Father Vernon realised what would be the effect of having a Catholic King on the throne?" asked Maynooth. "Let me put a case. Suppose we could place faithful members of the Church in high places, as they were placed in the time of James II.? Suppose the tutor of an heir apparent, while professing to be a member of the so-called Church of England, were at heart a Catholic, and secretly trained this heir apparent in the Catholic faith? Suppose, again, that he kept his faith a secret, as more than one loyal Catholic has done? Then suppose he ascended the throne? Well, the King's Declaration will be so altered that he will not have to deny any Catholic doctrine, so that he, without violating any vows, could appear to the public as a Protestant, and yet place all his tremendous influence on the side of the Church. Can any one imagine the gain that would be to us? The King would take his orders from the Vatican, and those orders would have tremendous effect on the life of the nation. An influence would be felt in the whole body corporate which would go towards catholicising the whole nation. It would be felt in every public institution. Every bishop appointed would be a friend of our Church, and thus the Church of England would more than ever help on the conversion of the nation to our faith. Father Vernon is right in saying that when you have a Catholic people they will demand a Catholic King, but the other fact is true. Once get a Catholic King on the throne, even although he may be only secretly a Catholic, and he will do much to make the people Catholic."

"But such a King would be unworthy the name," urged Father Vernon; "he would be a liar, a traitor to the truth."

A silence fell on the room, and Maynooth shrugged his shoulders.

"Has the Catholic Church condemned James II. for seeking to extend the Catholic faith, even although he swore to uphold the Protestant religion?" he said quietly. "Has our Church ever condemned Charles II. for holding the true faith, even while he professed to be a Protestant?"

"I cannot say I believe in this," replied Father Vernon; "but push your supposition a little farther. Suppose an heir apparent were secretly trained in the Catholic faith, and suppose, too, that he ascended the throne; what then? Would he go on acting a lie?"

"Father Vernon's terminology is somewhat sweeping," answered Maynooth. "I object to the phrase, 'acting a lie,' but accept it for a moment. The work we have done is not in vain. We have caused the people to foster the thought that no man should be disqualified for any position in the State because of his religious opinions. The Protestant doctrine of religious liberty is bearing fruit, and it is serving our purpose well. 'We want no tests,' say the Radical Nonconformists. Exactly; we encourage that feeling among Protestants, and shall encourage it while we are in the minority. Well, what follows? Our supposed secret convert will soon find it possible to avow himself a Catholic openly; and when you have an avowedly Catholic King on the throne, the battle is more than half won in the nation. For surely we have been led to see this. Our hopes of winning the nation by means of individual conversions have completely falsified themselves. Even in what is called the High Church, the germs of heresy remain. The numbers of our conversions are not nearly so great as they were. After the conversion of Newman and Manning there was a steady stream of Protestants coming to us. We were in high hopes, and many prophesied the speedy conversion of the nation. But that is all over. The stream has grown smaller and smaller, until it has nearly dried up. We are losing far more than we are gaining, and this in spite of all we have done. The increase of priests

and churches and monastic institutions has made little or no impression; the expenditure of millions of money, as far as the conversion of real Protestants is concerned, seems in vain. That is why we have been obliged to revert to what may be called material means. Now then, make it possible for a Catholic King to sit on the British throne—and remember the British throne influences the life of the world—and then, by means only possible to such a Church as ours, get a Catholic King on that throne, and we have won such a victory as the world has never heard of.”

“Then our weapons are carnal, not spiritual?” urged Father Vernon.

“The victory of our carnal weapons will make our spiritual weapons powerful,” replied Maynooth.

“But are you not counting without your host?” again urged Vernon. “You say that if a Catholic King sat upon the British throne, and were at length to avow himself a Catholic, it would influence the whole nation to our faith?”

“I do,” replied Maynooth. “That influence would percolate through the Army, the Navy, the Universities, the Church; it would be seen in the Law Courts, the schools; it would altogether change the complexion of the Houses of Parliament, and, through these institutions, the very warp and woof of the nation’s life.”

“Are you sure you understand the British character?”

“I know that the British race is, in the main, a race of snobs,” replied Maynooth, with a laugh. “Let the King be a drunkard and a clown, as was George IV., and the nation will follow suit. Let the King be a Puritan, and the people will turn Puritan. This was evidenced in the case of the man who was called Albert the Good, although he was not the King, but only the Queen’s husband. The truth is, in spite of its boast of sturdy independence, an Englishman always toadies to royalty.”

“That was not true in the time of James II. or Charles I.,” urged Vernon.

“My dear fellow,” replied Maynooth, adopting a

more free-and-easy attitude, "you must remember two things. The first is, that there is no Oliver Cromwell alive to-day; and the second is, that the throne is exceedingly popular at the present time. In fact, the ruling monarch can do pretty much what he likes."

"Pardon me for saying so," replied Vernon, "but I think you are utterly mistaken. The proclamation of a Catholic King might affect some in the way you have mentioned, but only comparatively few. The result in the nation would be entirely different; at least, that is my opinion."

"Then what, in your opinion, would the result be?" asked Maynooth.

"Civil war," replied Vernon. "Yes, and one of the bloodiest civil wars ever known. The nation would be torn in pieces. Class would be set against class. The official army would be opposed to the might of the people. England would become a hell."

"And what are your reasons for believing this?"

"Take one instance to illustrate what I mean," replied Vernon. "You remember the Eucharistic Conference, when it was arranged that the Sacred Host should be carried through the streets of Westminster. The Throne, according to public belief, made no protest; the Government made no protest—until it was obliged. And yet the scheme had to be given up. These 'fanatical Protestants,' as you call them, were too strong for us. Those in authority were commanded to desist, in spite of the fact that it is believed the Prime Minister favoured us. If the idea had been persisted in, there would have been a riot. The Sacred Host would have been trampled under foot, and the Congress would have ended in bloodshed. I tell you, King or no King, the people of England are Protestant at heart, and if any King were to proclaim himself a Catholic, even although Army, Church, and Government were to support him, the people would rise and would fight to their last breath."

"And what then?" asked Maynooth.

"What then!" cried Vernon. "I am afraid I do not understand."

"What then?" repeated Maynooth. "Probably you are right, up to a point. I quite believe that the people would rise, and probably there would be civil war. Nothing would be more probable than that the ultra-Protestants would create a great row, and would take to arms; James Anthony Froude, the Protestant historian, predicted it. He said that the battle between Catholicism and Protestantism ended in blood before, and will be likely to do so again. But what of that? We should have the trained armies against the mob; the mob would be annihilated, and the Church would be supreme."

"But think of the very fact of civil war! Imagine the evil passions that would be aroused; think of the terrible sufferings; think of the blight upon the land; think of the condition of the people. Any war is bad enough, but think of civil war!"

"Yes, think of it!" cried Maynooth, and he rose to his feet. "Do you suppose I have not thought of it? Do you fancy that I have not realised what the battle we are fighting means? You cannot subjugate and subdue, you cannot conquer and rule a stubborn people, without many bloody encounters. Time was when I thought it would be a bloodless battle, but I do not think so now. But what then? Did not Cardinal Manning say that he would see Europe deluged in blood in order to gain the temporal supremacy of the Pope? Some doubt this; but there is no one who doubts that the faithful Catholic, much as he may hate bloodshed and war, would stop at *nothing* to see the Church supreme. I go further, and I say that any true Catholic would see England plunged in civil war even for the *chance* of making the Church supreme. It is no new doctrine of the Church that, when other means fail, we must resort to force. What though thousands, tens of thousands, be killed; what is that in comparison with the salvation of the nation's soul? Did not the Pope, back in the time of the massacre of St. Bartholomew, cause the *Te Deum* to be sung, and a medal to be cast in commemoration of the fact that scores of thousands of heretics were killed? And well he might, for were there not scores

of thousands of heretics the less? Was not the Church more firmly set upon its throne? Did not the Church rejoice when the Edict of Nantes was destroyed, and thousands of Huguenots were driven from France amidst fire and sword? Of course, these were bloody affairs, and the results were terrible, but what have we to do with results? To the faithful Catholic the Church is first, *first*, FIRST, I tell you, and everything else comes after. It is for us to win England, and we must do it."

The man was in a white passion. I should not have known him for the same man I had seen in the inn at Blenheim. Situated even as I was, I felt the intensity of his words, and my heart beat rapidly.

"According to you, then," remarked Vernon, and although he spoke quietly, I could see that he was much moved, "Gladstone was right in his 'Vatican Decrees': No faithful Catholic can be a loyal Englishman?"

"Every faithful Catholic is a Catholic first and an Englishman afterwards. Surely you need not be reminded of that?"

"Thus, if England ever has a Catholic King, that King must obey the Holy Father, even if the Holy Father's command is opposed to the will of the nation?" said Vernon.

"The King obeys the Holy Father, even as every Catholic must," replied Maynooth. "Surely you must either have been badly instructed, Father Vernon, or you must lately have been attending some Protestant meetings. But are your questions answered? Is your ground cleared sufficiently?"

"Yes, thank you," replied the priest; "I think I understand. What you have said has been very interesting. But there is a personal matter I would like to mention. You referred just now to Killigrew, and I gathered that you do not wish him to come over to us yet?"

"It will not be wise for his conversion to be announced yet, that is assuming that he is converted to our faith."

"Why?"

"Because it may be that he can serve us better as

an inquirer. Once he is known as a Catholic, his influence among Protestants will be gone. And the controversy which must arise concerning the destruction of the Bill of Rights and the Act of Settlement may be upon us more quickly than we think. But I am sure that Killigrew is well in hand, and only needs careful handling."

"I am not so sure of that," replied Vernon quietly.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that he asked me some questions to-day, all of which go to prove that he is much further from the faith than you seem to think."

"And what are they?"

Vernon related the conversation we had had together only that morning, and I noticed that he spoke very gravely.

"That is your affair," said Maynooth; "you know what course to adopt. Meanwhile, brethren, our policy at present is one of waiting. We have won a great battle. The King's Declaration is as good as dead. When the proper time comes, that death will be made known. Of course, there will be opposition, but it will come to nothing. All this shows the great advances we have made. Ten years ago such a thing would have been laughed at; to-day it is as good as an accomplished fact. The rest will follow in good time. There may be dark times, but we need not fear. Our work will be misunderstood, just as the work of Ignatius of Loyola, and the society he formed, has been misunderstood through the centuries; but the victory of the Church has always followed in the wake of that society, even although it has caused the bloodiest of wars."

After this other matters were discussed, but they had no interest for me. For that matter, I did not understand them, and they seemed like men talking in a strange language; but at length the gathering broke up, the lights were put out, and I found myself in darkness.

I waited in quietness, scarcely comprehending what I had seen and heard. It seemed to me as though for a time I had been in a new world. Maynooth's declarations, and the evident agreement of all present, with

the exception of Vernon, well-nigh stunned me. Although every word he had spoken was engraved upon my memory, I could not take in their full significance. I was bewildered. So much was this so, that even although I was regarded as a kind of tool in Maynooth's hands, or as a pawn on a chess-board, I had at that time but little feeling of resentment. It is true there was a kind of dull anger at my heart, but nothing was clear to me.

I waited in silence for perhaps ten minutes, then I heard footsteps coming along the passage I had traversed. A moment later the man who had first met me appeared and beckoned to me.

I followed him without a word, and a few seconds later I was in the street. By the light of a neighbouring street-lamp I was enabled to see the time. It was half-past ten. Looking around me, I saw that, while the crowd had somewhat thinned, no one seemed to notice me. I had come to Pilchard Street unobserved, and I attracted no attention as I left.

Knowing that it would be no use to return to the House of Commons, I hailed a cab, and told the driver to take me to my club, where before long I found myself able to think over what I had seen and heard. As I have stated, I had been well-nigh stunned by my experiences; but presently things became clear to me. For this fact was evident: Maynooth had simply expressed the hopes and feelings of his hearers. When he had said he would gladly see England deluged in all the horrors of a civil war, even for the *chance* of making the Church supreme, his hearers, Vernon excepted, had applauded him. He had evidently expressed an accepted dictum.

I saw now what I had never realised before. The Church of Rome was like no other Church. It did not demand liberty simply that it might extend its distinctive religious dogmas, and thus lead others to adopt those dogmas; it demanded liberty that it might destroy liberty. It was not simply a religious body; it was primarily a huge political machine, which worked for

supremacy. It sought to dominate the whole of our national life. It aimed at making Rome the ruling power in our country. It was struggling to obtain power whereby it might make any other form of religion impossible. The liberties it demanded for itself it would not give to others. It wanted, it sought, it struggled to dominate every phase of our manifold life.

There was an infinite difference between the individual Roman Catholic, who thought he found in the Roman Catholic doctrines a strength to help him in his daily life, and the Roman Catholic Church as a Church. The former might be a saint, but the latter was a huge organisation opposed to the advancing liberties of the nation.

It may be that I had been culpably blind in not seeing this before, but, truth to tell, I had given little or no time to its consideration. Besides, was not my mother a beautiful, loving woman, and was not she a Catholic? Was not Kathleen the very soul of truth and honour, and was not she a Catholic? There was an infinite difference between the individual and the system. The individual might be pure and good and holy, but the system was opposed to the very genius of what appeared to me as best in our national life. And, more than this, the individual was used, as a cunning chess-player might use a pawn to win the game he was playing.

I became angry as I thought of it. I was simply regarded as a tool. My conversion was a matter of arrangement. Parliaments were nothing, Kings were nothing, nations were nothing, only in so far as they supported this system.

History appeared to me in a new light. The struggle in the time of James II., for example, was the struggle of the people against a system that would destroy its liberties. The laws passed at the time were, at heart, directed, not against Roman Catholics as Roman Catholics, but really against a system which threatened the very life of the nation. I saw, too, now why those whom I had got in the habit of calling "ultra-Protestants" feared and hated Rome. It was not because they had

any ill-feeling to individuals who preferred the Roman Catholic form of faith, it was because they feared and hated the system which, by its own confession, if it gained supremacy, would make private judgment, freedom in religious thought and belief impossible. It might be that many Protestants were in some respects as bigoted as Catholics, but the very meaning of their Protestantism was to extend to all, as individuals, the right to live their own intellectual and religious life.

I saw now the inwardness of Gladstone's plea in his "Vatican Decrees." The man who paid supreme allegiance to the dictates of Rome, and every Catholic must vow to do this, could no longer be an English patriot. Rome, not England, must be first. Of course, the Romanist would put it in another way; he would say that Christ, and not England, must be first. But then, Rome claimed to be the only body who had the right to interpret Christ.

For a long time I sat thinking. All my past reading of history came back to me. All the ghastly terrors of the time when Europe was deluged in blood became real. I thought of Motley's "History of the Dutch Republic," of the religious wars in France, of the struggles in our own land, and their heart-meaning became plain. All these things were because Rome claimed exclusive power and demanded absolute obedience. Where it had had power, it had not reasoned with men; it had commanded them, and if any disobeyed, the iron heel of cruelty and oppression was upon them.

And Rome was ever the same. *Semper eadem* was its motto, and although it might alter its methods according to changes of circumstances, its purposes never changed.

Presently the personal application came to me. I had considered joining the Catholic Church. I had paid but little attention to the niceties of doctrines, but had reflected upon the beautiful characters of my mother and of Kathleen. Possibly—probably, too—I had been influenced by the fact that if I did not become a Catholic

I could never win Kathleen as my wife. And now the question came to me: Could I ever become a Catholic? Could I give myself, mind, body, and soul, to this system? Could I give up my right to think on religious questions, even if for the moment I accepted Catholic dogmas? No, I could not. It would be intellectual suicide; it would be the murder of my manhood. I simply could not. But then, what was to become of my love for Kathleen Castlereagh? Could I give up the fondest hope of my life?

A knock came to my door.

"A gentleman to see you, sir."

I looked at my watch. It was approaching midnight.

"Who is it, James?"

"It's a gentleman called Father Vernon, sir."

"Tell him to come in, James," I said.

A few seconds later Father Vernon entered the room,

CHAPTER XXV

THE CALL FROM AFAR

"EXCUSE me for calling at such an hour, Killigrew," said the young priest, "but I am restless to-night. I have been walking along the Embankment for the last hour, and something drew me to come here to see whether you had gone to bed. I excused myself by thinking that this club was open practically all night, and that you would not resent my looking in."

"I am glad to see you," I replied; "but what have you to be restless about? You, at least, should have no doubts, your work is plainly marked out, you are freed from the worries of domestic life."

He laughed, I thought, uneasily, but threw himself in the arm-chair to which I pointed.

"Pouf! I am hot and tired," he sighed.

"It is close to-night. I was going to the House of Commons, but there is nothing important on hand, and—well, I felt I could be of no use if I went."

"Ah, you feel the heat, too?" he said.

"Yes, I feel the heat—and other things," I replied.

He gave me a keen, searching glance, as if to inquire if there were a double meaning in my words; but I imagine he read nothing in my face, for he immediately glanced around the room as if looking for something.

"Have a cigar?" I said, producing my case.

"I was looking for something to smoke," he replied.

"You don't look well, Vernon," I said presently. "Anything unpleasant happened?"

"No—that is, nothing new."

Nothing was said for a few seconds; then he went on:

"You put me some posers this morning, Killigrew. Would you mind my speaking plainly to you?"

"As plainly as you like, my dear fellow."

"Are you drawn very strongly to the Catholic Church?" he said, looking at me keenly.

"Those questions which I put to you this morning presented very real difficulties," I replied evasively. "You see, while I have a good deal of the Celt in my nature, and am therefore greatly moved by the mysterious, I imagine there is a hard substratum of John Bullism in me. I have been attracted by the continuity of your Church, and there is something in its claims that appeals to me. Your doctrine of the Real Presence makes strong demands on the mysticism of my nature. On the other hand, there are certain things that rise up and present almost insurmountable barriers."

"Ah," he said eagerly, "what are they?"

"Well," I replied, "take the thing which lies at the very heart of your creed, and concerning which there have been tumults, persecutions, imprisonments, and bloody wars. As far as I understand it, I must believe, on pain of everlasting damnation, that a priest has the power to change wine, and flour and water, into the actual blood and body of Christ; that every priest is given this power at his ordination. Am I correct?"

He nodded his head, but it seemed to me as though his thoughts were far away.

"Well," I said, "I can't believe it—I simply can't. It violates every canon of reason. It is repugnant to me; it is something against which my mind and heart revolt. I can believe things which are difficult to believe; maybe, possibly, I may be led to believe things I don't want to believe. But I can't believe in what I can't believe, and if I am to be damned for not believing in what I can't believe—well then, damned I must be. Excuse me, but I speak reverently and with sincerity."

"The Church commands it," he replied, "and it is for the children of the Church to obey her commands."

"Without question?"

"Without question."

"That leads me on to another question," I said. "Mark you, I condemn no one for seeing things

differently from the way in which I see them ; but I must live my own life and think my own thoughts. I cannot yield to any Church the right to dictate what I shall think on religious matters—I simply cannot. I have as much right to think as any of the members of your great councils ; I have as much right to think as the Pope ; and I cannot give up that right. If I were to give it up I should commit intellectual suicide.”

“But the Church claims that she is the mouthpiece of God,” he replied. “She is God’s instrument ; God lives in her very heart.”

“Then God was at the heart of the massacre of St. Bartholomew, and of the bloody deeds in the Netherlands, and of the Marian persecutions ?” I queried.

He was silent.

“It won’t do, Vernon,” I said ; “it won’t do. Let me ask you a question. Suppose I joined your Church : Is it a fact that I should promise obedience to it in everything ?”

“Certainly.”

“And if the nation were converted, it would have to be obedient to the Church ?”

He nodded.

“And if the Church had power, would it suppress all Protestantism ? All religious liberty, all right of private judgment in religious matters ?”

“Undoubtedly.”

“Let me ask you another question : Is this the ultimate aim of the Roman Church ?”

“Can you not see that it must be the ultimate aim ?” he replied. “If the Church speaks with the voice of Christ, it *must* suppress heresy, it *must* demand unquestioning obedience. Otherwise it were traitorous to Christ.”

“Can you not see where this would lead ?” I said.

“That is not my affair ; it is for me to obey,” he said, and I thought there was a touch of bitterness in his voice.

“Then, if the dream of the Church were realised, it would mean that it would control the whole State, from the King to the poorest peasant ?”

"The Catholic Church, the one and only Church of Christ, must," he replied. "It *must* stamp out heresy, it *must* prohibit unbridled thinking, it *must* demand absolute, *absolute* obedience. Has it not the right? Does it not speak with the voice of God? The claim of the Church is that it has always done right, that it always will do right."

"Thank you," I replied. "Somehow the real significance of these things never came to me until to-night. They were vague, they seemed a long way off. Now I see what they really mean."

"And?" he asked eagerly.

"Oh nothing," I replied; for something, I know not what, caused me to be reticent.

"I say, Killigrew," he cried eagerly, "do you think it is a sin to doubt? Do you think a man has the inalienable right to think his own thoughts, even although those thoughts are opposed to his Church? Do you think that God is angry with a man for denying the things that his reason scorns?"

"If he doesn't deny things his reason scorns, he blasphemes," I replied; "if he doesn't, he violates one of the supreme gifts which the Almighty has bestowed upon our poor human nature."

"You think so?"

"I am sure of it."

"Ah!" he replied.

I noticed that his cigar had gone out, and that his eyes had a far-away look.

"I must be going home," he said presently. "Walk back with me, will you? I feel as though I dare not be alone."

I went to the window and looked out. Silence was falling upon the great city, and I saw that the stars were shining. I opened the window, and the night air came in refreshing and cool.

"Yes," I said, "I shall be glad of a walk."

We went out into the street together.

For some minutes we walked in silence, and our footsteps rang out clearly in the silence of the night.

"The wind has changed," I remarked presently. "It blows cool. It comes from the north."

"Yes, from the north," he replied.

"Vernon," I said, "forgive me asking a personal question, but am I right in assuming that it is your duty to confess your thoughts, your doubts?"

"Yes, it is my duty. How else can my doubts be removed?"

"And you must suffer penance?"

"Better suffer here than hereafter. What can be more terrible than an unfaithful priest?"

"What can be worse than that a man made in the image of God should forgo the right to obey the dictates of his conscience?" I asked.

"Ah, his conscience! Yes, his conscience."

He turned on me suddenly.

"Good night, Killigrew. Don't go any farther. I am a poor companion to-night. I am going through deep waters, my friend, and they seem to be overwhelming me. Thank you for being so considerate towards me. Things seem to be reversed, don't they? I, a priest, am asking advice of you, a layman, about religious matters. But I have been reading Father George Tyrrell's books, and I wondered how certain matters appealed to an intelligent layman. Did you ever read Tyrrell? A modernist, and yet a mystic. He also claims the right to think, to receive truth from whencesoever it may come, even although that truth be opposed to Catholic dogmas. But you see what has happened to him. He is degraded, unfrocked—as good as excommunicated."

"And what then?" I asked.

"What then?"

"Yes; what then? Who cares for the Church's excommunications? What do they matter?"

"You spoke very differently three days ago," he said. "Has anything happened?"

"Yes, a great deal has happened."

"What?"

"Perhaps I'll tell you some time, but not now. Both of us will be better alone. Good night."

He wrung my hand almost feverishly, and seemed to be on the point of saying something more, but no words passed his lips. A few seconds later I stood alone watching him as he hurried along the now silent street.

A little later I was on the bank of the Thames, between Charing Cross station and Blackfriars Bridge. Even although it was far past midnight, a thousand lights burned and were reflected in the muddy waters of the river. The traffic on the Embankment was nearly gone. An occasional taxi-cab rushed by, but as the minutes passed they became more and more infrequent. Silence, the silence of night, was falling upon the great city, and most of its millions of inhabitants were asleep.

I walked all the way to Blackfriars Bridge, and then turned. I looked at my watch; it was nearly two o'clock in the morning. The City of London School, the great offices facing the Embankment were in darkness. The river ebbed almost silently towards the sea; the flaring advertisement lights across the river had been extinguished.

The night had become very silent. The light wind which had sprung up as Vernon and I had left my club together had dropped again, until not even the leaves on the trees moved.

I knew that a great change had come over me during the last few hours. Somehow my intellectual outlook had altered. My mind was more than ordinarily alert, and I knew that what was possible to me a few hours before was now no longer possible. I felt the meaning of Burke's famous phrase about the Englishman's white passion for liberty.

What was my future to be? I knew Kathleen's intense devotion to the Catholic faith, and I knew, too, that I could now never be of her way of thinking. I remembered not only her father's words, but hers. Kathleen Castlereagh would never marry what she would call a heretic. I did not resent her devotion to what to me was an impossible superstition. If her religion was a help, a comfort, an inspiration to her, it was for her

to enjoy it. But that same religion slammed the door of her heart against me.

Never until that hour did I realise how I loved her, and yet I knew that there was an inseparable barrier between us. Not only could I not accept her faith, but I could not help forward the cause upon which she and her father had set their hearts. For I could no longer advocate making it possible for a Catholic King to sit upon the British throne. I felt as kindly towards individual Catholics as ever, but I could not help to place power in the hands of those who, in the words of Manning, would deluge Europe in blood if thereby the Church could obtain temporal sovereignty. I called to mind Maynooth's reference to the words of a popular ecclesiastic, "Tolerance to Protestants is intolerance to Catholics."

And yet I could not give up the thought of winning Kathleen. How could I when my heart, my life cried out for her?

I came to Cleopatra's Needle, and looked upon the ancient stone that pointed to the starry sky. I tried to imagine its story. Who caused it to be carved? What were the feelings of those who cut those strange hieroglyphics? The Egyptians had their religion. They also believed in a spirit world. They had their mystic rites, their priests, their temples. They had their gods, they believed in the communion of souls. But their religion was dead; as a people they had died out, while only such monuments as I saw before me told of their past greatness.

Perhaps the very age of the obelisk before me affected me; perhaps—but I will not speculate, I will only tell of what took place.

As I said, the night had become very still. London at that hour, save for an occasional passing vehicle or the echo of a distant footstep, seemed to be a city of the dead. A waning moon had risen, and a half-circle of gold ascended the blue sky. The river's muddy waters rolled almost silently to the sea. The trains from Charing Cross station had practically ceased to

run. The great hotels and clubs had put out their lights.

As I stood at the base of the obelisk it seemed to me as though London became less real. Even Cleopatra's Needle did not appear tangible; there was a suggestion of the phantom about it. Doubtless it was because my mind had become dazed by the tumultuous thoughts of the last few hours.

The only real thing to me was my love for Kathleen, and as I stood there alone I pictured her face. I saw it as plainly as I had seen it that night when first we met; in fact, it presently became the only thing I could see. Everything else passed away. But the eyes were not bright and full of laughter as I had seen them first; the mouth was not wreathed in smiles as it had been then. It was still beautiful beyond thought, but it seemed to me to be the beauty of sorrow, and not of joy.

"Kathleen, my love," I cried aloud, "where are you? I want you. All my life is crying out for you. Speak to me, Kathleen. Speak!"

Then out of the stillness of the night I heard her voice. It was more real to me than the voices of the men I had heard through the day.

"I am here, Kerry," she answered. "Come! Come! Come!"

"I am coming," I answered. "But where are you? Tell me."

I heard her voice again, but it seemed as an echo of that which I had heard before.

"I am here, Kerry. I need you. Come to me! Come! Come!"

"I am coming," I cried. And then I seemed like one who wakes from sleep. Again I saw the river rolling eastward; again I saw the great buildings around me dark and silent, while before me was the ancient obelisk shooting up toward the starlit sky. But the face of Kathleen had disappeared; only its memory remained, and the memory of the words she spoke.

I have said that I have Celtic blood in my veins, that my mother was Irish, and my father Cornish. This

may account for the fact that I had no doubt but that Kathleen had spoken. For I had no doubt.

"She needs me; she has called for me," I said to myself. "I will go to her."

A few minutes later I returned to my club and packed my clothes ready for a journey to Ireland.

CHAPTER XXVI

BACK AT CASTLEREAGH

A FEW hours later I found myself in the train rushing towards Holyhead. No one knew where I was going. I left no instructions at my club, nor gave a hint as to the possible date of my return. I would have liked to have seen old Morton Gascoigne and George Fanshawe before I left, but I felt that I must not delay a moment. Kathleen had called me, and I must go to her. I reflected that I was going on a hopeless mission, and that Kathleen would probably drive me from her presence when I told her of my thoughts. None the less, I must go to her. She needed me, else why had she called?

For the light of day, which often dispels the illusions of night, had not dispelled the belief that I had seen Kathleen's face and heard her voice. I did not know where she was, but that did not matter. She was somewhere in Ireland, and I must go to her, and I must seek until I found her. The independent position which I occupied made me less amenable to the party whip than was the case with most Members of Parliament, even if important divisions were likely to take place. But no important divisions were likely. For that matter, many members had left London, and the session would, in the natural course of things, end in a few days.

As chance would have it, I had a compartment to myself, and I was able to think quietly. I called to mind the conversation I had had with old Morton Gascoigne and George Fanshawe. At that time I had scorned the thought that Eve Gascoigne's disappearance was in any way connected with priestly influences. Now I was no longer sure of it. What Maynooth had said about secretly influencing the children of Protestants gave

plausibility to the old man's convictions. Besides, there was *prima facie* evidence that Eve Gascoigne had become a Romanist and obeyed Rome's behests. Even although I found it hard to believe as the old man believed, I now found it easy to understand his feelings. In spite of myself I knew that my whole outlook was changed, and never again could I be indifferent to the great battle that was being fought. Up to the hour when I had heard Maynooth proclaim the programme of his Church I had stubbornly refused to see any truth in old Morton Gascoigne's position, but now I knew that he had spoken the truth. I could no more believe in the distinctive doctrines of the Roman Church than I could believe in the divinity of Odin, or of any other Pagan god.

But I will not describe my mental wanderings further. It is for me to tell my story as best I can, and I have spoken of these matters only that the events which I shall have to set down may be understood.

In due time I reached Holyhead, and boarded the boat bound for Dublin. I noticed three Irish Members of Parliament on the boat, but I did not know them personally, and as they took no notice of me no words passed between us. I did not stay in Dublin a minute longer than was necessary, and by the following afternoon I was at Ballysheen. Arrived there, I gave instructions to the landlord of the inn to get me a horse, and by six o'clock I was on my way to Castlereagh Castle.

I did not know whether Kathleen had returned to her home; neither, for that matter, did I make any inquiries in that direction. Somehow I felt sensitive about mentioning her name before strangers, and a kind of secretiveness to which I had hitherto been a stranger kept me silent as to my proposed destination.

Although I was eager to get to Castlereagh, I rode slowly. Even when my horse broke into a trot I checked him. I tried to explain to myself why I did this, but I could not do so. Something, I know not what, kept me a long time on the road, so that the shades of evening were beginning to gather when at length I drew near the house which I purposed entering.

I did not ride up to the castle, but instead turned into a lane that led to Castlereagh village. I had seen a broken-down inn there where I imagined my horse could be stabled until I again wanted him.

"What's your name?" I said to the innkeeper as he took the horse.

"Sure, and it's Mike Flaherty, yer honour," he said; "and it'll be stayin' the night wid me ye will?"

"No," I said, "but I may not return for a few hours. Don't go to bed till I come back for the horse."

"Sure, and ye'll be visitin' one of the big houses?" said Mike.

"That's as maybe," I made answer. "See to it that the horse is well foddered and groomed."

"It's a gallon of best oats I'll give him, yer honour, and I'll wait till ye come, if ye never come at all. But ye'll 'ave a drap of the crater afore ye set out."

"Not a drop, Mike"; then, seeing his disappointment, I handed him a shilling and started for my walk to the house.

On my way I passed by the village church, and called to mind the time when Kathleen and I had visited it together, and remembered the look on her face as she told me the old story of why the church had been built.

What a simple faith was hers, after all, and how implicitly she believed in all its teaching. She had been fed upon its doctrines, and her love for her Church was a part of her very life. I knew that the poles lay between us. What had been possible then was not possible now. Nevertheless, I resolutely set my face towards the great, gloomy house.

The light was already beginning to fade, and great black clouds hung in the sky. It was more than a month past midsummer, and the days were perceptibly shortening.

Presently I reached the brow of the hill, from which the house was visible, and I stood looking at it like one afraid. Somehow, I could not tell why, but for the first time I felt I had come on a useless errand. Kathleen

was not there. I remembered Maynooth's frequent information that she was away from home, and that it was uncertain when she would return. Moreover, the conviction that I had heard Kathleen's voice calling to me in the night had passed away. What had been real a few hours before was now as vague as a shadow. I reflected that I had been for hours under a great excitement, and that what I believed I had seen and heard were but the wanderings of a disordered imagination.

What sane man, I reflected, could believe that a voice could be heard from Ireland? How could Kathleen's face be seen in the heart of London, when she was far away; and how could her voice be heard? I had simply yielded to a wild, unreasoning fancy, and had come to Ireland on a fool's errand.

But I did not turn back, and a few minutes later I stood at the doorway I remembered so well.

I pulled the rusty bell chain and listened. The clank of the bell plainly reached my ears, but nothing more. The house might be uninhabited; all was silent as death.

Again I rang the bell and listened, and this time I was sure I heard footsteps. A minute later a window above my head opened, and I heard a voice saying:

"There's no one in the house, and will ye be plaised to go away."

I remembered the voice. It belonged to the woman through whose good offices I had been enabled to see Kathleen on my last visit.

"But you are at home, Biddy," I said.

"But it's not to see me that ye've come."

"Come and open the door, Biddy," I said. "You remember me, don't you?"

"Faith, and I don't know you at all, and you must go away, or I'll tell the master to shoot you."

"But you said the master was not at home. Come down, Biddy, and open the door. I want to say something to you particularly."

"To me? You don't want to see me. You are de-caivin' me, Mr. Killigrew, and, faith, I don't know who you are."

"I've a likeness of the King that I want to show you, Biddy," I said, "and as sure as I'm standing here it's engraven on a piece of gold."

The window was shut immediately, and then I heard the sound of voices and the noise of heavy footsteps.

I should think that two minutes must have elapsed before I heard bolts shoot back from the door and the clanking of a heavy chain. However, the door opened and the same slatternly woman stood before me.

"Go away, sor, I can't let ye in. It's as much as me life's worth."

"I want to see Miss Kathleen."

"Then ye cannot."

"Why? She's at home."

"She's not been at home for months. Not since ye was here last."

"Biddy, you are lying to me."

"Tell me that again, and I'll tell them to shoot on ye. I main it, by the 'Ouly Virgin I do."

I could see that the woman was in earnest, and that she was not amenable to the treatment which had been so successful before.

Still, I determined to make an effort, and I took a piece of gold from my pocket.

"It's no use at all, at all," she cried. "I can't let ye come in, and I can't tell ye nothin'."

"But your master's at home."

"By all the saints, I wish he was," cried the woman.

"But you told me he was."

"Faith, and I never did. Go away, I tell ye."

"But you said you would tell him to shoot me."

"And that was only to frighten ye."

"But there are men in the house. I heard their voices."

"I'll tell ye nothin', nothin'," cried the woman angrily. "That is, there's nothin' to tell. Master's gone away. Miss Kathleen, heaven bless her, is gone away; the house is empty, for sure; only the servants are here, and a wild, drinkin' lot they are."

"If you'll tell me where Miss Kathleen is I'll give

you this," I said, showing her the sovereign I held in my hand.

"Go away, ye divil," she cried; "ye are like the sarpent that tempted our first parents in the Garden of Eden, and that ye are. Not a word will I tell ye. And master had no bizness to laive a poor woman so, and only Jim Mahoney and my ould man to kaip watch, seein' as he knew the waikness av both of them."

"They are fond of whisky, are they?" I said; "but what of that? He can trust you. He knows what a faithful creature you are."

"And what's the use of that when the drink's in 'em?" she cried. "How can I keep them from gittin' Pete Flannagan and Titus Mulligan in? And then, the saints help us all, it's cards and whisky; and who's to kaip watch? And ye mustn't come in, and it's I that won't tell ye anything."

"Not for this?" I said, again showing her the sovereign.

"And what's the use of that?" she said, "for they'll be listenin', and they'll know I've got it, and they'll git it, and that'll main more cards and more whisky. Besides, it's I that have nothing to tell. The house is empty, I tell ye, whoever may tell ye differently, and may the saints forgive me."

My mind was working quickly, and I reflected on several words the woman had let fall. I felt sure that she knew more than she felt disposed to tell me. It might be of no importance, but the woman believed that it was. I saw, too, that she was in a state of fear, and I believed that if I could gain her confidence I should discover where Kathleen was.

"Biddy," I said in a whisper, "I vow to you that I am a friend of yours. If you are afraid to speak to me now, meet me in an hour from now down by the entrance gate and I'll give you the sovereign. For I must know where Miss Kathleen is. You know what it is to be in love, Biddy?"

"And who'll watch then?" she cried. "She's gettin' out of hand, I tell ye. And master's away."

"Do you mean to tell me that Miss Kathleen is not allowed her liberty?" I cried.

"I will tell ye nothing, and I haven't told ye nothing; and what I've first told ye is a lie; and it's a divil ye are, tryin' to tempt a poor woman."

She slammed the door in my face, not even giving another look to the coin at which she had been casting longing eyes. A moment later the window above my head opened again.

"Begone, ye spalpeen," she cried, "or the dogs shall be set on ye, and Jim Mahoney shall shoot ye like the varmin ye are."

There was not only anger but fear in the woman's voice. Everything confirmed the suspicion that some great terror lurked in her heart.

I walked away from the door and turned down the weed-grown drive by which I had first approached the house. But I determined not to go far. I felt sure that there were secrets behind the walls of the gloomy building—secrets which I determined to unravel.

Before I had gone far I had come to the conclusion that Kathleen was kept there against her will. I called to mind what she had said to me when she had confessed her love. She had besought me to help her, to fight her father's opposition, and to accept no refusal. I reflected on her passionate and untutored nature, on her wild, Irish blood, and I drew my conclusions accordingly. I believed that her father had forbidden her ever to think of me again, and that she, in spite of her desire to obey him, had rebelled against him. He, as a consequence, had imprisoned her, and then, having to leave home, had given command to certain men to watch her. This might be absurd, if not impossible, in England, but I reflected that Michael Castlereagh was a passionate and unreasoning man, that he was the plaything of fanatical prejudices. Besides, would not this explain what I had seen and heard as I stood by Cleopatra's Needle? She had been thinking of me even as I had been thinking of her, and by some means unknown to me our souls had been in communion. I had cried out to her, and she

had responded to my cry, and had besought me to come to her.

Besides, if she were imprisoned in the house she might be subject to ill-treatment. Hers was not a nature that would meekly allow itself to be placed under restriction. She was impatient, passionate, and would only be amenable to the commands of an old servant except under the strongest compulsion. This would mean stormy scenes, and perhaps the use of physical force. What did the woman's strange allusion to the men who were in the house mean? And who could tell what those men, especially when under the influence of whisky, might do? Biddy had hinted at hard drinking and card-playing. What did Michael Castlereagh mean by calling in such aid while he left the house?

I turned suddenly and looked back. The drive was shaded by overhanging trees, and nothing was plainly visible now that the daylight had gone; otherwise I could have sworn that I saw the figure of a man in the road.

All this made me determine not to leave Castlereagh until I had discovered the truth. But I must act warily. I remembered that I was in a country where bloody deeds were not uncommon; but in this instance I had only to match my wits against those of a few Irish peasants, and I had no fear of results.

But was Michael Castlereagh at home? If he were my work would be more difficult. Michael Castlereagh was not a careful, cautious man; but he was intelligent and could not be managed in the same way as ignorant peasants were managed.

I walked the whole length of the drive and entered the parish lane. I listened carefully, but no sound reached me. The night had become still, and even the snapping of a twig could be heard.

Remembering the geography of the country I determined to return to the castle by another route. I reflected that I knew nothing of the surroundings of the back part of the building, and it was necessary that I should know without an instant's delay.

Half an hour later I found myself in the region of

the castle again, but this time I was at the back of the building. I saw now what was unknown to me before. A wall, at least twelve feet high, enclosed a piece of ground contiguous to the castle. Of course, it might only be a wall such as is often built around gardens, and on which fruit trees were trained; nevertheless, I could not help seeing that only an experienced climber could mount it, and that it made that part of the castle grounds almost as safe as a prison-yard.

I walked around it in the hope of seeing some broken place, or some means whereby I could climb and see what lay beyond. But in vain. There was no breach in the wall, and I could see no means whereby I could climb. Presently my heart almost stood still, for just on the other side of the wall, and close to me, I heard a woman sobbing.

CHAPTER XXVII

I MAKE A DISCOVERY

I KNEW it was a woman's voice. At first I thought it might have been a child, but a child's cry is different from that of a woman. Besides, there was a depth of anguish in what I heard, unknown in the voice of a child.

But it was not Kathleen that I heard. I should have known her voice among ten thousand others. Had it not been ringing in my ears ever since I had first heard it? Grave or gay, passionate or playful, I should recognise it anywhere.

She did not cry aloud, but rather seemed to be trying to suppress the sorrow of her heart. And yet there was a world of pent-up anguish in her tones.

I listened eagerly, feverishly. I remembered that, as far as I could judge, some one was in trouble, and imprisoned in domains where Kathleen Castlereagh was mistress. If some one were suffering, did not that suffering reflect on Kathleen's kindness? Was she not to some extent, at least, responsible for it?

"Oh, I am afraid! Will not some one come to me? Oh, Kathleen, Kathleen, where are you? You who told me you were my friend!"

The words came in a wail. They were the cry of a heart torn by fear and anguish; they were also a reproach on the woman I loved.

Then my heart gave a great bound, for I knew who was behind the wall. I recognised the voice as belonging to the woman who for months had been eagerly sought after.

"Miss Gascoigne," I said, not loudly, but loud enough for her to hear.

Instantly the sobbing ceased, and there was silence.

"Miss Eve Gascoigne," I repeated, "do not be afraid. I am your friend."

"Who are you? Tell me quick!" Her voice was eager, excited, almost hoarse.

"We have met once," I said; "don't you remember—down at your grandfather's house? I am Kerry Killigrew."

"Mr. Killigrew! Is that the name?"

"Yes. Can I help you? Serve you?"

"Yes, yes. You can—but no, you must not; but—but—hark!"

She spoke in a hoarse whisper, but every word reached me in the silence of the summer night.

"Tell me why you are here?" I said. "Your grandfather has been seeking you for months. Why have you hidden yourself here?"

"My grandfather been seeking me? No!"

"Yes; for months. Will you tell me how I can get to you, then I can tell you everything?"

"My grandfather seeking me? Are you sure? Tell me that again."

"Of course I am sure. He summoned me to help him to find you months ago. But why are you here? Tell me."

"Oh, help me, Mr. Killigrew, help me!"

"Of course I will help you. There must be some means of my getting to you. Tell me how."

"But you cannot. I am like one in a prison. I cannot get away, and no one will come to help me. I am alone, all alone, and I am afraid. Those men—those horrible men!"

"They have not harmed you, have they?" I cried.

"No; but I am afraid. Sometimes—— Hark! some one is coming."

"Don't be afraid," I said. "I will come to you; I will take you back to your grandfather."

"Oh, you cannot. I would not go—that is, I cannot get away; I must not go with you, I dare not. Some one is coming—there, don't you hear? It's the woman. Oh, go away—go!"

"And where is it ye are, miss?"

"Here—I'm coming."

"And it's give me a fright, ye did. Come in at once, if ye please."

"There, I must go! Don't you hear?"

"Yes, I hear; but listen a minute. The woman cannot hear me; she is some distance away. You have evidently been deceived by some one. Can you go back now and come out later? I have much to tell you, and I can wait here for any length of time."

"No, I cannot; I dare not."

"Why not? You can wait till the woman is asleep, and then come out quietly."

"No, no. She keeps the keys, and—yes, I think—oh, if I dared!"

"You must dare. Listen! I shall wait here for two hours, and then, if you do not come, I shall be here at this time to-morrow night. But not a word, not a hint, you understand."

"Where are ye, miss? An' it's you who know that ye ought not to be out at night time like this."

A few seconds later I heard Eve Gascoigne's voice answering her. She was some distance from where she had stood when she spoke to me and nearer the woman.

"All right, Biddy; I'm here."

"And what for did ye go out alone of a noight like this?"

"Why, what harm is there in my going out, Biddy? I felt a bit lonely, and I just went for a walk. That's natural enough, isn't it?"

Her voice had changed. The tones were almost wheedling. I began to have hopes that I should see her again that night. Evidently she was bent upon allaying any suspicions the woman might have.

"Ah, but ye shouldn't, miss, and it's ye that know it."

"But, Biddy, I've only been a walk round the garden. Wouldn't you do the same if you were me?"

"And it's me that would let ye out when ye would. But ye know the orders, miss. When master comes home all will be different."

"And when will he be home, Biddy?"

"Ay, and what wouldn't I give to know. For it's me that have the divil's own time, what with Mike and Jim and the rest av 'em. It's whisky and card-playin', and yet I dare not tell the master even when he comes."

Their voices died away now, but I knew by the way the woman spoke that, even if she had had suspicions, Eve had allayed them. For the present, therefore, I had nothing to fear, and in all probability she would manage to come into the garden again.

A few minutes later all was silent, and I was in a position to reflect on what had taken place. There was no doubt about it, the discovery of Eve Gascoigne's whereabouts had come to me as a great shock. What did it mean? Here was the girl whom I had first seen at her grandfather's house several months before, a prisoner in the home of Kathleen Castlereagh. To say the least of it, the thought was disturbing, and set me thinking furiously. Why had this girl left a beautiful home, a home where she had every liberty, every luxury, in order to become a prisoner in this tumble-down Irish castle? It seemed inexplicable. Eve Gascoigne was a potential heiress, one of the greatest in England. Everything that a young girl could desire was hers. She bore one of the oldest names in the country, a name that meant a great deal for many miles around her home. Her grandfather was ready to grant her slightest wish. She had the love of one of the finest young fellows in the county, a love which, according to George Fanshawe, was returned.

Again the question which old Morton Gascoigne and I faced months before appealed to me, the question of motive. Some motive of more than ordinary power must have been at work to induce her to leave position, home, and love to become a prisoner in this old house, and under the surveillance of ignorant Irish peasants. What was it?

The more I considered it, the more I was driven to the conclusion that Morton Gascoigne and George Fanshawe were right, and that the girl's religious fears had

been worked upon. And yet—why? What could be gained by such a method of procedure?

Again and again I pondered over the problem, only to be baffled. That duplicity had been at work, I did not doubt, but whose was the duplicity? For, I reflected, Eve Gascoigne was in the home of Kathleen Castlereagh; thus she must have been a party to all that had taken place.

In casting my mind back over the history of the whole affair, I remembered that it was about the time I had first met Kathleen that I had heard of Eve's disappearance; and at this remembrance events began to connect themselves. I recalled to mind the fact that Kathleen had told me she had had a sudden summons to return to Ireland immediately, because her father had special need of her. I saw the need now. Eve had been taken to Ireland, and Kathleen was needed to bear her company. I reflected, too, on my experiences when I had first visited Castlereagh Castle. I recalled the fact that a servant had entered the room while we were having lunch, that she had been much excited, and that Kathleen had hurried away as if to attend to some urgent matter. I remembered that Michael Castlereagh had seemed anxious that I should ride to Fairy Glen on an excursion with Kathleen, and that on my return I was not invited to the house; and that Kathleen had discouraged the idea of my visiting her. Moreover, when I had called the next day, it was with difficulty that I had obtained admission.

All this meant that Eve Gascoigne was prisoner there, and that they feared I should make a discovery. Thus Kathleen was cognisant of all that had taken place; she was a party to all the deception that had been practised.

Did this account for her strange behaviour when I had gone to her and told her of my love? Was it because of some pangs of conscience that she had seemed to rejoice in my love at one minute, and reject the next?

Nothing was clear to me except one thing: I had discovered the hiding-place of Eve Gascoigne; I had

learnt that she was unhappy, and that it was my work to deliver her and to restore her to her grandfather.

Many plans of action shaped themselves in my mind, the one that struck me as most feasible being this: I would wait for the two hours I had mentioned, and if she came to me I would act upon the revelations which Eve Gascoigne should make. If she did not come, however, I would return to Ballysheen, and send a telegram to Morton Gascoigne early the following morning, telling him to bring George Fanshawe without delay.

But in the meanwhile? Evidently the woman Biddy had had instructions not to admit me. She would, of course, communicate with Michael Castlereagh without delay, telling him of my visit. It was necessary, therefore, that what was done must be done quickly. One thing was in my favour: Michael Castlereagh would have no suspicions that I knew anything of Eve Gascoigne's imprisonment in his house. He would believe that I had come to Ireland to try to see Kathleen, and, knowing that Kathleen was not at home, would not think it worth his while to return. Of course, it was only a chance, but it was a chance. However, no time must be wasted. I had a difficult work to do, and it must be done quickly.

The night was moonless, and the sky was so cloud-laden that, although a summer night, it was so dark that it was with difficulty that I could make note of my surroundings. I saw, however, that I was standing on a piece of waste ground, that it was overgrown with bushes, and that trees grew here and there. As far as I could judge, no footpaths ran through it, so in all probability no one would pass that way. I was, therefore, free to investigate to my heart's content. My first business was to examine the high wall, and see if there was any possibility of climbing it. If I could do this, I felt sure I should be in a better position to help Eve Gascoigne.

Slowly I crept around the base of the wall, but everywhere it presented an impregnable barrier. It formed a

huge square and was built up close to the house. Close to the house was a door, but that, I discovered, was securely bolted from within. The enclosure was indeed a prison.

Again I traversed the whole length of the wall; but it had no breach anywhere. Unlike the rest of the buildings of the place it looked intact and in good repair. Still, I did not give up hope. Like every other strong, active boy who had been reared in the country, I had done many difficult feats of climbing, and I felt sure I could overcome the difficulties that presented themselves. Especially was this so when presently I discerned a tree, the branches of which overhung the wall. In less time than it takes me to write I had mounted the tree and stood on the coping-stones of the wall. As far as I could judge, the enclosure was at one time a garden, but now it appeared to be a wilderness. As I have said, however, it was too dark to discern anything plainly. I crept along the summit of the wall, watching as well as I could for any sign of Eve's coming, until presently I could have cried out for joy. Either an apple- or a pear-tree which had been planted many years before against the wall, and been allowed to grow untrimmed and untrained, offered an easy means of descent. A few seconds later I was within the enclosure.

The ease with which I had overcome the obstacles assured me of one fact. Eve Gascoigne was a willing prisoner, otherwise a strong, active girl as I knew her to be would have found a way to escape. Michael Castle-reagh might think it wise to take means of safely guarding her, but I was sure that stone walls did not make her prison. It was not physical force that took her to this lonely house; it was not physical force that kept her there.

I waited in the garden—for such it was, although little of it had been cultivated for many years—for some time, watching and listening eagerly, and presently I heard stealthy footsteps. I made no noise, however. I was determined to be sure that it was Eve Gascoigne before making my presence known. The footsteps drew

nearer and still nearer to me. Sometimes there was a silence for a few seconds, as if some one were listening, and then whoever it was came-nearer to me.

Presently I saw the outline of a woman. Still I waited. I could afford to take no risks.

"Mr. Killigrew."

I had no doubt now. It was Eve Gascoigne's voice, and she had evaded the watchfulness of her keepers.

"Yes," I said, coming towards her, "I am here."

"You have got inside! How did you manage it?"

"Oh, easily enough," I said, laughing quietly, for I wanted to allay her fears. "A tree growing outside enabled me to get on the wall, then by the aid of a friendly apple-tree, I descended. Besides, it would not hurt me if I dropped into the garden."

"No one has seen you?"

She seemed more calm and composed now than she had been an hour or two before. Evidently the knowledge of my nearness had given her strength and confidence.

"How did you know I was here?"

"I didn't know it."

"Then how is it you found me?"

"I'll tell you another time if you wish it," I said quietly. "Enough that I know where you are, and that I am here to help you."

"But granddad doesn't know I am here?" This she asked almost fearfully.

"If he knew he would have been here long ago," I replied. "We will come to that presently. You are sure that the woman does not know you have left the house?"

"I do not think so. No, I am almost sure she does not suspect such a thing. I noticed that she took special care in bolting the doors; then she went to bed."

"How long was that ago?"

"It must be an hour or more."

"Does she sleep near you?"

"Yes, and she was fast asleep when I passed along the corridor."

"You are sure?"

"I heard her," she replied, and I thought I detected merriment in her voice.

"Then we can talk freely," I replied. "But you must be tired. Is there not some place where you can sit down?"

"There is a seat near here," she answered.

She led the way to a kind of shed where there was a rough bench.

"Now," I said, "tell me why you are a prisoner in this place!"

"I am not a prisoner," she replied.

"Then tell me why you are here," I urged, and waited for her to speak.

CHAPTER XXVIII

WHAT EVE GASCOIGNE TOLD ME

"TELL me about my grandfather," she said, instead of answering my question. "Of course, he is terribly angry? Of course, he hates me? Yes, he must. I know he does. He would drive me from his door if I went back."

"Who told you such a thing?"

"Oh, I know. It is terrible to think of; but the price had to be paid, and I counted the cost."

"You counted the cost? Tell me what you mean."

"You know my grandfather? You know how bitter he is against the faith?"

"I know he is a strong Protestant, but——"

"Yes, yes; then you understand; you can realise what he felt and said when—when he knew the truth. If I had stayed, I might have—but I dare not tell you."

"Miss Gascoigne," I said, "you are evidently under a great misapprehension. I wish you would tell me everything plainly; then I should understand what to do."

Evidently she was in a state of great excitement, her voice trembled, and I felt by the quiver of her fingers as she held my arm that fear had possession of her heart.

"Yes, I can speak to you," she said, "I know I can. You will not be angry with me, will you?"

"Angry! no, why should I be angry?"

"No, why should you? But what do you wish me to tell you?"

"Everything. That is—tell me why you left your home, why you came here, why you are staying here."

"But you know—you surely know?"

"No, I know nothing. I may have made guesses, but

I know nothing for certain. I wish you would tell me everything."

"You are of the faith, aren't you?"

"What faith?"

"The Catholic faith."

"I am not a Roman Catholic, if that's what you mean."

"Oh, I heard something about your being converted. But you are not?"

"No."

"Then I cannot tell you. Why should I? You would not understand. Besides, there is no need that I should. I have done right, and—and I am very happy!"

She said this with a sob.

"You will tell me nothing, then?"

"No, nothing."

"And you do not wish to leave this place?"

"No, I ought not—I would not!"

"You mean this?"

"Yes, that is—yes."

"Then I had better go," I said quietly. "I shall do no good by remaining here. As for you, you are happy, and you do not wish to leave."

"Oh, but I am not, and—and I—oh, Mr. Killigrew, don't be unkind. Help me!"

"I cannot help you unless you tell me everything."

"But how can I? I dare not!"

"Come, Miss Gascoigne," I said, for I saw that she was under the influence of a great fear. "No harm can happen to you by telling me everything, and really and sincerely I want to be your friend."

"But I dare not. I shall have to confess to Father Shannon, and—and oh, I dare not!"

"Unless you tell me everything I am powerless," I said. "Besides, what have you, a Protestant girl, to fear from a Roman priest?"

"But I am not a Protestant! Surely you know?"

"How could I know? I have never seen you but once before. And you were a Protestant then?"

"No, no. That is why I am afraid. Don't you see?"

"No, I don't see."

"But my grandfather knows."

"He has had suspicions, but he doesn't know. That is, he has heard nothing beyond what you yourself wrote to him. You wrote that letter at the dictation of some one, didn't you?"

"How did you know? But that was only to—to—— You see, other letters have been sent him since."

"By whom?"

"I don't know. But I know he has been told everything."

"He has been told nothing."

"But he has. I know he has."

"I saw him only a short time ago, and up to that time he had heard nothing."

"How long ago?"

"Only a few weeks."

"But—but—of course, that is a mistake. Oh, Mr. Killigrew, you saw my grandfather? How did he look? Was he very angry with me?"

"He looked very much worried and perplexed. His sorrow has aged him. He is anxious lest some evil has befallen you. He has been using every means of finding you, and is longing for you to come home to him."

"No, no; you do not mean it?"

"But I do mean it."

"He does not curse me, then?"

"Curse you! No, he loves you as his own life. You are all the world to him."

"What, now?"

"Yes, now. And to George Fanshawe, too. He has been searching night and day for you. He says he will never cease searching until he finds you."

"But he hates me, despises me."

"No. George Fanshawe is not a man who says much, but it is easy to see that all the world will be dark to him if he does not find you, and—and——"

"Yes, what?"

"Make you his wife."

"No, no, you don't mean that?"

"But I do."

"But they don't either of them love me any longer; they hate me, despise me!"

"I assure you, Miss Gascoigne, you are deceived. For months they have been giving their lives to find you." I spoke very quietly, for I saw that she was well-nigh hysterical.

She was silent for some seconds. Evidently she was trying to realise what I had told her.

"Then—then—they do not know—cannot know—everything," she said.

"George Fanshawe believes you have been deceived," I said, "and he feels sure that you will one day find out the truth."

"Then—then neither he nor my grandfather hates me! Tell me again."

"They both came to me at my club only a few weeks ago," I replied. "I know that they love you as much as ever, and would do anything to get you back. They have been searching for you for months."

"But what do they think?"

"They think the priests have got hold of you, and poisoned your mind."

"But—but I have deceived them. I have deceived grandfather for years."

"Yes, they have come to believe you have been under influences which have led you to do this. But they are sure you are a victim, not to be blamed, but to be pitied. I did not believe this when they told me."

"And what did you believe?"

"I did not know what to think. But be assured of this, Miss Gascoigne: your grandfather loves you, and longs to have you back."

"Oh, I want to go back, I do, I do; but I am afraid," she sobbed.

"You need not be afraid," I replied.

"Oh, if you only knew! If you knew, I feel sure that you would——"

She did not complete the sentence, but burst out sobbing as though her heart would break.

"There is no need for you to be afraid," I said. "Now I know where you are you shall be delivered, protected."

"Mr. Killigrew," she said feverishly, "do you believe it is my duty to tell Father Shannon everything?"

"Your duty! Certainly not. You are a free-born English girl, and it is for you to think your own thoughts and live your own life."

"Then you do not believe I shall be damned for—that is—suppose—I—I——"

"You will not be damned for doing what your heart dictates," I said. "It is your duty to throw aside all superstition, to scorn priestly commands, and go back to your grandfather."

"Are you sure of this?"

"Yes, sure of it."

"Besides," she went on, as if speaking to herself, "since I have been here I have been in doubt. It does not seem right. My grandfather is a good man, and he is so wise, and—but Father Shannon says he is a heretic, and that I shall save my soul only by obedience to the Church."

"Ah, I see now," I said. "George Fanshawe was right in his suspicions."

"You see," she went on apparently heedless of what I had said, "that woman came as my governess, and little by little she made me believe that grandfather was a heretic. She took me to a Catholic church at Excheater, and—and—I went to see a priest. He gave me books to read, and told me on no account to tell my grandfather, as he would be very angry. You see how things came to me. That priest was a wonderfully clever man, so clever that I could not help feeling that grandfather was wrong. I was baptised, and then I was told that I was admitted into the Catholic Church, and if I were an undutiful child terrible things would happen to me. Somehow, when I went to him for confession I seemed like one hypnotised, and I dared not disobey him. Presently, grandfather found out everything, but Miss Lakeman did not mind. Of course, she was sent away, but I was afraid to dis-

obey Father Finlayson. He told me I was a child of the Church, and would be damned everlastingly if I became apostate, but under the circumstances, I must pretend to fall in with my grandfather's wishes, although secretly I was true to the faith. Oh, you don't know how hard I found it to do this, but he exercised a sort of spiritual tyranny over me. I dared not disobey him, I simply *dared* not.

"Then Miss Grant came, and I was not long in finding out that, although she outwardly professed Protestantism, she was a papist at heart. But I dared not tell grandfather; Father Finlayson commanded me to be silent, and I had to obey him."

"Then Miss Grant is not a Protestant?"

"No, she is a splendid actress. I despised her for it, and I despised myself more. But I seemed like one in chains. I knew I was wrong in deceiving grandfather, and yet I felt I should be doing a greater wrong in disobeying the Church. For I went to Excheater often, and every time I went the power of the Church seemed to grow greater. Father Finlayson showed me the writings of the holy men of the Church, and some of them went to prove that it was not wrong to tell a lie if thereby I could serve the Church. I remember, especially, the writings of St. Alphonso de Liguori, who said that it was lawful, for a just cause, to use equivocation, and to confirm the equivocation with an oath.

"Oh, I despised myself all the time, and yet I could not do otherwise. Besides, I knew my grandfather's opinions, and I was afraid of him. I expect the fact that I was led to deceive him made me afraid. A great shadow hung over my life. In spite of the fact that Father Finlayson, who, as I said, was a very clever, learned man, and a member of the Society of Jesus, told me that I was justified in deceiving my grandfather, I felt a great scorn for myself, but on the other hand I dared not disobey him. He claimed to be my spiritual director, and somehow I could not help obeying him.

"One day, however, I went to church with my grandfather, and the minister preached a sermon on 'Truth.'

He urged that truth must be told under every circumstance, and that a lie of any sort was sin. This sermon affected me tremendously, and I felt I must tell my grandfather everything. But I dared not do so until I had been to see Father Finlayson, who commanded me to be silent, and also hinted that he was not sure that I ought not to leave my home for the salvation of my soul. He said my confession had shown him that my faith was in danger, and as the faith was of infinitely more importance than home, or friends or relations, he must seriously consider my leaving home.

"Then a distant relation came to the house. Perhaps you have heard of him—a Titus Breen from Ireland—and Father Finlayson urged that it was my duty to marry him. But I could not do that. How could I—when—when——"

"You cared for another," I suggested when I saw her hesitate. "Your grandfather told me that George Fanshawe proposed to you shortly before you left home."

"Yes, but when I told Father Finlayson he commanded me to drive every thought of George from me. He said that if I married him I should certainly lose my faith and perish everlastingly."

She burst out sobbing again at this, but she presently became calmer again, and went on.

"Oh, Mr. Killigrew, you do not know, you cannot tell what I suffered. I—I—but you must know. Father Finlayson said that all love for a heretic was a deadly sin, and that it was my duty to leave my home, where my soul's salvation was threatened, that it was better that my heart should break than that my soul should be lost everlastingly."

"And you believed him?" I said.

"He made me believe him. Oh, I know my whole course of action must seem pitiful and despicable to you, but I seemed like one in chains. I was afraid to confess everything to grandfather; for one reason because Father Finlayson forbade my doing so, and for another because I was in terror of what grandfather would do when he knew I had been deceiving him for years."

"Then you went away?"

"Oh, yes; oh, I scorn myself for— And yet after all, did I not do what was right? Besides, at that time I believed Father Finlayson in everything, I believed that he spoke as God. Besides, oh, you do not know the influence of a man who acts in a priestly capacity on the mind of a girl, and I think the fact that I had been deceiving my grandfather through the years made me more obedient to his will. Since I have been here I have thought continually about it, and I can see how I came to believe what I was taught. At first, even although I was a child, I laughed at what Miss Lakeman said, but little by little I was influenced. Then when I went to Excheater and saw Father Finlayson, the terror of it all got hold of me. He made me believe in the priests' power. He almost frightened me when he assured me that priests had the power to change bread and wine into the actual body and blood of our Lord. I was afraid of him when he read those words of the great saint, Alphonso de Liguori, who said that a priest was the creator of his Creator. Thus little by little I came to believe that I ought to obey him in everything, that it was right to deceive my grandfather, and to pretend I was a Protestant when I was not. It seemed to me that I had no will of my own, but that I must do his will. And the longer I kept from telling grandfather everything, the harder I found it to go to him and confess everything. Then when Father Finlayson quoted those words from the New Testament, where our Lord said that he that loved father or mother or anything more than Him was not worthy of Him, I felt I must do what he said."

"Then this Father Finlayson arranged everything?"

"Yes, everything."

"And you obeyed?"

"I was afraid to do anything else."

"Even although you knew you were deceiving your grandfather?"

"I dared not disobey."

"But why was this place chosen?"

"I was told that no one would think of finding me

here; that I should have a friend who would love me, and a place of quietness where my faith would be strengthened."

"Well, tell me more."

"After a time I wanted to go back. I longed to go to grandfather and tell him everything. But I was told that both grandfather and George Fanshawe had cast me off, that my grandfather had sworn that if I came back he would drive me from his doors."

"But you surely did not believe this?"

"For a time I could not—at last I secretly wrote to him."

"You wrote to him?"

"Yes, I gave the letter to Kathleen Castlereagh to post."

"Well, what then?"

"I never got an answer."

"Who told you that your grandfather had cast you off, and had sworn he would drive you from his doors?"

"Kathleen told me."

"You are sure of this?"

"Yes, she told me so repeatedly."

"Then Miss Castlereagh knows everything?"

"Yes, she knows everything."

"And Miss Castlereagh urged you to stay here?"

"Yes, I do not think I could have stayed but for her."

CHAPTER XXIX

DOES KATHLEEN KNOW?

IT is no use denying it, my heart burned with anger as she spoke. This then was the woman whom I had believed to be the soul of truth, this was the woman I loved, and to whom I had offered my life. She had been an actor in this vile plot. She had been a party to deceiving this girl, to dragging her from her home, to ruining her life, and to trying to rob her of the love of the old man whose heart was yearning for her.

I could not believe it, and yet the evidence was complete, conclusive. I knew now why Kathleen said she must hurry back to Ireland. It was in order to ruin a home, to blight an old man's life, to rob a girl of her fortune, her individuality, her liberty. And yet I had raved about her nobility, her truthfulness. I had said to myself that hers were the eyes of one who was incapable of meanness, of lies. I had dreamed of her as a pure child of Nature, as my ideal of what a woman should be. Wilful she was, and I loved her for it; passionate, unreasoning, and as changeful as an April day; but she was beautiful, and noble, and true amidst it all. The woman who, to me was above all others, the queen of my life. And yet her life was a lie. She was a party to a deception so cruel and so base that my heart burned with anger at the thought of it.

Yet, how could I believe it? Again the picture of her face rose before me. The face of a beautiful, guileless child, and yet the face of a woman. There was no suggestion of falsehood in that picture. One could as soon associate her with fraud or deceit as one could the Madonna, whose picture was so common at the shrines of Roman Catholics.

Besides, I remembered why I had come to Ireland. I called to mind what I regarded as a vision which I had seen on the Embankment. The face was sorrowful, almost despairing, but it was the face of an angel for its purity. I thought of the words that were wafted to me in the silence of the night, "Come to me, come to me, Kerry!" And I had come with winged feet to Ireland to find her.

Yet, now when I had come I had been met with this! I had found that the girl on whom old Morton Gascoigne had bestowed the wealth of his heart had been enticed from home through deceit and fraud, and that Kathleen had been a party to that fraud. The thought was maddening, and for the moment I almost forgot the problem of how I was to help Eve Gascoigne in the anger that was burning in my heart.

All this flashed through my mind in a few seconds, although it takes me some time to set it on paper. In fact, I do not believe that the girl by my side ever dreamed of what I was thinking. Indeed, her next words showed that she did not.

"You cannot help me, can you?" she cried.

"Yes," I replied grimly. "I can, and I will."

"How?" she asked eagerly.

"You must come with me. I will take you to your grandfather."

"Oh, I cannot, I dare not; but when?"

"To-night, now."

"Oh no, I dare not, I dare not!"

"Why? Your grandfather would receive you with open arms. George Fanshawe has been searching for you for months."

"But tell me, are you sure of this?"

"Yes, I am sure—but tell me this: Do you know where Kathleen Castlereagh is now?"

"No. She left here a week ago."

"Only a week ago?"

"That is all. I was told that she was going into religion. For some days before she left she hardly spoke to me, and Father Shannon told me that she was going to

a convent, and he asked me whether I also would like to go as a postulant?"

"And what did you say?"

"I hardly know what I did say. It seemed to me that when Kathleen was gone I had no friend, no one to confide in, and I was almost distracted, but I think he left me with the idea that I should go to this convent."

"And where is Michael Castlereagh?"

"I don't know. He has spent very little of his time here lately, I think, and I seldom see him even when he's at home."

"Then the way is plain," I said. "I have a horse down at the inn at Castlereagh. I can help you to get out of this place, and then you will be free."

"But where can I go? Where can you take me? We are miles from a station, a town."

I saw the truth in her words. As I reflected it was no easy matter to take a young girl away from such a house as this in the way I had suggested. I needed time; my plans must be carefully made. Besides, there was no immediate hurry. She was safe for another day, and by the following night I could have everything in readiness.

It must be remembered, moreover, that I was not the lover of Eve Gascoigne. Had I been George Fanshawe I should doubtless have urged her to leave at once, and I should have persuaded her, but I loved another woman, and truth to tell, I thought more of her than of the girl by my side.

"Besides," she went on, "—no, I cannot go with you now. I must have time to think."

"Will Father Shannon come and see you to-morrow?"

"Yes."

"You must tell him nothing of what has taken place to-night."

She was silent at this.

"You see the importance of it. Everything will be frustrated if you do. Besides, he has no right to know.

You are a free woman. You will soon be the wife of George Fanshawe."

"But I dare keep nothing back in confession."

"Then make no confession. You have been deceived. You ought not to be here. You are the victim of a conspiracy."

"Are you sure of this?"

"Yes, I am sure of it."

"You think that Mr. Castlereagh and Kathleen have been a party to it?"

"We must not judge hastily," I said, for even then I could not confess to another the fears that haunted me. "Everything will be made known in good time. You say you will not come with me to-night. Perhaps your judgment is best. No harm can happen to you for the present, but be here again to-morrow night. In the meanwhile I will prepare for every emergency."

"Oh, if I were sure I ought to leave!" she cried piteously.

"No one has the right to keep you," I said; "remember that. You are free to go where you like and when you like."

"But I'm not. Those people have received orders to keep me here. Besides—oh, you don't know."

"Know what?"

"How the commands of the priests hang on me like chains."

"Shake them off," I cried. "You will soon laugh at them."

"But, Mr. Killigrew, I am afraid. Do you think Father Shannon has any right to command me? Do you think that if I disobey him I shall be lost?"

I laughed gaily.

"We do not live in the Middle Ages," I said. "Do not think I do not sympathise with you; I do. But the threats of a priest are only fit to frighten children. You are a child no longer. And remember you are not unprotected."

For some time she seemed to be fighting a battle with her own heart. Her hands clenched and unclenched

themselves quickly. Presently she rose to her feet, and she heaved a deep sigh as though she were trying to throw a weight from her heart.

"Yes," she replied, and I noted a new tone in her voice. It suggested decision, determination. "Yes, you are right. My eyes have been opened. I have the right. I will be free. You are sure of what you say about—about George Fanshawe and my grandfather?" she added quickly.

"Sure, absolutely sure," I replied.

"Oh, I shall be ashamed to see them, ashamed of my weakness, of my deceit. But no matter, my mind is made up. I will be free; I will live my own life."

"Then to-morrow night you will come here again, and I will have everything in readiness."

"Yes," she replied quietly. "I must be going now. Oh, thank you so much—you—you do not realise——"

"Never mind that," I replied. "I am glad to be of help to you. To-morrow night, then. Don't be afraid of anything, no matter what happens. You have a helper, a friend near. You'll remember that, won't you?"

"Yes," she replied quietly. "I'll remember. Good night."

A few minutes later she had found her way into the house, while I, by the aid of the friendly trees, climbed the wall and dropped on the other side.

Late as it was I found Mike Flaherty awaiting me, neither did he ask any questions as he led out my horse. Perhaps his suspicions, if he had any, were allayed by the money I gave him.

The first thing I did on the following morning was to go to the village telegraph office and send some telegrams. I was not quite sure as to the length of time that either old Morton Gascoigne or George Fanshawe intended to remain in London, and so I sent not only to their clubs but to their country residences.

"Come here immediately," I telegraphed. "Extremely important. Unexpected discovery of everything."

This done I endeavoured to face the whole situation, as, after reflection, it appeared to me.

The facts were plain enough. I had discovered that for months Eve Gascoigne had been living in the house of Michael Castlereagh, and that she had been led to go there at the command of those who told her that her soul's salvation was in danger in her own home. I had learnt, too, that she had been led to stay there not only for fear of disobeying the priests, but because she had been told that her grandfather was furiously angry with her, and had sworn to drive her from his doors if she returned. Added to this she had been led to believe that George Fanshawe had discarded her as utterly unworthy. In spite of this, however, she longed to go home, and was now heartily ashamed of the weakness which had led to years of duplicity. Moreover, before I had left her she had seemingly been able to throw off the incubus of the past, and had become filled with a new determination.

All this was plain enough, but there were certain things I longed to know. Where was Kathleen Castle-reagh? She, so Eve Gascoigne said, was cognisant of everything that had taken place. This being so, was it not strange that she should have left Eve Gascoigne there alone?

I recalled to mind what I had heard about her going into religion, but I could not grasp it.

One fact, however, was clear enough. Kathleen had been a party to Eve Gascoigne's being enticed away from her home, and had aided and abetted those who sought to keep her from knowing the truth.

How this thought rankled in my heart I will not attempt to describe. Again and again my heart declared that I had been deceived in this, only to be faced by what Eve Gascoigne had told me. It was horrible to contemplate. I might aid in restoring old Morton Gascoigne's grandchild to him, I might be instrumental in making George Fanshawe happy, but my own future was blackened. Ever since I had last seen Kathleen, even although there seemed no possibility of winning her as

my wife, I had never given up hope that all the difficulties would be removed. But now a great black wall arose, making everything impossible. How could I continue to care for a woman who had been a party to a black, cruel lie?

And yet I did care for her. Every particle of my being cried out for her, and I longed with a great longing to find her. In spite of everything I believed she needed me. Old superstitions might have entwined themselves in my brain, but I felt sure that I had really heard her voice and seen her face as I had stood on the Embankment. Therefore, I determined to stay in Ireland until I had discovered where she was and had seen her face to face.

While I was having lunch that day Timothy Tralee rushed into the room as though he had an important communication to make.

"Faith, yer honour," he said, "and have ye heard the news?"

"What news?" I asked.

"Michael Castlereagh and Miss Kathleen have come back. Bless her shinin' eyes."

I dropped my knife and fork with a clatter, for the man's communication startled me. My heart not only beat with joy at the thought that I might soon see the woman I loved, but I saw new difficulties in the way of restoring Eve Gascoigne to her grandfather.

"Ah, I thought ye'd be deloighted," said Timothy with a grin. "Faith, it's miles away that they live, and yit I can always feel the difference in the air when Miss Kathleen's at 'ome. May the saints preserve her."

"How do you know they've come back?" I asked.

"And didn't Mike Flaherty see them with his own blissed eyes at the station?" he cried. "Didn't he speak to them hisself? I expect yer honour 'll be off to Castle-reagh again to-day?"

"Possibly," I replied.

"And mayhap ye'll be stayin' 'ere a long toime, yer honour?"

When presently the man had left me alone I tried to think out the whole situation. Had the woman Biddy telegraphed to Michael Castlereagh telling him of my visit? And had the woman been cognisant of my interview with Eve Gascoigne? But more. Why had Kathleen come back? If she had gone into religion, as Eve had said, how could she return with her father at a minute's notice?

All these things, and more, I determined to discover, for, as may be imagined, the news that Kathleen had returned home made me all the more anxious to go to Castlereagh Castle. Indeed, I am afraid I was willing to let caution go to the winds, so eager was I to see the face of the woman I loved.

At first I made up my mind to start at six o'clock, and by an hour's brisk riding get to Castlereagh at seven o'clock; then I reflected that I might as well start at five, or, for that matter, why might I not start at four? Surely, I reflected, my visit to Michael Castlereagh need not interfere with my purpose concerning Eve Gascoigne. Ere long I came to the conclusion that I had better start at once. The more I thought about it the more I felt that I had only to tell Michael Castlereagh the whole truth about the matter, and there would be no need for Eve Gascoigne to leave the house in secret at all. He was an honourable man, and when he learnt the truth he would send Eve back to her home without a word of protest.

As soon as I had lunched, therefore, I ordered Timothy Tralee to get me a horse without delay. This, however, he did not find so easy as he had expected. The horse I had ridden on the previous day was engaged by some one else, and it was not until four o'clock that he had been able to find me anything fit to ride.

Once on the horse's back, however, I made up as well as I could for lost time, and by five o'clock I found myself in the neighbourhood of Castlereagh.

I stopped at a cross road and was deliberating whether I should put up the horse at Castlereagh village, or whether I should ride up to the house, when I heard the

sound of an approaching rider. I turned and saw Michael Castlereagh.

"This is fortunate, Mr. Killigrew," he said quietly, and there was a note in his voice that I had never heard before. "I was just on my way to Ballysheen to find you."

CHAPTER XXX

TWO MEN IN EARNEST

"It seems we are both fortunate," I replied. "Hearing you had returned, I determined to come and see you. I was just on the point of taking my horse down to Castle-reagh village. If I had I should probably have missec'd you. That would have been horribly disappointing."

"Oh, we should have met all right," he replied. "I am never far away when my enemies want to find me."

"Your enemies!" I cried.

"Ay, my enemies," he repeated grimly.

I glanced quickly at him as he spoke, and it was impossible not to see the look of anger that shot from his eyes, or to fail to note the sternness of his features. I saw, too, that while his left hand held the reins of the bridle with all the skill of a practised horseman it trembled with excitement. There could be no doubt about it that Michael Castlereagh was deeply moved. I knew, too, that while he was holding himself in check it was with difficulty, and that it would take but little to cause him to break forth in uncontrollable passion.

"You were at my house last night," he said.

"I was."

"And yet I told you when you were last there not to come again. My language was very plain. You could not misunderstand me. So plain was it that any man with a scrap of pride would, for decency's sake, have stayed away."

I do not think I am an excitable man, neither am I liable to give way to fits of passion; but the Celtic blood in my veins began to warm at his words. Still, I held my peace. I did not know whether he was aware of my meeting with Eve Gascoigne, and even if he was not, I

should frustrate my purposes by giving way to the feelings which surged within me.

"By what right did you come to my house?" he asked, and his voice, although he tried to speak quietly, trembled with passion.

"I am ready to give you full explanation, Mr. Castlereagh," I said; "but I do not think this is the place to give it. Look, there are two men coming, and I am sure that neither of us wishes to discuss our affairs in public. With your consent we will ride up to your house."

For a moment he hesitated as though he were in doubt what to do. Then he said, "No, I do not wish you to enter my doors."

"I think I had better, Mr. Castlereagh," I said.

Again he hesitated. "No," he repeated, "I do not wish it."

"Why should you be afraid to let me enter your house, Mr. Castlereagh?"

"Afraid!" he cried. "Michael Castlereagh afraid! Come, my man, I'll let you know if I am afraid!"

He turned his horse's head as he spoke and we rode together towards the house. I saw, as I had never seen before, what a powerful man he was, saw, too, the look of stern determination on his features. In his present mood I knew it would take but little to lead him to acts of physical violence.

He rode a little ahead of me as we went up the weed-grown drive, but I was on my feet almost as soon as he when we came up to the doorway, from which the night before I had called to the woman Biddy.

"But remember, you are not to see Kathleen," he cried. "I forbid that."

"Why should you forbid it, Mr. Castlereagh?" I asked.

"Because"—and he took a step nearer me as he spoke, "because—because I will not have it."

"Why will you not have it?" I urged. "Have I acted towards Miss Kathleen otherwise than as an honourable man should?"

"Honourable!" he almost shouted. "But enough of

questions. You are not to see her. But you can come in. Hallo, there! Mike, Pat, can't you see I want someone to take my horse!"

His voice might have been heard for a long distance around, and a minute later I heard the sound of running footsteps.

"Take my horse, Pat," he said, as a man came up, "and yes, you may as well take this nag into the stable. Come, be quick about it!"

The man looked into his master's face, and then led the horses away without a word. It was evident that he stood in great awe of Michael Castlereagh.

Michael led the way into the house, and presently we came to the room in which I had last seen Kathleen. He threw down his riding-whip on the table, and then turning to me he said:

"Now we can talk, Mr. Killigrew, and there will be no one to hear us."

He was, I thought, a little less wrought upon than when we first met; nevertheless, I knew that our interview would be a trying ordeal for me. Had I been dealing with an ordinary Englishman, I should have known how to act, but this man was not only different from my own countrymen, he was also less amenable to reason than most of his countrymen. I had, of course, come into contact with many Irish Members of Parliament, and while they were impulsive, and many of them were altogether unconventional in their behaviour, they were, in the main, pleasant fellows. But I could see that Michael Castlereagh was a man who, in certain moods, acted utterly on the impulse of the moment. In his eyes was the look of a madman. That he was a man of violent prejudices I knew, but I never realised until now that his prejudices might completely master him, and that he would sacrifice anything and everything because of them. As a consequence he was not to be depended on to act as other men would act. Even although he was, as I could see, putting a strong restraint upon himself, I knew that a wrong word would be like putting a match to a powder magazine.

I waited in silence, for I judged it best that he should take the lead in our conversation. He had as yet given no hint as to whether he knew anything of my plans concerning Eve Gascoigne, and until I knew this I determined to be wary in my speech.

For more than a minute he paced the room as if he were unconscious of my presence, then, turning on me suddenly, he cried:

"How did you know where Kathleen was?"

I looked at him in astonishment, for I could not read the thoughts in his mind.

"Oh, I am not a fool," he went on. "How should she know you were coming here if you did not tell her? But then, how could you know, and by what means did you get your letter to her?"

"I do not understand you, Mr. Castlereagh," I said. "I have written Miss Castlereagh no letter."

"You swear it."

"Not for a long time," I replied. "After my interview with her in this room, of which you were cognisant, when I asked her to be my wife, I wrote to her several times. I addressed the letters to her here, but I got no answer. My last letter was returned to me unopened, and since then I have never written a line. I was told that she had left this house."

"Who told you that?"

"Simon Maynooth."

"What that—oh, he told you, did he?"

"Yes."

"And you will swear that since the time that letter was returned to you unopened you have never written her a line?"

"I have never written her a line. I give you my word of honour."

"Nor have you been to Ireland?"

"I left England only the day before yesterday."

He looked at me for several seconds as though he would read my inmost thoughts.

"You left England the day before yesterday?" he repeated.

"Yes."

"And you have never been to Ireland since—since we met in this room?"

"No."

"You will swear it?"

"I will swear it if needs be; but surely my word is sufficient."

"Then answer me this," and his voice rose almost to a shriek: "how did Kathleen know you were coming?"

"Did she know?" I asked in astonishment.

"Know! Didn't she send a special messenger for me to come and see her? And when I came didn't I find her in tears? Didn't she beg me to take her home? Didn't she tell me that you were coming to Ireland, and that she must be here to meet you?"

"And you brought her home?" I cried.

"Ay, and there's my sin. I yielded to the temptation of the devil. I—I—but no, you shall not see her. By all the holy angels you shall not!"

The man's voice trembled with what seemed to me a great fear, and I could see that he was scarcely master of his own actions.

"I have come to Ireland to see her," I said. "I must see her."

"You came to Ireland to see her, and yet you did not smuggle a letter to her to tell her you were coming?"

"I did not."

"Kerry Killigrew," he said, placing his fist close to my cheek, "you are a liar."

I kept myself cool. I reflected that I was dealing with a man who was well-nigh mad, and that I must not heed what, from another, would be among the worst of insults.

"I think I have the right to ask you to prove those words, Mr. Castlereagh," I said.

"Prove my words!" he cried. "Yes, and I will prove them. Kathleen herself told me she had received a message from you. Now then!"

"Kathleen told you that!" I cried.

"Aye, she did. She said she must come home, and I—

I, God forgive me, but I brought her home. Now then, tell me if you dare, that you did not know where she was, and that you did not send her a letter!"

I could scarcely believe my ears, and yet why should I be doubtful? I called to mind the vision I had seen as I had stood at the base of Cleopatra's Needle; I remembered the face I had seen, the words I heard, and the answer I made. On the strength of my experience that night I had come to Ireland. If what I had seen and heard had been real to me, why might she not also have seen and heard? *

"I sent her no letter," I said.

"And you did not know where she was?"

"As God is my witness, I did not."

"But, man alive——"

"Mr. Castlereagh," I said, "you are Kathleen's father, and I will tell you what I would have told no other man. What I have said is absolutely true. I did not know where Kathleen was; I have never written her a line since the time when my letter was returned to me unopened."

"I returned it," he cried. "Kathleen never saw it. I took good care of that."

In spite of everything a feeling of joy came into my heart. Kathleen had not returned my letter. Perhaps—perhaps—but I dared not speculate too far.

"But I want to tell you this, Mr. Castlereagh," I went on. "I have never ceased to love her. I, too, come of the Celtic race, and as a consequence I am not cold and calculating in the realm of love. I loved Kathleen the first time I saw her, I have loved her ever since, and it has

* It may be that this part of Kerry Killigrew's story will appear to some as a record of wild imaginings, but that he is not alone in having such experiences the following incident will show. A doctor who has a good practice in the West of England, and is well known as an able physician, told me that when he was a student in London he was engaged to a lady who lived in that part of the country where he now practises. One night, when sitting alone in his room, he fell into a kind of trance, and saw her under circumstances which he described to me. He started to see her the next day, and discovered that what he had seen as in a vision had actually taken place. The lady has since become his wife.

been the fixed determination of my life to win her for my wife."

"Never! never!" he cried vehemently.

"That determination I shall never give up until one of us dies, or she becomes the wife of another," I went on quietly. "Although after my last letter was returned I did not write her again, I never ceased thinking of her and loving her. I could not if I would, and I would not if I could. And now I want to tell you what may throw some light upon what you cannot understand."

Thereupon, I told him as plainly as I could what I have set down in these pages, and the effect of what I had seen and heard upon me.

He listened like a man spellbound. The anger which had burned in his eyes when we first met died out, and instead came a look of awe, of fear. His tanned face became ashy pale, his flesh hung loosely on his cheeks.

"And this brought you to Ireland?" he said in an awed whisper.

"Yes," I replied. "I believed she called to me, that she wanted me, that she needed me. That was why I came."

"Kerry Killigrew," he said hoarsely, "do you believe in God?"

"I do," I replied. "I believe I did not come here without a purpose. I came to see Kathleen, and I mean to see her."

"But you cannot, man. You must not. I dare not let you."

"Why?" I asked.

The strange passionate light came into his eyes again, the old look of anger came back. And yet he was not the man I had seen at first. Other influences were at work in his nature, and I was sure his feelings towards me were different from those which well-nigh mastered him an hour or so before.

As I have said, he was unlike any other man I had ever met. Things which other men would not think of doing would be natural to him. He, strong man as he

was in some respects, was in others a child, governed by fancy and impulse.

"I'll tell you why," he said. "Kathleen must not be your wife, nor the wife of any man. She is the spouse of the Church which is the Bride of Christ."

"But, Mr. Castlereagh," I cried—

"Nay, listen, man," he interrupted, "and I will tell you—what, well, what I never dreamed of telling you. You see me now, you've seen me in London. Has it ever struck you that I love the faith, that I'm a devoted Catholic, a religious man? Tell me, how have I struck you?"

"As a deeply religious man," I said, "as one passionately devoted to your faith, as one who would sacrifice anything for your religion."

"Ah!" he cried as he breathed a deep breath, and I thought his eyes shone with satisfaction and joy. "And yet, Kerry Killigrew, not a quarter of a century ago there was not a worse divil in Ireland than I. There was nothin' too bad for me, nothin'. Gamblin', fightin', drinkin', and every divilment known to man was known to me."

He walked around the room as he spoke, and I noticed that in his excitement he lapsed into the Irish brogue.

"Man," he went on, "I was a terror. I broke my mother's heart. I killed my father as sure as if I had struck him dead. We Irish are a wild people, God knows we are, and when we let the devil have full fling with us, let men beware. I laughed at the priests, and kicked them out of the house when they remonstrated with me. And yet, mind ye, I was afraid all the time of the hell they preached.

"Then, man, I fell in love. Is Kathleen a beauty? Did she turn men's heads in London? Have half the squires in Kerry gone mad about her? She is plain and dull compared with what her mother was. I loved her, man. Great God, how I loved her! She was afraid of me, but I married her—I married her, and swore I'd be a good husband."

Great drops of sweat stood thick upon his brow, while

his whole body shook with emotion. He wiped his brow and went on.

"Is man an incipient devil? I think he must be, else after having won such a woman to be my wife I had become a good man. But I did not. I was faithful to her as a husband, in that I never thought of another woman, but I did not give up my life of devilry.

"Then Kathleen was born—oh, my God, my God!"

Again he wiped the sweat from his brow. He had forgotten all his feelings of anger towards me; the memory of the past had destroyed every other thought. But he had begun his story, and, like the Ancient Mariner, he felt he must tell it.

"And now I'll tell ye, man," he went on with trembling voice, "why Kathleen is not for you, or any other man, but especially not for you."

CHAPTER XXXI

MICHAEL CASTLEREAGH'S VOW

HE came up close to where I stood, and laid his hands on my shoulders; then, looking into my eyes, he said:

"If I'd been the husband I ought to have been, if I'd cared for my wife during the weeks when she needed kindness and tenderness the most, I believe she might have been alive to-day. But weeks before Kathleen was born I neglected her, I brought boon companions to the house, I frightened her with my drunken carousals, then Kathleen's birth killed her, killed her!

"Oh, man, never shall I forget the hell I suffered when the doctor told me that she could live only a few hours. She lay in the room upstairs, so white, so weak, so helpless. While I—Oh! I am a passionate man, Mr. Killigrew; no man knows it better. At that moment I would have sold myself to the devil body and soul to have kept her, and I fear I behaved like a madman. I cursed God in my despair, for I had behaved like a brute, a devil, and yet she was all—all to me.

"'Mike,' says she, 'I'm going, but the baby will live. Mike, promise, for the baby's sake, that you'll be a good man. It's the last request I'll make to you.' Then Father Shannon came in, and I promised—I swore upon the cross—that I would give up everything for religion."

All the time he had been saying this he had kept his hands upon my shoulders, and had been looking into my eyes, but when he uttered the last words he left me abruptly and walked to the window. A little later he returned again and went on, but more quietly:

"I kept my promise—in a way. I was a better man. I gave up my bad companions, I gave up gambling, and drinking, but I didn't go to church. I never went to

Mass or to Confession. I did nothing for the religion. I worked for ould Ireland, but it was through politics, and not through the Church. I laughed at when I did not curse the priests, and said that they were the leeches, the bloodsuckers of Ireland. I saw great churches being built, costing scores of thousands of pounds, and casting their shadows on wretched huts in which the people were starving. I saw the people kept poor in building huge nunneries. I saw countless thousands spent upon the Church, while the schools were neglected, and while the children were growing up in ignorance and squalor and vice. I saw, or thought I saw, the Church sponging up the money which should be devoted to the people's welfare. Then I denounced the priests, and became a political agitator.

"But I looked after the estate, and things prospered with me. I became a well-to-do man. I looked after my servants and my business matters well, so well that there was not a better managed estate in Ireland than Castlereagh. But I never gave a penny to the Church—not a penny.

"Then when Kathleen was ten years old she was taken ill. I have told you how I loved my wife; well, in every way that a child can take the place of a wife, Kathleen took her place. I loved her because I saw her mother in her, and I loved her for her own sake. She was my child, my little Kathy. But she was taken ill, and the doctor told me she would not recover.

"Think of it, man, think of it! My little Kathy! She was all I had. Everything else seemed as nothing, and I thought I was going to lose her. She lay in the same room where her mother had died; and I—well, I became a madman again. Old Biddy had sent for Father Shannon, and he told me that I had myself to blame for Kathy's death; that I had broken the vows I had made to her dying mother; that I had been the enemy of the Church and had forsaken her altars, and that Kathy's death would be God's curse upon me. He told me that God could not trust me with such a child, and that He was going to take her to Himself.

"Ay, and I felt he was telling the truth. I saw the evil of my ways. My father and mother, and their parents before them, were ardent Catholics, and I had been unfaithful. All the influences of many generations began to work, all the education and teaching of my childhood came back to me.

"'Oh, God,' I cried, 'give me back my Kathy!'

"'The doctor has given up hope,' said Father Shannon, 'and it's God's curse upon you for being unfaithful to the vows you made at your wife's death-bed, unfaithful to the vows you made to God that you would live for the faith.'

"Then I took another oath. I vowed that if God would give her back to me I would give all my wealth, all my strength, all my life, to the furtherance of the holy faith. Ay, I vowed that I would dedicate Kathy to the faith, and that everything should be given to God."

He came to me and laid his hands on my shoulders again, and looked straight into my eyes.

"My Kathy got well, Mr. Killigrew," he said, and his voice quivered with emotion. "The doctor said that her recovery was a miracle. In a few days she was almost as well as ever, and she's never had a day's illness since. Did not God answer my prayers, man? Did He not take me at my word?"

"Well, and then?" I asked.

"Then!" he cried. "What could I do but keep my word? From that time I have lived for the Church. I've tried to serve ould Ireland, but I have done it through the Church. I've given every penny I could to God. I've neglected everything that I might serve the Church; aye, and although the very thought of it has been like tearing out my heart-strings, I've trained my Kathy to the thought that she's to go into religion. She is the sacrifice that God demands of me, and I'm going to make it."

"You mean to say that you'll consign her to the living death of a nunnery?" I cried.

"The fairer the sacrifice, the more acceptable to God,"

he cried. "After all, what is money? I know I've pauperised myself so that the faith might be advanced, but that's not enough. Father Shannon says it's not enough. I promised Kathy to God if He would restore her to health. He did it. Shall I not keep my word?"

"But think," I cried, "do you think God demands that a beautiful, bright, happy girl like Kathleen shall be buried in a nunnery? God gave her life that she might make the world brighter, gladder."

"It's God's price," he cried, "and woe be to me if I do not pay it. As a holy nun her prayers will prevail more than if she lived in the world."

"And does she want to be a nun? Does she consent?" I asked.

"Consent!" he replied. "She will do what I think best; that is——" He stopped as if a contradictory thought had come into his mind.

"But she does not want to be a nun," I persisted.

"And why, Mr. Kerry Killigrew? Oh, don't think I am ignorant of the thoughts you have in your mind. I know, I know! Why, man, the thought of losin' her is hell to me. I've kept her home year after year because I've hoped that—that—— But, no, I've never given up my determination to dedicate her to God."

"The true way to dedicate a life to God is to allow her to live in the world, and make it sweeter and better," I urged.

"Have done with that!" he cried impatiently. "Do you think the devil hasn't tempted me with that kind of thought month after month?"

"You did not always seem so decided on this matter," I pleaded. "Even when, in this room, I asked that she might become my wife, you did not quite slam the door of hope in my face."

"No—I know. I was trying to bargain with God—or the devil. I persuaded myself that if you could be won to the faith, and serve Ireland and the religion through—through—— But there! I overcame that."

"And you sent her to a convent?" I said.

"I—I; oh, I've been an unfaithful man! My heart

has clung to her, and I couldn't give her up entirely and at once. So she went to the Convent of the Pure Heart, not as a postulant, but as a guest. I couldn't bear her even to take the first definite step."

"And she went willingly?"

"I'm not going to tell you, Mr. Killigrew."

"But you told me she sent for you?"

"Yes, she did; and I, weak man that I am, yielded to her. Oh, I can refuse her nothing, and she knows it. She's all I have in this world, my dear, lovin' little Kath. So, although I knew I was yieldin' to the devil, I brought her home. Yes, I—I brought her home. But you are not to see her, Mr. Killigrew, mind that."

I saw, or thought I saw, what was in his mind now, and, in spite of everything, my heart burned with joy and hope. And yet there were so many things that I could not understand! What if she had come back, what though it were possible for me to see her, had she not connived at a lie in bringing Eve Gascoigne to Castle-reagh? Even as we stood there I called to mind Eve Gascoigne's cry of anguish, I remembered the story she had told me a few hours before.

Nevertheless, I longed, I determined to see her. I remembered, and there was a world of joy in the thought, that she was under the same roof with me. I remembered, too, that it was because of me that she had persuaded her father to bring her home. As for Michael Castlereagh, I saw that the great struggle of his life was between an ardent and almost overwhelming love for his child and what I believed to be a mistaken sense of duty.

"But I have come to Ireland to see her," I urged weakly.

"You must return—return at once," he said. "No, Mr. Killigrew, I have nothin' against you, but can't you see, man, can't you see? Besides, even if such a thing were possible, you—you are not even a Catholic!"

"No," I replied, "I am not a Catholic—that is, I am not a Roman Catholic. But I must see her before I go. I demand to see her."

"You demand!" he cried; and his anger was rising again. "Think what you are saying, man. You have seen by this time that Michael Castlereagh is not a man to be trifled with."

"It's necessary that I should see her."

"Why? Tell me that. As I've told you, she is not for you nor any man. In my heart I've espoused her to Christ; I've vowed to give her to God."

"There are questions I wish to ask her."

"What questions? I'm her father, and I can act as intermediary. But you, a heretic like you, shall not see her again."

"I want to ask her, and I want to ask you, why you both connived in deceiving a young girl by the name of Eve Gascoigne? Why you induced her to leave her home? Why you have kept her practically a prisoner in this house for months?"

The words escaped me almost against my will. I had never intended to speak so bluntly, so almost brutally. But the interview which had so moved Michael Castlereagh was not without its effects on me. I, too, had been torn with conflicting emotions, and I had less control over my feelings than I ought to have had. Moreover, when I saw the effect I had made on Michael Castlereagh, I was sorry I had spoken. The veins in his forehead stood out like whip-cords, and his eyes burned with the old mad light. For some seconds he seemed incapable of speech; then he said, with a gasp;

"Miss Eve Gascoigne?"

"Yes," I replied; "she is in the house at this moment."

"Ah, you've found out that!" he cried.

"Yes, I've found out that," I replied. I saw now that he was ignorant of our meeting.

I could see, too, that he was struggling to grasp the situation, and that in his excitement he found it difficult to adapt his mind to the new trend of our conversation.

"How did you find out? Who told you?" he cried. "Did I let it out, or did Simon Maynooth? No, he would not, he would not."

"It does not matter how I know," I answered. "Enough that I do know."

"Well, and what then?" he demanded. "If I was willing to give the child a home, what is that to you? What right have you to meddle in my affairs?"

"A home!" I sneered, angry at his reply. "Call it a prison."

"A prison! What do you mean, you blackguard?" he cried, losing control over himself. "Oh, I see. You come here spying on my private affairs. You come here with a charge against me. Be careful, my man, or I'll set the dogs on you."

"There are laws, even in Ireland," I replied.

"Laws!" he cried; "and what have I to do with laws?"

"You may have a great deal to do with them if you are not careful," I replied. "Remember that Miss Eve Gascoigne is not yet of age; remember, too, that she has a rightful guardian, and that it's against the laws of the realm to induce a child like that to leave her home."

He snapped his fingers in my face.

"That for the laws!" he cried. "Do you think I'd stand by and see one of my own faith persecuted? Do you think I'd see her made to marry a Protestant? Do you think I'd see her breathing an atmosphere of lies, while her faith is robbed from her? Do you think I'd let her go back to that old devil, who'd persecute her into giving up her faith? No, not for all the laws ever made."

"But she wants to go back," I said. "She was induced to leave her home by lies; she is no longer a Romanist."

"What!" he cried.

I repeated my words, and told him, perhaps more warmly than I ought, what I thought of the treatment which Eve had received.

He stared at me as though I were demented, while his eyes blazed with passion. Then his wild, impulsive Irish nature overcame his judgment.

"Come," he cried, "there shall be an end of this!"

He pulled a rusty bell-handle as he spoke, and the woman Biddy came.

"Go and tell Miss Gascoigne that I want to see her!" he cried. "Don't wait a second! Go at once!"

The woman gave me a fearful, angry glance, and went away without a word, while Michael Castlereagh stamped around the room.

"I'll let you know what I think of you and your laws!" he cried.

A few seconds later I heard excited voices and the sound of footsteps coming towards me. Then my heart gave a great bound, for not only did Eve Gascoigne enter the room, but Father Shannon, and behind him was Kathleen.

Michael Castlereagh took no notice either of the priest or his daughter.

"Miss Gascoigne," he said, "you see this fellow here. He declares that you were enticed to come here by lies; that you are kept here a prisoner against your will; that you long to go back—to—to the people who have cast you off, and that—that—you are not a Catholic. Will you be pleased to tell him that he is a liar."

There was a deathly silence in the room when he had finished speaking, and we all looked to Eve Gascoigne for her reply. I saw that her face was as pale as death, while in her eyes was a look of terror. She gave a quick glance at Michael Castlereagh, then at Kathleen, and Father Shannon, and then she turned to me. But she never spoke a word.

"Speak!" cried Castlereagh. "Keep nothin' back! Did I ever induce you to come to this house? Did I ever lock the door against your leaving?"

"No," she almost gasped.

"Ah!" said the man, with a deep breath. "You hear, Mr. Killigrew, you hear! Then he turned to the others. "I think it is well you should all know everything—everything. This man, this Mr. Killigrew, whom I have received under this roof as a friend, has made charges, vile charges. He says that I—yes, and that you, Kathleen—have been a party to a system of deceit; that

you told Miss Gascoigne lies in order to get her here, and that she has been kept here against her will. That is the man, Kathy, who—who—but no, I will not sully my tongue by mentioning such things as I have in my mind in connection with such a creature.”

I watched Kathleen's face as he spoke. I saw a look of anger take the place of wonder, and loathing take the place of anger.

“Tell me,” she cried, “is this true? Did you think this of me?”

How could I answer definitely; and yet her eyes were fastened upon mine as if to draw my answer from me.

“Tell me this first,” I said: “Did you know the whole truth about Miss Eve Gascoigne prior to her coming here?”

“Yes—all,” she answered.

“And, knowing all, you were a party to her coming here and to keeping her here?”

“Yes!” she cried defiantly.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE BATTLE

I **MUST** confess that her reply staggered me. It confirmed all that I feared; by her own confession she had been a party to what I could not help calling by the strongest names.

"Now," then she continued, "do you still believe that I have acted a lie; do you still believe that I am the base thing you thought me?"

"Think of your replies to my questions, and then answer yourself," was my reply.

"I do not understand you," she said. "Tell me plainly what you mean."

Her face, the look in her eyes, her voice, puzzled me beyond words. All my old doubts came back again, and with my doubts was hope. Perhaps—perhaps—

I looked around again on the faces of all present. Michael Castlereagh stood glaring at me as though he longed to strike me to the ground. Father Shannon was watching me as a cat might watch a mouse, and there was a sinister glitter in his eyes. Kathleen's cheeks were flushed with anger, and yet I thought that in spite of the anger there was an appealing look in her eyes. As for Eve Gascoigne, she stood like one incapable of acting or thinking.

"I think the time has come for explanation," I said. "I think there may be much to tell which you do not know. Miss Gascoigne, have I your permission to speak?"

But she never answered a word. She appeared like one hypnotised by some great fear.

"There is surely no need for further speech," said Father Shannon. "We want no lyin' stories here. You

have asked your questions and have had your answers. You have made your accusations, and you know they are lies. Go back to your own country, young man, and leave us alone."

"With Miss Gascoigne's consent I shall say what there is to say," I replied. "There are many things to clear up."

"Then you'll not have her consent," said Shannon. "Can't you see she's ill? I tell you we'll not listen to you."

"But we will," cried Castlereagh. "It shall never be said that I wouldn't allow a man a chance to speak his mind, although his mouth is full of lies. Speak on, man; say what you have to say, and then go."

"Thank you, Mr. Castlereagh," I replied. "I begin to hope that I have been mistaken."

"Mistaken, man, of course you've been mistaken. But say what you have to say."

"I am afraid it will take me some time," I said, "and Miss Gascoigne shall either confirm or deny my statements."

Thereupon I described my first visit to Mr. Morton Gascoigne's house, and what he told me concerning Miss Lakeman, who came to the house professedly as a Protestant, but who was really a Romanist, and who took Eve to a priest at Exchester, and that together they persuaded the child to be secretly opposed to her grandfather's faith. That little by little she became more and more under the dominion of the priest, and feared to disobey him, and that she also feared to let her grandfather know how she had deceived him.

"I want to ask Miss Gascoigne either to confirm or deny this," I said.

"Tell me, Eve, is this true?" cried Kathleen. "Of course, I knew that as a child you had been led to embrace our faith; but—but tell me is what he says really true?"

But Eve Gascoigne did not speak. She stood looking at the priest with a look of despair in her eyes.

"Of course it's not true," cried the priest. "It's true she secretly embraced the faith in that nest of heresy, and naturally she was afraid to let her cruel old grandfather know. He would have killed her."

"But did that woman pretend to be a Protestant, while all the time she was a Catholic?" cried Kathleen. "Tell me that, Eve."

The eyes of the two girls met.

"Yes," replied Eve, "she told me she did. She told my grandfather she was a Protestant, and she frightened me into keeping silence. What Mr. Killigrew said is true."

"Go on," said Michael Castlereagh fiercely, "tell the rest of your story. We can prove whether it is lies afterwards."

I told the story as it has been set down in these pages. I described old Morton Gascoigne's grief, and his longing to have his child back. I told them of all the efforts that had been made to discover Eve's whereabouts, and what those efforts had resulted in. During the recital, which took some time, Father Shannon constantly interrupted me with denials, while Michael Castlereagh stamped around the room as if unable to control himself.

As for Kathleen, she seemed frightened. Her face became ashy pale; even her lips lost their colour.

When I had finished, Michael Castlereagh came up to Eve Gascoigne. "Is what this man says true?" he cried. "Tell me, is it true?"

Eve looked at him as if she were dazed.

"You know it is true," she said. "Both you and Kathleen told me you knew everything. So you know it is true, both of you."

Michael Castlereagh did not speak a word. He seemed incapable. I saw, too, that there was a strange look in his eyes. He was not angry as he was when I had met him at first, but there was a look of wonder, of doubt, of awe, in his eyes.

"Can't you see?" cried Father Shannon. "This man is a wolf in the fold, and he is trying to take our lamb

away. Of course, we had to take her away in secret, I told you so. We had to preserve her. She was in danger, and we had to bring her to a place of safety. Her grandfather wanted to marry her to a heretic, and then she would have lost her faith; don't you see, man, don't you see? Besides, her grandfather wouldn't have her back. He cursed her when she left him; he took an oath to drive her from his doors if ever she showed her face there."

"Who told you this?" I asked.

"Never mind who told me," he cried. "I know; that's enough. And we want no more of your lying tales. Besides, what if they are true? Any weapon is good enough to fight the devil with. We had to save the child's soul. And could she, after she had espoused the true faith, be left in a hole poisoned with heresy? Could she be allowed to drift to the everlastin' hell which is the doom of all the unfaithful?"

I caught the look on Kathleen's face as he spoke, and I saw what appeared to me to be loathing and horror.

"But, Father Shannon," she cried, "is what—what this man says true? Tell us that."

"It's lies, lies," cried the priest. "Of course, her grandfather had to be kept in ignorance."

"But you told us that he knew," cried Kathleen. "You told us that she was persecuted at home. And when she came Father Finlayson told us that we were not to mention her past troubles to her because they pained her so. He said that we were to be just kind and loving to her. That was why I asked her no questions, and why, even when I saw her in sorrow, I dared not say anything about her life with her grandfather."

"I tell you the man has told a heap of lies," cried the priest angrily. "And I'll prove it, too; yes, I'll prove it this very moment. He has told us that she wants to go back to her grandfather, that she's given up the faith. Now then, look here, my child," and he turned to Eve Gascoigne as he spoke, "you have of your own free will accepted the Catholic faith. Of your own

free will you have been baptised into the Church and partaken of her sacraments. You know that ours is the only faith, and you know the terrible doom of those who are unfaithful, and who, like swine, go back and wallow in the mire of heresy. You know, you know. You know what I was tellin' you before we were called into this room. You know that if there is one hell blacker and more terrible than another, it is the hell of one who, havin' nestled in the bosom of the Church, leaves her and denies her. Now then, this man says you want to go back to your grandfather. You know what that means. It means that you will be a deserter from the army of the Lord, that you will be an apostate, and that through the countless ages of eternity you will suffer in the hell of those whose worm dieth not and whose fire is not quenched. You will crucify your Lord again, you will wound the lovin' heart of the Holy Virgin, you will grieve the hearts of the faithful, and after this life you will go away to everlastin' doom. Now then, do you wish to go back?"

I have set down here as near as I can remember the words he spoke, but I cannot convey the intense fervour and passion with which he spoke. He possessed all his countrymen's gift of eloquence, and he so evidently believed, passionately believed, what he said, that even I felt impressed. Writing now in cold blood, his threats seem but as those of a child, but then they felt real. And if they felt real to me, who had never been surrounded by the influences of the priests, what must they have been to the girl, who for years had been secretly under their influence, and who had learned to believe in the teachings of the Roman Church?

Still she did not answer. She stood before us speechless. There was a set, stony look on her face, an expression of mute despair in her eyes as she looked from face to face as if beseeching help.

"Ah, my child," went on the priest, and there was a tender, beseeching tone in his voice, "ye couldn't, ye couldn't. Ye couldn't forsake the mother who gave you her life-blood, who nursed you at her bosom. Ye

couldn't cause the wounds of our Lord to bleed afresh, and break our Holy Mother's heart. Ye couldn't do it, my child. But speak; let them know what is in your heart. Speak freely, little one, and be not afraid."

I saw a new look come into Eve Gascoigne's face as he spoke. What threats failed to do he was accomplishing by pleading eloquence. I saw at a glance how matters stood. I saw that he had been talking with her before I came, and I realised as I never realised before the power which a priest has over a woman's mind. The choice to her was terrible. All her resolutions of the night before while I spoke to her had become as nothing. At that moment the priest's words were to her as the voice of God, and she must obey. The influences which had been at work for years were a living force in her life; the chains which had been forged through the years held her fast. She might be free in body, but at that moment her mind, her will, were enslaved. I had in the past laughed at those who talked about the tyranny of the priest, but now I realised what it meant.

"You know what I have persuaded you to do," he went on. "I believe you have a vocation, my child. I believe God would have you go into religion. Ah, think, my child, of being free from the temptations and snares of the world; think of living the holy life in the company of holy women; think of your prayers helpin' to win the world to the faith. Think of the everlastin' joys hereafter, and then make your choice. This man says you are unfaithful, that you would become the enemy of the Church, that you'd go back to a life of sin. Tell him that you scorn both him and his accusations."

Had he left off speaking a few minutes before, I believe that Eve Gascoigne would have made her choice as he wished her. I could see that he had been playing upon her as a skilled musician plays upon the strings of an instrument over which he is master, while I was unable to say him nay. But his last words were of a more matter-of-fact nature, and gave me time to think.

"Miss Gascoigne is not in a fit condition to make her choice just now," I said. "As we can all see, she

is almost overwhelmed with excitement and wonder. There is no hurry. Let her have a few hours of quiet. Let her be able to weigh issues fairly. Let her remember that her grandfather is longing for her and breaking his heart because of her loss. Let her weigh well the question whether she can serve God better by being buried in a nunnery than being the wife of the true, honourable Christian man who loves her. Let her ask herself again whether what Father Shannon says is in accordance with the teachings of the New Testament which her grandfather taught her to read. There is no hurry for her to make her choice in this way. There is plenty of time. Let her wait until to-morrow."

"There is never time to wait when we have to say 'No' to the devil," cried the priest. "Speak now, my child, and make your choice."

But my words were not without effect; the influence of a few minutes ago had passed away, and Father Shannon saw it. Eve Gascoigne's eyes burned with a new light.

"Yes, yes, let me wait until to-morrow," she said.

"But why?" cried Father Shannon. "I tell ye, ye cannot; ye dare not hesitate in such a matter."

"But she *shall* have time," cried Michael Castlereagh. "It shall never be said that she was coerced to do a thing in my ptesence."

"Coerced!" cried Father Shannon. "Hasn't she had months to make up her mind?"

"She shall have time," cried the Irishman. "By heaven she shall! If—if—— But there, I'll know the truth, and the whole truth, by God I will!"

"Very well," said Father Shannon, "be it so. After all—yes, yes. Let us wait till to-morrow."

By the look on his face I was sure he had thought of something to further his plans. Neither had my mind been idle, and now that I had set my hand to this matter I determined that I would not give up easily. Moreover, I believed that not only had Eve Gascoigne been deceived, but that Michael Castlereagh and Kathleen had been deceived also.

"And now ye can go, Mr. Kerry Killigrew," said Michael Castlereagh. "I must have time to think over what you have said."

"But not until I have said something to him," cried Kathleen, and her eyes were blazing with anger.

"And so you think I am a liar!" she went on wildly. "You believe I am guilty of deceit and cruelty! You believe that I have been a party to a conspiracy! You believe that I have been living a lie! Tell me you believe that. You—you who—who I—you—you believe that!"

Her vehemence was such that I was silent in spite of myself, and she read in my silence a confirmation of what she had said.

"Tell me," she cried, "tell me, did you believe it? Did you believe that I enticed Eve here, kept her here, knowing all the time that—that the things you have said are true?"

"They are not true," cried Father Shannon. "All he has told you is a pack of lies, and I'll prove it to-morrow."

"Tell me," repeated Kathleen, not heeding the priest's words. "Did you think that of me? Did you, did you? Whether what you have told me is true or not, I don't know. You believe it is true. Do you believe that I—I, knowing what you say, connived at—at such a thing. You—you who in this very room——" But she did not finish the sentence. Her passion overcame her.

"Miss Gascoigne told me," I said, almost sullenly. "She said you knew. What could I do?"

"Do!" she cried. "Would I believe that you were a liar, a sneak, a betrayer of trust, although all the world should declare it, and although every proof known to man were against you? I would not believe it if you told me with your own lips. I could not, it would be too horrible. That I should be a party to a plot! A liar! One who stooped to the basest of deceit!"

Her eyes blazed with passion as she spoke. Her whole being seemed to loathe the thought that I should ever dream of associating her with such a thing.

"Go," she cried, "go, and never let me see you again." And she rushed out of the room.

For a few seconds no one spoke; we were all silenced by Kathleen's vehemence.

"I will go," I said presently, "but I will return to-morrow. You, Mr. Castlereagh, will at least allow me to prove the truth of what I have said."

"Very well," said the Irishman. "But I want to be alone now. I want to think."

"I will return at this hour to-morrow, then," I said, "and I have your word that Miss Gascoigne shall be given until then to make up her mind. You see, I want to——"

"Go," said the Irishman. "I have given my word. Miss Gascoigne shall be here at this time to-morrow."

CHAPTER XXXIII

VICTORY

MORTON GASCOIGNE and George Fanshawe had been listening to me for nearly half an hour without uttering a word. Not that they had not been deeply moved. I knew by their deep breathing, by the clenching and unclenching of their hands, and by half-suppressed ejaculations, how much they felt, but they were not the kind of men to hinder my recital by words of their own.

They had, on receipt of my telegram, hurried to Ireland. On my return from Castlereagh I had found a telegram telling me of the time they expected to arrive. I therefore met their train, and saw by the look in their eyes as they stepped on the platform that no sleep had visited them for many hours.

"You have found her?" said Morton Gascoigne, grasping my hand.

"Yes."

"She is here, here in Ireland?" said George Fanshawe.

"Only a few miles away."

"Tell us where."

"Come to the inn," I said. "I have secured a private room. I will tell you everything when we get there."

And I had told them. The recital took some time, but, as I have said, neither interrupted me. Both sat like men spellbound, and neither missed a word that I said.

"And that is all?" said Morton Gascoigne, when I had finished.

"That is all."

George Fanshawe looked at his watch.

Morton Gascoigne asked me some keen, searching questions, which I answered.

"Of course, you had another purpose in coming to Ireland than to find Eve?" he said.

"Yes," I replied; "but I do not wish to speak about it at present." For I had said nothing about Kathleen.

"Exactly," said George Fanshawe. "That was all he said, but I was sure that he understood.

"Thank you," said old Morton Gascoigne; "thank you, Killigrew. I am afraid I was scarcely civil to you when we last met," and he looked questioningly into my eyes.

"Many things have happened since then," was my reply.

"Important things?"

"Important enough to open my eyes and to lead me to see very much as you see."

The old man heaved a sigh of satisfaction. "I knew it would come," he said.

"What time did you say you would be at Castlereagh Castle?" asked Fanshawe quietly.

"At six o'clock. I have ordered a conveyance to be ready in an hour from now."

"You have Castlereagh's word that Eve shall be there?"

"Yes. He gave his promise before I left there last evening."

"You've no doubt about his keeping it?"

"No. Why?"

He looked at his watch again.

"Could you hurry up the conveyance?" he said.

"I dare say I could."

"I wish you would. Do so, will you?"

There was an anxious look in his eyes.

"You've reason for this?"

"A grave reason."

I went to Timothy Tralee, who told me the carriage should be ready in a few minutes.

"What is your reason?" I asked on my return.

"A priest got out at Ballysheen station," replied

Fanshawe; "and, unless I am mistaken, it was Father Finlayson. I have seen him at Exchester."

Neither Morton Gascoigne nor I spoke a word, but I knew by the flash in the old man's eyes that he understood the significance of George Fanshawe's words.

"I expect he was in Ireland, and Father Shannon telegraphed to him," I remarked presently.

"Of course," said George Fanshawe.

"I was on the point of telling you, Mr. Gascoigne," I said, "why my opinions have changed since our last meeting, but that matter can stand over."

"Yes, it can stand over," replied the old man; "but I fancy you have an interesting story to tell."

"Yes," I said, "I think I shall interest you."

"A time will come," replied the old man. "Ah, there is the sound of carriage wheels."

He rose from his chair like a young man, and a few minutes later we were on our way to Castlereagh. I must confess that I was much excited, and I had great fears as to what the result of our visit might be. George Fanshawe also looked grave and perplexed. But not so old Morton Gascoigne. A look of great hope, almost amounting to certainty, shone from his eyes.

"Even yet the question of motive perplexes me," I said presently.

"Yes?" and I saw him shrug his shoulders.

"Do you suspect anything?"

"I suspect—everything," he replied; "but this is not the time to tell of my suspicions. My poor little Eve!"

There was a new note of tenderness in his voice as he spoke.

"I am not sure this is not partly my fault, Killigrew," he said presently. "I fancy I was a bit harsh and stern at times. Yes, I'm to blame. Of course, I loved her as my own life; all the same, she was afraid of me. That should have been impossible. Poor little girl! What she must have suffered."

And that was all that was said during the journey.

It was barely five o'clock when we reached Castlereagh Castle, for we had not spared horseflesh on the way, and

as we drew up to the door I saw Michael Castlereagh looking out of the window. He came to the door and opened it himself. He took no notice either of George Fanshawe or me, but fastened his eyes on the giant figure of old Morton Gascoigne. His face was much paler than usual, and the flesh on his cheeks hung loosely; he also seemed more quiet, more thoughtful. I wondered greatly what his change of demeanour meant.

"You are her grandfather?" he said quietly.

He seemed to understand the situation without the asking and answering of questions.

"Yes, I am her grandfather," replied old Morton Gascoigne simply. "I have come for my little maid."

There was a world of tenderness in his voice, and it seemed to me then that he had aged very much since I had last seen him.

"She is all that I have to love in this world," he added. "Where is she?"

The eyes of the two men met, and I saw Michael Castlereagh's face soften. Perhaps the old man's words made him think of his love for his own child.

"You are a Protestant?" said Michael Castlereagh.

"Yes, I'm a Prötestant."

"You hate Catholics?"

"God help me—no," replied the old man. "I hate no man. I only hate what will enslave the mind and paralyse the will. I trust I only hate every form of evil, of tyranny. But I am not come to talk about that. I am come for my child."

"This man," turning to me, "has told you all that took place yesterday?"

"Everything."

"Then you hate me?"

"No; you have been deceived. You are an honest man."

There was a calm dignity about the old man's presence which Michael Castlereagh could not help realising. I think he felt something like awe in his presence. Morton Gascoigne possessed a kind of patriarchal power.

"You believe that?"

"Yes, I believe it implicitly. Will you please take me to my child?"

There was a look of doubt, almost approaching fear, in Michael Castlereagh's eyes, but he said:

"Yes, I will take you. Do you wish to come alone, or do you desire your friends to come with you?"

"They are my good friends," said old Morton Gascoigne; "let them come too."

A little later we stood outside a door at the end of a passage, and heard the low murmur of voices.

Michael Castlereagh knocked at the door.

"Who is there."

"It is I. I wish to come in."

"Will you kindly excuse me, Mr. Castlereagh? It is not well that we should be disturbed just now."

"No, I must come in at once."

"But it is impossible. I gave orders that we were not to be disturbed."

"Will you kindly open the door, Father Finlayson? I happen to be master in this house."

"But, Mr. Castlereagh——"

But the Irishman was in no mood to be thwarted. He opened the door and entered, while we followed immediately behind him.

In a way the scene was dramatic. At the further end of the room was Father Shannon, and by his side was another man, whom Castlereagh had called Father Finlayson. He was a tall, fine-looking man, with rather massive features. He looked angry now, but that was natural. Seated before him was Eve Gascoigne, with her face buried in her hands.

"Is—is this considerate, Mr. Castlereagh?" protested the priest.

But the Irishman did not answer. Another voice was heard instead of his.

"Eve, my darling!"

It was old Morton Gascoigne who spoke, and his voice was full of pleading tenderness.

The girl looked up on hearing his voice. It was plain

that she had been weeping, for her eyes were swollen and red. It was impossible to doubt, moreover, that she had been passing through a terrible ordeal. Every feature told of anguish.

When first she saw her grandfather she looked at him as if overwhelmed with terror. I had had no chance of warning her of his coming, and she had not expected him; besides, in spite of all I had said, she was in deadly fear of the old man whom for years she had been deceiving. Moreover, Father Finlayson had been talking with her for some time.

Old Morton Gascoigne took a step nearer to her, paying no heed whatever to the priests who stood by her side.

"Eve, my darling," he repeated, "I have come to take you home."

The girl rose to her feet, and I saw the changed expression on her face. The priests saw it, too, and Father Finlayson said, "Think, my child, think what you do!"

"I have been searching for you for months," went on the old man, "searching with an almost breaking heart. But, thank God, I have found you, and I've come to take you to your old home."

"Granddad!" cried the girl.

"Yes, my darling."

"Do you want me?" She seemed scarcely conscious of what she was saying.

"The house has been like a vault without you, my own little maid," he replied. "Come back and make my last days happy."

"And you know everything?"

"Everything, my darling, and I forgive everything. Everything. It was not your fault. Let the past be forgotten."

I saw her move towards him, and I saw George Fanshawe, who had not spoken a word, gazing at her with love-lit eyes. But he made no sound, took no action. His hour was not yet come.

"You dare not," said Father Finlayson. "Remember

you are a Catholic; you dare not imperil your soul by going back to those who would rob you of your faith. I forbid it; I forbid it."

He spoke with terrible intensity, but the girl did not seem to heed him.

"You are sure, granddad; you are sure you forgive me?"

"Yes! The old home is waiting for you. And I have nothing but love and pity for you in my heart."

He opened his arms to her as he took another step towards her. For a moment more she seemed afraid; then she breathed a deep sigh, as though she would lift the incubus of a great weight from her. A moment later she was in the old man's arms.

None of us spoke. Even the priests were silenced by the scene before them. The girl's heart had yielded to her love, and that love was too sacred for their interference.

Then George Fanshawe came forward.

"Eve," he said quietly, so quietly that the word seemed little more than a whisper.

She still lay sobbing out her heart on the old man's bosom, but she lifted one arm from her grandfather's neck and placed it in the young man's outstretched palm. Then I knew that this quiet, unostentatious young fellow, who for weary months had pursued his search, had entered into his reward.

"Gentlemen," I said, "I think we are intruding here. Naturally they will wish to be alone."

Father Finlayson gave a quick, searching glance at those in whom all our interest had been centred, and then we left the room, leaving the three together.

Neither of us spoke until we had reached the room where we had met the day before, and then Father Finlayson said:

"I think I can ask for an explanation, Mr. Castle-reagh?"

"Yes, and you shall have it," said the Irishman bluntly. "My love for my own child has brought me to an understanding of what that old man has been

suffering. By all the laws of God and man she is his child."

"But—but——"

"There are no 'buts,' Father Finlayson. Had I known what I know now, my doors should never have opened to her. You deceived me, you know you deceived me. Last night I talked hours with the child, and she told me everything, everything. I am a Catholic, Father Finlayson, all my people have been Catholics, and I shall live and die a Catholic; but I tell you it was a cruel, vile thing to do. That old man is a good man, an honourable man, and the way he was deceived is abominable, it is devilish. I am a plain man. For years I have tried to be a loyal Catholic. I am not clever, and I am not learned, but I have been ready to devote all I have and am to the faith. But I hate deceit. I hate your Jesuit lies, and I tell ye this, that the means ye took with that poor child are abominable in the sight of God and man. There, I've said my say and I stand by it. And now ye'd better go, for I'll not have ye here. As for poor Shannon, I'd be angry with him if I didn't know he'd been your tool just as I've been."

"Before I go I must speak one more word to that poor child and to those men."

"Spaik, if ye will, and much joy ye'll git," said Castlereagh, lapsing into his Irish brogue.

"Will you kindly send for them?" said the Jesuit blandly.

"Not for a quarter of an hour," replied Castlereagh; "they'll be wantin' to say many things to each other."

Never do I remember spending such a quarter of an hour, and never, surely, was there a better opportunity for studying diverse characters. Father Finlayson was bland, pleasant of speech, and apparently at ease, even while his eyes were hard and watchful. Shannon, on the other hand, was fearful beyond measure, and he looked towards Finlayson as though he hoped he had still effective plans in his mind. As for Castlereagh, he looked like a lion at bay. He knew he had defied his spiritual masters, yet he was grim and determined;

the innate honesty and independence of the man overcame everything else, and although the minutes dragged slowly he never yielded an inch.

When at length old Morton Gascoigne entered the room, accompanied by Eve and George Fanshawe, Father Finlayson said to him :

"I suppose you are aware, sir, that you are taking a terrible responsibility?"

Old Morton Gascoigne laughed.

"I suppose, too, that you who, like other Protestants, boast so much about religious liberty, will try and coerce that poor child into giving up the faith into which she has been baptised?"

"She shall be coerced into nothing," cried the old man. "She shall be free to believe what she will, and to accept what faith she will."

"And you will allow her to choose her own religious advisers?"

"She shall choose whom she will," replied the old man, "but not one of your tribe shall enter my doors; neither shall one penny of my money fall into your coffers."

I saw a strange gleam in the Jesuit's eyes, while a curious smile played over his features; but he said nothing more to Morton Gascoigne. Instead he turned to Eve, whose hand was held by George Fanshawe.

"My child," he said, "I cannot believe that you will forsake the faith. I cannot believe that you will marry this man, who is surely an enemy to your soul."

Eve Gascoigne looked at the priest steadily, and I rejoiced when I saw that she was not afraid.

"His people shall be my people, and his God my God," she said, looking into the face of the man she loved.

That night the three left Ballysheen on their way to England.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE JESUIT

I STAYED in Ireland three days after the others had left in the hopes of gaining further speech with Kathleen, but in this I was disappointed. I called at Castlereagh Castle three times, but she refused to see me. Neither did Michael Castlereagh offer me a welcome. He was no longer angry with me, but he was grim and taciturn. He seemed to regard me kindly, and yet he would not yield to my entreaties. On the morning of the third day after Morton Gascoigne had returned to England I received a letter which informed me that my presence was urgently needed in London, and so I had to return. I wrote a letter to Kathleen, however, in which I pleaded as only a man in love can plead, and I urged her to let me know if ever she needed me or ever wished me to come to her. I told her all the story of the past, and urged that although I was not, and never could be, of her faith, I should love her as long as God gave me life.

"Only send the word 'Come,'" I concluded, "and no matter where I may be, or what difficulties may be in the way, I will hasten to your side."

I took care that this should be delivered into her hands, and then I went back to England. On my way back I reviewed the events which I have set down in this history, but in spite of my utmost endeavours to explain what had taken place, many things still remained a mystery. Even yet I could not explain why Eve Gascoigne had been induced to leave her grandfather, who, in spite of a certain sternness, had lavished kindness upon her, or why she had been prepared to relinquish the man she loved. Now that I had seen Father Finlayson, I could not believe that it was simply for her soul's

salvation that he had used his influence in this direction. Neither could I divine who it was that had sent me the anonymous letters I have mentioned, and had made arrangements for my visit to the conference at 274, Pilchard Street. The woman—for, as I have said, I felt sure that it was a woman—must have been cognisant of Simon Maynooth's plans, and yet was his enemy.

"The key to unlock this mystery will come into my hands some day," I said to myself as the train entered Euston Station, "but at present I see no light anywhere."

For the next two days I was kept busy with the affairs that had brought me to London, and I was just preparing to depart for Cornwall when one of the club servants brought me a card.

"Simon Maynooth," I read, and I must confess to a curious feeling in my heart.

He came into the room in his quiet, unobtrusive way, not appearing to notice anything and yet taking in everything by his quick, observant glance. He was dressed after the fashion in which I had first seen him. Had any one been told that he was the head of a responsible firm of solicitors, the information would have been accepted without question. His linen was scrupulously clean, and his attire gave evidence of punctilious care.

"London is said to be empty," he said, putting his hand before his mouth as if to stifle a yawn, "and yet there are several millions of human beings here. What a lot of nonsense is talked about such things, eh?"

"I am about to rid London of one person, anyhow," I said.

"Yes?" he said inquiringly.

"I am just off to Cornwall," I said; "the House is not sitting, and I have concluded my affairs."

"Lucky man."

"You'll be leaving yourself soon, I expect?" I said.

He gave me a quick glance out of his half-closed eyes, as if to read whether I had any ulterior meaning in my words, then he said:

"There is no knowing. My plans are never settled."

"No?"

"Never. But what matters? It adds piquancy to life."

I did not answer him, but waited for him to proceed. I knew he had not come to see me without a purpose.

"About the King's Declaration business," he said presently.

"Yes?"

"I admired the attitude you took on that question; it was so broad, so free from prejudices. But it'll be altered without any special effort on your part."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. It may not be done at once. But all in good time. Of course, any future King will declare that he's a Protestant. I'm a bit of a Protestant myself. But the next Declaration will never be binding on Catholics like the present one."

I did not speak, but watched him, as, with half-closed eyes, he lay back in the huge arm-chair.

"Of course, the thing we have arranged for is only preparatory, only a sort of John the Baptist. There'll be great work for you to do yet. I can see you shaping the destiny of the Empire."

"I am afraid you'd better not count on me."

"What's that?"

I repeated my words.

"Might one ask why you've changed your views?" he said wearily.

"I could never labour to make it possible for a Romanist King to sit on the British throne," I said.

"No?" And he looked at me out of his half-closed eyes. "Might one ask why?"

"Oh, I've reflected," I replied.

"That's very strange."

"What is strange?"

"Oh, that reflection should make you a sectarian, a bigot. You've always urged so strongly that no man should suffer disabilities because of any peculiarity in his religious views."

"I hold to that still."

"Then why would you make it impossible for a

Catholic to be King? I had some idea that you were—were threatened with a logical mind.”

“I am not thinking of it from the religious standpoint at all,” I said.

“It would be interesting to know from what standpoint you are regarding it?” he said, looking steadily at the toes of his boots.

“From the standpoint of an Englishman.”

“Pardon me, I am very dense. As you know, I have always been slow to take up a point.”

“If the King of England were a Romanist, he would be in submission to Rome,” I replied; “he would have to vow allegiance to Rome; he would have to take his orders from Rome; and as an Englishman I could never labour to make it possible for England’s King to take his orders from an Italian priest. I am a patriot.”

“An Italian priest? Meaning——?”

“The Pope—or those who give the Pope his orders. It doesn’t matter. It would be a terrible day for England if the King, wielding tremendous influence, which, as King, he must do, were to be in subjection to the Vatican. Besides——”

“Yes, besides what?”

“It would mean civil war.”

He laughed quietly, as though he were amused. Presently he made a movement as if to rise from his chair.

“It’s a great pity,” he said.

“What is a great pity?”

“I saw a splendid career before you. A greater career than you dreamed of. Yes, and I saw not only your ambitions realised, but your heart satisfied. But there——” and he shrugged his shoulders. “Besides, he said, rising to his feet, “it will come.”

“What will come?”

“You may not live to see it, but I think you will. I would I were thirty years younger, and then I should live to see it. A Catholic King will before many years are over sit on England’s throne, Mr. Kerry Killigrew.”

I could only smile.

"That time will come," he repeated solemnly. "Millions are working for it, praying for it, and they will never cease working and praying until their desires are realised. As for you, you've been to Ireland, I hear."

"Yes," I replied.

"It would be interesting to know what caused you to alter your mind—you who were so near the truth. I suppose you do not care to tell me?"

"I will leave you to find out."

"Oh, of course, I shall find out. Good day."

He walked to the door as he spoke.

"By the way," I said, "is Father Vernon in London? I should like to see him before going to Cornwall, if he is."

He looked at me a second before replying.

"No, he has left England," he replied.

"Indeed. Rather sudden, isn't it?"

"Have you read the Holy Father's Encyclical?" he asked.

"Some of it."

"Get hold of his instructions concerning the treatment of those who are poisoned with the heresy of Modernism, and you'll know why he's been dealt with suddenly," he said, and his voice had become hard and rasping.

The next day I left London for my old Cornish home, but I did not stay there long. Barely a week had passed when I received a letter from old Morton Gascoigne.

"I want you to come here at once," he wrote. "I think I shall be able to throw some light on certain matters that have been puzzling you. In any case, come. I am wanting to see you badly, and certain matters seem drawing to a crisis.

"You will be glad to hear that George Fanshawe and Eve are very happy. As was natural, the priests have been trying to get hold of Eve again, but I have no fears on that score now.

"I have looked up the trains, and shall send a motor-car to meet the 4.15 at Gascon on Wednesday."

Although I had seen so little of my home during the

last few months, I made preparations for going to Gascon immediately. The truth was, I was very restless, and I hoped, although I had no reason for doing so, that I should hear something of Kathleen.

To my great surprise one of the first persons I met at Morton Gascoigne's house was Miss Grant. She seemed, I thought, ill at ease, but she retained great control over herself and tried to appear gay and happy. It required but a glance to see that Eve Gascoigne and George Fanshawe were in a state of bliss. Never had I seen lovers more devoted to each other. Eve shyly informed me that they were to be married in the autumn, her grandfather having given his consent on condition that they would live at home with him.

"And, of course, you have agreed to this?" I queried.

"I do not think I could be completely happy anywhere else," she said.

As for Morton Gascoigne, old as he was, his youth seemed renewed. He laughed like a boy, and scarcely seemed to heed the weight of his fourscore years.

We dined early, I remember, and during dinner I saw the old man looking frequently at his watch as if expecting some one. I thought, too, he was rather excited, but of that I was not sure.

After dinner we all gathered, with the exception of Miss Grant, in the large room, which the old man called his study and smoking-room, and coffee was barely served when Robert Gascoigne was announced. I saw from the look on his brother's face that he had been expected.

"Have you had dinner, Robert?" asked the old man, after the first greetings were over.

"Yes," was the reply, "I dined in the train," and Robert Gascoigne cast his eyes around the room, noting who was present. I could have sworn, too, that he gave a start when he saw Eve.

"You are quite a family party," he said; "and upon my word, Morton, I congratulate you. I am glad to see Eve looking so well."

He did not even refer to the circumstances under which we had last met.

"Have you heard the news, Robert?"

"What news? I have heard nothing. You see, I've been abroad so much."

"Then you will be surprised to learn that Eve and George here are to be married next month."

"Married! Eve married—and to Fanshawe!"

"Yes, does it surprise you?"

He mastered himself with an effort, then he said: "Oh, no; of course—I congratulate them both."

In a way which I cannot describe, the atmosphere of the room had become tense with excitement. Only the simplest words had been uttered, and yet we all felt as though we had come to a great crisis in our lives. Although I knew not why, all eyes were turned on Robert Gascoigne, who looked from one to another as if waiting for us to speak.

"Robert, how could you?"

Old Morton Gascoigne's words were simple, and yet they seemed tragic. I felt the perspiration ooze from my forehead, and I scarcely dared to breathe. What had made the air so electric? What caused our every nerve to be in tension?

Then Robert Gascoigne laughed, a hard, unnatural laugh. I saw the man whom I had taken months before to be one of the easy-going class of men, one who was incapable of deep feeling, clench his hands nervously, while his form grew rigid.

"What is it?" he said. "Is it a kind of pantomime, or are you in your dotage, Morton?"

"Robert, my brother, I know everything. How could you?"

"How could I—what?"

"How could you plot against my grandchild? You know it is no use denying it. It was you who got Miss Lakeman into the house, who pretended to be a Protestant, but who was sent here to try and pervert Eve. It was you who secured Miss Grant, who was also a Romanist, as her successor, and because I had such great faith in you I welcomed her gladly. It was you who plotted to get Eve away from home. You knew I had

sworn never to leave a penny of my money to her if she became a Romanist, and it was through your influence that I was deceived; it was through you that I have been left for months a broken-hearted old man, while Eve was allowed to eat out her heart in agony. Why did you do it, Robert?"

"I—why, Morton, you are mad!"

"Robert, I repeat, how could you? How could you pretend to be an ardent Protestant while all the time you were in league with Father Finlayson and the others?"

By this time Robert Gascoigne had mastered himself. He was not the pleasant, mild-looking man I had seen months before, but keen, cold, calculating.

"And I repeat, Morton," he said, "that you must surely be in your dotage. Who dares to say that I—did these mad things?"

"I have proof, my brother."

"Bring your proofs. I defy you to bring them. Who dares bring such a charge against me?"

"You deny what I have said?"

"I would not take the trouble to deny such mad charges. Bring your proofs."

The old man touched a bell. A minute later Miss Grant came into the room. She was very pale, I remember, and she looked afraid, and yet she seemed filled with a great determination.

Robert Gascoigne's face became ghastly as he saw her, but there was no fear in his eyes.

"Now do you deny?" said old Morton Gascoigne.

"What!" cried Robert, looking at Miss Grant, "have you dared to—to——"

"I have dared to tell the truth," replied the woman, "and I am prepared to dare to prove the truth if you drive me to it."

Robert Gascoigne looked from face to face, and it seemed to me that he was trying to decide what plan to adopt.

"Morton," he said presently, "this is surely a matter for us to discuss alone. There are strangers here."

"No," replied the old man, "there is no one here who may not hear everything, and I prefer to have everything explained here."

Robert Gascoigne laughed again, he seemed to have made up his mind. Evidently he had decided that subterfuges would avail nothing.

"Very well," he said defiantly, "and what then?"

"You admit it, then?"

"Yes," he replied, "I admit everything."

CHAPTER XXXV

THE CROWN OF LIFE

I THINK that not even old Morton Gascoigne expected this. For a moment he was taken aback, then he repeated his old question.

"But, Robert, how could you?"

"How could I what?"

"Act as you have acted. Of course, I now know that you did it for money. You were quite aware that I, believing you to be an ardent Protestant, would leave you my money if Eve became a Romanist. I had told you this. But surely that cannot explain. You knew you had only to ask me and you might have had five, ten, twenty thousand pounds, even. But you always told me that you had more than you needed, and you have constantly declared that you cared nothing about money. Again I repeat, you knew that you had only to mention any need to me, and I would gratify it. Why did you do it?"

Again Robert Gascoigne laughed, not loudly but quietly, as though he were enjoying himself.

"You are right," he said; "what do I care about money? I have never loved it, never wanted it—for myself. But now you drive me to it, I did get Miss Lakeman here as Eve's governess for the purpose of winning her to the Catholic faith. When she was found out—yes, it is no use denying it—I obtained the valuable services of Miss Grant to continue what Miss Lakeman had begun, knowing that if Eve became a Catholic I should be your heir. But did I care for your money? Should I have been enriched by it? Not a penny."

"But why, then?"

"Why?" he cried, "because the Church needs money,

and because her plans are frustrated and her work hindered for the want of it. I did it because it would have been a brilliant victory for the Church to have obtained the millions of old Morton Gascoigne, the militant Protestant, and to have used them for the furtherance of the cause he detested. I did it because it would have won me the smile of the Church, the smile of Heaven. That is why."

He spoke defiantly, while every one in the room stared at him in astonishment.

"Why did I do it? Yes, I can tell you now. I did it because I am a Catholic, a priest, a Jesuit. I did it because I can say with Cardinal Wiseman, 'I love the Church, and I love nothing else.' To enrich her I deceived you, to enrich her I pretended to agree with your Protestant twaddle—but for myself? No, not one penny of it would I have touched! All, all, should have been poured into her lap. Oh, yes, you thought in your silly ignorance that I had seen the error of my ways and had returned to the Protestant fold, after once having been received into the true Church. And I let you continue thinking it. Of course you condemn me; you will say that for years I have been a living lie, you will cover my name with ignominy. What care I for that? I would suffer a thousand times more than that, ay, I would suffer a thousand deaths to see the true faith established in this land, to see Great Britain united to the Holy Roman See."

He rose to his feet as he spoke and walked to the door.

"I suppose you think you have won a victory, and that I am defeated," he said. "But what of that? The Church is never defeated. What we fail to do to-day will be done to-morrow. Good evening, Brother Morton. Our victory will come; it may not be in your time, perhaps, but it will come. As for this woman," turning to Miss Grant, "I have an idea that her reckoning will come."

Robert Gascoigne left the house as he spoke, and a little later I heard him speak genially to one of the servants as he bade him a pleasant good evening.

Even now that hour seems to me more like a scene in

a play than an actual experience, but it was terribly real to Robert's brother, who sat silent for a long time after his departure. Of course it was evident that Morton Gascoigne had arranged for this meeting, and arranged, too, for the unmasking of his brother's perfidy. As I discovered afterwards, Miss Grant had communicated with him and had confirmed the suspicions which for some time had been growing in his mind. As I have said, the whole incident had seemed like a scene in a play, for never once had I suspected that the quiet, inoffensive-looking Robert Gascoigne had been a prime mover in the matter which had occupied my mind for so many months. At I reflect now, I tell myself that I ought to have seen the naturalness of it; but I defy any man, after having conversed with him as I had conversed with him, when I had first been called to Morton Gascoigne's, to associate Robert Gascoigne with such a plot. Not only did he seem mentally incapable of such a course of action, but his whole demeanour was such as to disarm the faintest suspicion.

Old Morton Gascoigne, however, directly he was sure of the truth, had arranged for the meeting, and with the aid of Miss Grant had made it impossible for him to wear his mask any longer. I think it was for Eve's sake more than anything else that he was determined that his brother should appear in his true character.

But the surprises of the day were not over with the departure of Robert Gascoigne, at least, as far as I was concerned. For presently I was informed that it was Miss Grant who had sent me the anonymous letters, and who had been instrumental in arranging for my being a witness of the meeting in Pilchard Street.

"But Eve told me you were a Romanist," I said when she confessed to this.

"I was," she replied, "but Simon Maynooth had treated me abominably. I hated the part he made me play; I was ashamed of acting a lie day by day; but he had me in his power and I was afraid to disobey him. I learnt through a friend that he had designs upon you, and was planning to get you into his toils; thus, because

although I feared, I also hated him, I sent you that first letter. Then when I saw you getting under his influence I sent you others, and was terribly disappointed when they seemed to have no effect on you. But I thought I knew the kind of man you were, and so when I heard of that meeting I determined that you should be present. I wanted to open your eyes to the character of Simon Maynooth and his plans. I wanted to do all in my power to disappoint him. What wonder? I hate him!"

This she told me, giving me the details of all she did, which I need not set down here, as they have no direct bearing on my story.

"And did you know where Eve Gascoigne was?"

"No. I believed her to be in London, and I tried all in my power to find her, but in this I failed. I think Father Maynooth began to suspect me."

"And are you a Romanist still?" I asked, wondering at the woman's strange behaviour.

"I don't know what I am," she replied bitterly. "Sometimes I think I have lost all faith. I know that Father Robert Gascoigne and Father Maynooth believe in their religion intensely, and yet—how can one believe when one thinks of the kind of men they are?"

I went to Eve Gascoigne's wedding. I had hoped that Kathleen Castlereagh might have been persuaded to be present. I know that Eve had invited her; but I was disappointed. She had written a characteristic letter, but she would not come. Thus, much as it rejoiced me to see the happiness of the young couple so strangely brought together, I was far from happy. How could I be when my heart was yearning for her, and when I felt day by day that the possibilities of winning her as my wife were becoming less and less?

Of course, I wrote to her time after time, but only once did I get an answer from her. It was a few lines, and while it made me think of heaven, it made the sky of my life blacker than ever.

"It is no use your writing me," she said, "for the hopes you have in your heart are vain. How can it be

otherwise? If love were all—but it is not. Oh, that it were. I am writing this to tell you to forget me. Why should you waste your thoughts on such as I? It is the will of God that we shall never meet again. And yet, why did you hear my voice that night, and why did I hear yours? Surely—but no, it is useless. Good-bye.”

And that was all, except for two lines as a postscript, which I will not set down here, but lines which made it impossible for me to go to Ireland to seek her.

Long, weary months followed. I spent Christmas here in my old Cornish home, and hoped with an aching heart for some message to cheer me at the time when all Christendom rejoices, but none came. Morton Gascoigne urged me to spend Christmas with him, and join in the festivities which Eve and Fanshawe had arranged, but I could not bear the thought of going.

Winter passed away and spring came, but there was little spring in my heart. I worked hard and attended assiduously to my parliamentary duties, but the position which I was slowly but surely gaining in the political world brought no joy. How could it when my heart was hungering for love and could not be satisfied?

Presently the Easter vacation came, and again I went to my old Cornish home, but even the great resurrection which I saw in the unfolding glory of leaf and flower failed to bring me gladness. And yet I shall never forget that Easter Day. Early in the morning I rose. The birds were calling to their mates and singing their love-songs as the sun rose in a clear sky.

“This is Easter Day,” I reflected, “the day which Christendom commemorates as the anniversary of that wondrous event which has changed the history of the world,” and then there flashed into my mind the memory of those words which are surely among the greatest in the world: “He is not here; for He is risen. . . . Come, see the place where the Lord lay.”

Then the bells pealed out from the old belfry tower, and I, standing bareheaded and alone, felt my heart beat with mighty throbs, and they were throbs of joy.

“This life is not all,” I said aloud; “Christ is risen.

Kathleen and I may never meet again in this life, but God meant us for each other, and we shall meet in the land where death is not."

I found my way into the churchyard, while the bells continued to peal forth their joyous notes. It was, indeed, a glad Easter morning.

What drew me to the grave where my father and mother lay I knew not, but presently I found myself there. I read their names on the grave-stone, and as I read I thought of them as I had known them. I remembered my father's giant-like form, his noble, massive head. I thought of my mother's face as it is revealed in the portrait which now hangs on the wall of the room in which I write.

In Loving Memory of
ROGER TREVANION KILLIGREW.

Also of his Beloved Wife
KATHLEEN.

Love beareth all things, believeth all things,
Hopeth all things, endureth all things.

LOVE NEVER FAILETH.

I thought of my father's wooing, and of the life he and my mother spent together. They were of different faiths. But love had triumphed.

Then I saw my mother as I remembered her. Was there ever another so beautiful? Yes, there was one.

Whether my eyes were open or closed I know not, care not. I saw—and I saw my mother's face become dimmer and dimmer, until it faded quite away, but as it faded away another took its place. It was Kathleen's—beautiful as a lily, but as pale as one also, and sorrowful beyond words. And yet the eyes were love-lit.

I saw the face as plainly as I saw it the first night in that London drawing-room when she appeared before me as a vision of glory.

"Kathleen!" I cried in my heart, but whether I spoke the word I know not.

"Come!"

I heard no sound, and yet I knew the word had been spoken.

The vision, or whatever it was, faded away.

An hour later I was at Truro Station waiting to catch the express train to Bristol.

When I arrived at Castlereagh Castle the gloom of evening was gathering around the old house, and I saw twinkling lights at some of the windows.

I rang the rusty door-bell.

The woman Biddy opened the door.

"Hush! for the love of the Blessed Virgin, hush!" she whispered hoarsely. "Master's dyin'."

"Dying!" I cried; then, "But your mistress—Kathleen—where is she?"

"She's wid him now. Oh, Holy Mother, help her, help her!"

"She's called for me, and I've come," I said. I did not know what I was saying, but the words came to me and I spoke them.

"Ye cannot go to her," she said. "Master fell from his horse, and he can't live long. The doctor says—oh, my poor master! And what'll become of the darlin'? Father Shannon is wid him now." And the woman sobbed convulsively.

What possessed me I know not, but I cried out passionately, "I must go to them—I must, I tell you."

"But you cannot," she cried; "and, blissed be the saints, here is the doctor to tell you so."

A tall, brawny man came up as she spoke and looked at me steadily.

"What is your name, sir?" he asked abruptly.

I told him.

He hesitated a second, and then took me by the arm.

"Praist, or no praist, ye shall see him," he said grimly.

Like one in a dream I accompanied him into the death-

chamber. Candles were burning around the dying man's bed, and the priest stood by his side. But even at that moment I did not look towards the man who was about to enter eternity, but at the face which I had seen as I stood by my mother's grave.

"Kathleen, my love, I am come!" I said.

"What is that?" It was the dying man who spoke.

"Mike, my old friend," said the doctor, "I have brought him. You were askin' about him, and when I saw him on the doorstep I brought him."

Michael Castlereagh looked at me steadily.

"Ye've come," he said simply.

"Yes," I replied, "I could not help it."

At that hour there seemed no need for explanation of any sort. The dying man knew what was in my heart.

"Ye've come because—because ye love my—my—Kathy?"

"Better than my own life," I said.

He looked at me steadily for several seconds as though he would read my soul, then he cast his eyes on Kathleen with a look of infinite tenderness.

"I only grieve for her," he murmured. "I am not afraid. I shall soon see my wife—my own little wife. But I grieved for Kathy—what was to become of her? I was afraid. God never intended her for—for that! And yet!—Man, come here, come close to me."

Like a man in a dream I obeyed him.

"And Kathy, my sweet one, come too," he whispered.

Again he looked at us both steadily.

"Man, you'll swear you love her!"

"I love her more than anything, everything else," I said. "She is all the world to me."

"And ye'll make her happy? Promise me that! Promise me that!"

"I'll give my life to make her happy," I replied. "As God is my witness, I will."

With a strength of which I did not think him capable he lifted himself in his bed and stretched out his hands.

"Come nearer," he whispered, and then with his right

hand he caught my right hand, and with his left he held Kathleen's.

Once again he gazed on us spellbound, while no one dared to speak; even the priest was awed into silence. He seemed like one fighting a great battle; the death-dews stood upon his brow, and in his eyes was a look which I never saw in any man's eyes before.

"It is the will of God," he said. "I cannot understand it, but it is God's will, it is, it is. Kathleen, me darlin', ye mane every word ye've told me?"

"Every word, father."

"Then it shall be so. Vow, or no vow, God wills it."

Then the priest spoke.

"No," he said. "You dare not. It must not be."

"Father Shannon," said the dying man, "it is God's will. For months I've fought against it, but I see now, I see now. What did the Holy Apostle say? Love is greater than hope, greater than faith, ay, greater than everything! And they—they love each other."

"But, but——"

"Silence!" said Michael Castlereagh, and the priest spoke no more.

"Take her, my boy," he said to me, uniting our hands. "She's all I have, and I—I give her to you. It is God's will. For many a month I could not, would not see it, but I can now. Love is greater than all things. Be—be good to her, and—and, Kathy, ye'll be good to him. I shall die happy now. My blessing on ye both—ay, and ye shall be blest."

He lay back on his pillow and panted out his life.

"I'm ready now," he whispered presently. "I've nothin' to wait for. I know my little Kathy will be cared for. He is a good man."

After that he became unconscious, I think, and lay in a comatose condition for several minutes. Then his eyes opened again, and he spoke clearly, almost triumphantly.

"All's well," he said. "I'm comin', my love, I'm comin'!"

Then he entered that land where there is no night.

It is not for me to tell of all that followed. Full of

joy though my heart was, I could not help being solemnised by the scene through which I had passed. Moreover, my heart was torn with sorrow as I saw the grief of the woman who had promised to be my wife. And yet our sorrow was not without hope; nay, it was my joy, even although she sobbed out her heart's agony on my breast, to see the light of love and hope in her eyes.

"Sleep, my little one," I said late that night. "All is well; there is nothing to fear."

"I know," she replied with infinite content. "Father's eyes were opened at the last. He placed our hands together. He gave us to each other."

"Love is more than everything else, and God is love. And oh, my little maid, I love you, I love you."

"Tell me so again," she whispered.

And I told her, not coldly as I write it here, but out of the fullness of my heart.

"Did you doubt it?" I asked.

"No, only I love to hear you telling me," she replied, "for I—oh, Kerry, I am afraid sometimes that it is sinful to love as I love you. But it is not, is it?"

What need is there that I shall write my answer to that?

When, after months of waiting, Kathleen and I were wedded, we returned to my old Cornish home.

"This is the place, is it?" she asked.

"Yes, do you like it?"

"It is beautiful beyond words—and it's home."

"Yes, home," I told her.

"Kerry."

"Yes, my queen."

"Will you take me to the place where—where you saw my face? By the grave of your mother, you know."

We walked side by side, hand in hand, into the old churchyard.

"And it was here you saw me?"

"Yes, my queen. And I hurried to your side."

"Oh, how I longed for you, how I longed for you!"

"And are you content?"

"Content! more than content. If you hadn't come, and father hadn't spoken, I—I think I should have been afraid. But not now. You remember what he said?"

"I shall never forget," I said. "There is the grave; look and read."

And together we read the words:

"Love beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faileth."

She looked up into my face with tear-filled eyes, but they were tears of joy. Then, standing by the grave-side of my father and mother, our lips met.

"I think they are here watching us and blessing us, Kerry," she said.

"Yes, I think so too," I replied.

Then slowly we went back to our home, and presently, when the servants were called for prayers, we asked the great Father of us all that He would help us live in the spirit of the words we had read together.

THE END