

Glenallan

By Edward George Lytton Bulwer

I

I was born in the county of —. After my mother's death my father, who deeply lamented her loss, resolved to spend the remainder of his life in Ireland. He was the representative, and, with the exception of an only brother, the last of a long line of ancestry; and, unlike most ancient families still existing, the wealth of my father's family was equal to its antiquity. At an early period of life he had established a high reputation in that public career which is the proper sphere of distinction to the rich and the highborn. Men of eager minds, however, should not enter too soon into the world. The more it charms them at first, the more it wearies them at last; hope is chilled by disappointment, magnanimity depressed by a social perspective which artificially lessens even great characters and objects, tedium succeeds to energy, and delight is followed by disgust. At least so thought, and so found, my father before he was thirty; when, at the very zenith of his popular esteem, he retired from public life, to one of his estates in the West of England. It was there, at a neighbouring gentleman's, that he first saw and loved my mother, and it was there that all the latent softness of his nature was called forth.

Men of powerful passions who have passed the spring-time of youth without the excitement of that passion which is the most powerful of all, feel love perhaps with greater tenderness and force when at last it comes upon them. My father and mother had been married for several years; their happiness was only equalled by their affection, and, if anything could weaken the warmth of the thanksgiving my father daily offered to Heaven for the blessings he enjoyed, it was the reflection that there had been born no pledge to their attachment, and no heir to the name and honours of his forefathers. Justly proud of his descent from some of the most illustrious warriors and statesmen of his country, such a reflection might well cast a shade on the otherwise unbroken brightness of his married life. At last, however, in the eighth year of that life, my mother found herself pregnant, and the measure of my father's felicity was complete, as the time of her confinement approached. But on the day when I came into this world to continue the race of the Glenallians, my mother left it, for ever. This stroke fell the heavier on my father, because in the natural buoyancy of his character, he had never contemplated the possibility of such a calamity. He left England for six years, and travelled over the greater part of Europe. At the end of that time he returned, with the determination to withdraw himself completely from society, and devote all his time and intellect to the education of the son he had so dearly acquired. But as it was impossible for one so distinguished to maintain in his own country the rigid seclusion on which he was resolved, my father decided to fix his future abode in Ireland, upon the estate where his mother was born, and which in her right he inherited.

Though so young at the time of our departure from England, I can well remember many of the incidents of the journey, and never can I forget the evening when our travelling carriage stopped before those moss-grown and gigantic ruins which were the only remnants of the ancient power of the Tyrones.

It needed but a slight portion of my father's wealth to repair the ravages made by time and neglect in this ruined but still massive structure, and my future home soon assumed a more lively appearance. Although my father civilly but coldly declined all intercourse with the neighbouring

gentry, the lower orders were always sure of finding a warm hearth and a bounteous board in the princely halls he had restored. His beneficence secured to him the affection of his peasantry, even amidst the perpetual disorders of one of the wildest parts of that unhappy country, and notwithstanding the abhorrence with which the existing Government was regarded by the surrounding population. My father's sole occupation was the management of my education. It was both the employment of his severer hours and the recreation of his lighter moments. He was not satisfied with making me a thorough classical scholar, but was particularly anxious to give me a perfect knowledge of the history and literature of my own country; to enlarge my views by habitual meditation; to make me familiar with the sciences of philosophy and political economy; and, in short, to bring me, as nearly as my abilities would permit, upon a par with himself.

Perhaps in his ardour to make me great, he forgot how necessary it was for my happiness to make me amiable. He suffered me to pay too little attention to the courtesies of society; and, thinking that it was impossible for a gentleman to be anything but a gentleman, he remembered not how many trifles, small in themselves but large in the aggregate, were required to lay a just claim to that distinction.

From the lessons of my father I used to turn to my private and lonely amusements. I in some degree inherited his aristocratic pride, and preferred even solitude to the intrusive familiarity of the servants and dependents, who were accustomed to join in the rural sports for which I felt no inclination. It was in solitary wanderings over wide and dreary plains, by rapid streams, amongst the ruins of ancient power, beneath the lofty cliffs, and beside the green and solemn waters of the Atlantic, that my mind insensibly assumed its habitual bias, and that my character was first coloured by the sombre hues which ever afterwards imbued it. As there were none to associate with me, my loneliness became my natural companion; my father I seldom saw, except at meals and during the time I was engaged with him in the studies he had appointed for me.

The effect of one great misfortune upon a mind so powerful as his was indeed extraordinary. Although during my mother's life he had given up all political activity, and lived in comparative retirement, yet he was then proud of preserving the ancient and splendid hospitality of the family, and whilst his house was the magnificent resort of all who were distinguished by their rank, their talents or their virtues, I have been told by those who then frequented it, that his own convivial qualities, his wit, his urbanity, his graceful and winning charm of manner were no less admired by his friends than his intellectual powers were respected by his rivals. But during the whole time that I can remember him, his habits were so reserved and unsocial that, but for his unbounded benevolence, he might have passed for an inveterate misanthropist. Although his love for me was certainly the strongest feeling of his heart, yet he never evinced it by an affectionate word or look. His manner was uniformly cold, and somewhat stern, but never harsh. From my earliest infancy I never received from him an unkind word or a reproach; nor did I ever receive from him a caress. In his gifts to me he was liberal to profusion, and as I grew up to manhood a separate suite of rooms and servants were allotted to me, far more numerous and splendid than those with which he himself was contented.

The only servant I ever admitted to familiar intercourse with me was an old man whose character was of a kind to deepen the gloom of those impressions I had already derived from other sources. He was a sort of living chronicle of horrors. He knew about every species of apparition and every kind of supernatural being, whether of Irish, English, or Scottish origin. The wildest tales constructed by the luxuriant genius of German romancers would have been tame in comparison with those of old Phelim. But of all the fictions he used to narrate, and I to revere as sacred and incontrovertible truths, none delighted me so much as those relating to my own

ancestor, Morshed Tyrone, a wizard of such awful power that the spirits of earth, air, and ocean ministered to him as his slaves, and the dead walked restless rounds to perform his bidding. I can remember well how the long winter evenings were spent, by the flickering light of the turf fire, in descriptions of the midnight orgies and revels, held perhaps in the very room where Phelim and I were then sitting. I can remember well the thrilling delight with which I used to watch for the hour when I laid aside what seemed to me the cold and airy beauties of Virgil, or the dry and magisterial philosophy of Seneca (the two books my father at this time most wished me to study), that I might listen to those terrific legends. Well, too, can I remember the not all undelightful fear which crept upon me when they were over, and I was left to the dreary magnificence of my solitary apartment.

As I grew up, so far from discarding or wearing out these impressions, so inconsistent with the ideas of the eighteenth century, they grew with my growth, and strengthened with my strength. In the old library I discovered many treatises on the existence of witchcraft. Some of them went so far as to hint at the means of acquiring that dreadful art without the penalties which superstition has attached to it; others were filled with astrological speculations, and to these treasures, which I carefully removed to my own rooms, I was continually adding every work I could procure upon the subject of my favourite pursuits. Still as I read, the ardour of penetrating further into the mysteries hidden from human eyes so powerfully increased, that at last I used to steal forth on certain nights to the lonesome abodes of the dead; and, amidst the corruption of mortality and the horrors of the charnel, I have sometimes watched till morning for the attainment of frightful secrets from which my mind in its ordinary healthful condition would have shrunk with repugnance.

This unnatural state of mind, however, could not last when nothing sustained it but the chimeras of a disordered imagination; and what perhaps conduced more than anything else to restore me to my senses was a long and violent illness, caused by a severe cold caught in one of my midnight expeditions. During several weeks I was confined to my bed, and then the long dormant kindness of my father's nature seemed to revive. A mother's fondest care could not have surpassed the unceasing vigilance, the anxious tenderness, with which he watched and soothed me. He poured forth, for my amusement, the varied stores of a mind rich in the knowledge of men as well as books; and the astonishing fund of information thus lavished for my enjoyment made me conscious of my own mental defects, and anxious to recover the time I had squandered in eccentric reverie. As soon as I was convalescent I fell into a more regular and instructive course of reading: I discarded old Phelim from my confidence, cleared my shelves of their unhallowed lumber, and seemed in a fair way to flow on with the rest of the world's stream in the calm current of ordinary life. Alas, it was not to be!

I have been thus diffuse in the narrative of my earliest years, because it is in that period of life that the character is stamped. It is then we sow the seeds we are to reap hereafter.

II

I had attained my eighteenth year, and was beginning to think it time to mix somewhat more with my equals, when my father sent for me one morning at an hour which was not the usual time for our daily meeting. Since my recovery he had gradually relapsed into his former habits of reserve, although when we were alone his manner was warmer and his conversation more familiar. I was somewhat surprised at the message, but more surprised by the extraordinary agitation in which I found him when I entered his study.

'Redmond,' said he, 'I believe you have never heard me mention my brother. Perhaps you did not know that I had so near a relation. I have learnt today that he is dead.' Here my father paused, evidently much affected, and I gained time to recover from my surprise at hearing in the same breath of the existence and death of so close a connection.

'In very early youth,' continued my father, 'an unfortunate quarrel arose between us, partly caused by my brother's change of political party for reasons which I thought either frivolous or mercenary. The breach was widened, however, by a very imprudent marriage on his part, at which my family pride revolted; and he, disgusted at what he deemed (not perhaps unjustly, as I have since imagined) my heartless arrogance, resented so warmly some expressions I had used in the first moment of mortification that he forswore for ever my friendship and alliance. Thus we parted, never to meet again. He withdrew to France; and from that time to this my information respecting him has been slight and trivial. Today I received an official letter informing me of his death and enclosing one from himself, in which, after lamenting our long separation, he recommends (and in terms I dare not refuse to comply with) his only son to my care and affection. I shall therefore write at once to this young man, inviting him to Castle Tyrone, and assuring him of my future solicitude. I have sent for you, Redmond, to acquaint you with this decision and to prepare you for a companion about your own age, who will, I trust, relieve the tedium you must often have felt in the unbroken solitude of our lonely life here.' With these words my father dismissed me.

I will pass over my reflections and anticipations, my fears and hopes, in reference to the prospect of this addition to our home life. During the whole morning of the day when our guest was expected, my father was in a state of silent agitation, as unusual to him as it was surprising to me, although I largely shared it. At length the carriage was seen at a distance; it approached, and a young man leapt lightly down from it. My father received him with a warmth quite foreign to the usual coldness of his manner, and entered into a long conversation with him about his own father. During this conversation I employed myself in taking a minute survey of my new acquaintance.

Ruthven Glenallan was in person small, but the proportions of his figure were perfectly symmetrical. He could scarcely be called handsome, but in his dark and dazzling eye, and in his brilliant smile, there was a power greater perhaps than that of beauty. He had been brought up from childhood in the most polished societies of Italy, and the winning grace of Continental manners was visible in all his gestures and expressions. Except my father, I have never known any person with such varied powers of conversation, or so able to charm and dazzle without apparent effort. Yet at times there was in his countenance a strange and sinister expression, which assumed a more suspicious appearance from the sudden and sparkling smiles immediately succeeding it if he thought himself observed. This peculiarity, however, I did not immediately perceive. For the next week we were inseparable. We walked and talked together, we accommodated our dissimilar habits to each other's inclinations, and we seemed to be laying the foundation of a lasting intimacy. Little as my father was accustomed to observe how those around him passed their time, he was evidently pleased with our friendship; and one morning, when I went to ask his advice about a course of reading on the commerce and politics of America, he said to me: 'I am much gratified by the affection which you and Ruthven feel for each other; the more so, as I am now convinced of what I have always hoped, that you would be but little affected by the loss of a part of that overflowing wealth which will be yours when I am gone. You are aware that a very small portion of my estate is entailed, and I can therefore, without injury to you, bequeath to Ruthven enough for his future independence. Though his

father's fortune was not large, his expenditure almost rivalled that of the foreign princes with whom he associated, and at his death little or nothing could be saved from the wreck of his fortune. The least I can do, therefore, to compensate for any fault I have committed towards my brother will be to give to his son a small moiety from the superfluous riches of my own.' I need not say what was my answer; it was, I hope, what it ought to have been.

III

After the first novelty of companionship was over, I began to find in my cousin's character much that widely differed from my own ideas of excellence. If I spoke of superior worth, if I praised a lofty thought or a noble action, his usual reply was a smile of contempt, or a cold calculation of its probable motives, which he invariably sought to prove selfish or unworthy. Sometimes he laughed at my notions, as the inexperienced absurdities of a romantic visionary; at other times he startled me with a bold avowal of his own, and they were mostly those I had been taught to abhor in the most cynical literature of France and Italy. I must own, moreover, that I had sometimes the meanness to feel jealous of him. My own character was not formed to be popular. Naturally proud and reserved, and cold in my manners though warm in my feelings, there was in me something repellent, which chilled affection and repressed confidence. But Ruthven was precisely the reverse. Really wrapped in himself, yet by the perpetual courtesy of his manners always appearing to think only of others, he was loved as soon as seen. The largest part of my munificent allowance I gave away in charity; but my charity was always silently and oftenest secretly bestowed, nor did my manner of giving it ever heighten the value of the gift. Ruthven seldom or never gave, but when he did give, he so managed it that his gift was sure to be known, and the value of it exaggerated, set off as it was by that winning grace so peculiarly his own, and so particularly seductive to our Irish neighbours. His habits also, both of reading and of recreation, widely differed from my own. He was devoted to politics, which to me seemed neither interesting nor amiable, and his amusements were either the sports of the field or the society of the promiscuous admirers, mostly his social inferiors, whom his conviviality of spirit perpetually gathered round him.

I have said that I was jealous of my cousin. Yes, I was jealous of him; but this was perhaps not altogether so unworthy a feeling as it might appear. I could have recognized without irritation the solid superiority of another; I could have admired such superiority even in a declared rival, with feelings, not of jealousy but of generous emulation; but I could not acknowledge Ruthven as my superior in any quality my character had been trained to admire. I could not but feel that in personal advantages, in depth of information, in abilities natural and acquired, and above all in that region of character which is governed by the heart, any just comparison between us would have been greatly in my favour. Yet he was loved and admired; I was disliked and feared. To a mind ardent in all its emotions, and hearty in all its thoughts, such a reflection could not be but bitterly mortifying. It was a reflection constantly and painfully renewed by the most ordinary events of every day; and the pain of it, which was not wholly selfish, may palliate perhaps, though it cannot condone, the fault I have confessed.

The gradual separation now began to take place in our pursuits was hastened by Ruthven's adoption of a profession. My father had given him his choice, and promised him assistance in any career he might select; and after a short wavering between a commission in, the army and a seat in. Parliament, he finally decided upon the latter. My father had three boroughs at his disposal: two of them had been lately given to men of high reputation, and at this time, all of

them were filled; but the member for one of them was very old, and labouring under all the infirmities of advanced age. There was therefore every probability that it would soon be vacant, and the expected vacancy was promised to my cousin. After this decision, Ruthven applied himself more ardently than ever to the study of politics. Every branch of law and history connected with this great object he pursued with an unwearied attention which scarcely left him an hour at leisure. This intense desire of distinction was decidedly the highest point in his character. In youth, to desire honours is to gain them.

IV

I resumed my former habits of solitude. I had always been more fond of walking than of any other kind of exercise. Accustomed to it from my earliest childhood, and blest by nature with a more than common activity and strength, I would often wander forth, in all varieties of weather, over those dreary and almost uninhabited wastes which tell so sad a tale of the internal condition of Ireland. Unhappy country! whose sons have in all ages, and more especially in ours, been among the brightest ornaments and best supporters of other lands, whilst their own, formed by nature to be so prosperous, has remained in a condition mourned even by the stranger who beholds it.

One morning, tempted by an unusual flow of animal spirits and the beauty of the advancing spring, I prolonged my excursion far beyond its customary limits. I was greatly attracted by the novelty of the scenery which opened around me, and finding myself at the foot of a small hill, I climbed it, for the pleasure of a wider prospect. There was one object in the foreground of the landscape on which I then looked down which immediately and strangely impressed me; but little did I then anticipate the influence it was destined to exert over my future life. This object was a rather large and very ruinous building, which stood utterly alone, upon a dull and shrubless plain. The oasis of desert, islanded in the loveliness of a landscape with which it had no visible relation; looked as though a wicked enchanter had stolen it by night from another and more dismal land, and dropped it where I saw it, to sadden and deform the beauty of the scenery around it; so foreign did it look to the character of the neighbouring country, and so coldly did it seem to cower in the desolation of its own sterility. My imagination tempted me to approach it.

I found the house in a state of even greater dilapidation than had been apparent to my first and more distant view of it. There was no wall or fence to protect it from the encroachment of man or beast. The rank ivy rioted in its broken windows, and troops of wild thistles crowded its doorless thresholds. At first it seemed to me impossible that such a place could have a human tenant, but presently I perceived a faint smoke rising from a rickety chimney in the shattered roof; and soon afterwards a woman, whose dress and air were evidently not those of a peasant or a pauper, emerged from the crumbling aperture which served as main doorway to the interior of the ruin. She slowly approached the place where I was standing. As she walked, her head was stooped apparently in deep thought, and we were close to each other before she noticed my intrusion. With a respectful gesture I stepped aside to let her pass. She heard my footsteps and looked up. Our eyes immediately and involuntarily met.

Could I devote the unremitting labour of a hundred years to the description of the feelings which that momentary look awakened within me, I should fail to express them. Philosophers may deride, and pedants dispute, the magic of those rare moments which reveal to the heart the capacity and the destiny of emotions it has never felt before; but from the first glance of that woman's eye my soul drank inspirations of passion which have influenced my whole life.

The stranger blushed deeply beneath my riveted and ardent gaze; and, slightly returning the involuntary bow which my ignorance of modern etiquette could alone excuse, she passed on with a quickened step. How often have the most momentous events of our future life originated in the most casual and trifling incidents of the passing moment! Ruthven's favourite dog had that day accompanied me in my lonely excursion. He was one of the fiercest of the fierce breed of English terriers; and his indignation being kindled by some mark of disrespect in the behaviour of a small spaniel which was the lady's only companion, he suddenly flew upon the little creature with a force and ferocity from which it was wholly unable to defend itself. My interference with this unequal combat was successfully exerted at the most opportune moment; and I had the happiness of being rewarded for it by a smile, and a voice, of which the memory almost repays me even now for the terrible sufferings I have since undergone.

To those who read the history of my eventful life, I would fain describe, If I could, the surpassing loveliness of that face which has been the star of its fairest hopes, and even in its darkest moments a guiding light, a glory, and a blessing. But the best part of beauty is what no picture can ever express; and if I attempted to portray the beauty of Ellen St Aubyn, the attempt would be as eternal as my love.

V

I took advantage of an opportunity so favourable, to enter into conversation with the fair stranger: a conversation embarrassed only by my habitual reserve. She was too high bred, and too genuinely modest, to repulse my respectful advances. Half an hour's walk brought us to the entrance of a large modern mansion, so completely embosomed in the surrounding woodlands that till then I had not perceived it. By this time I had learned that my fair acquaintance was the daughter of Lord St Aubyn; that her father was dead; that since his death her mother had settled almost entirely in Ireland, which was her native country; and that Lady St Aubyn was accustomed to pass half the year in Dublin, and the rest of it at 'Rose Cliff', the beautiful retreat which then bust into view from the depth of the embowering foliage around it, bright in all the sweetness of the noontide sun. Here I received from my companion a slight but graceful invitation to accompany her into the house, and I gladly accepted it. 'I have brought you,' said Miss St Aubyn to her mother, 'a treasure from an unknown shore. Let me introduce Mr Glenallan.' Lady St Aubyn received me with a charming courtesy which was a pleasant combination of English dignity and Irish cordiality; and in a few moments I found myself in animated conversation with her on the state of the neighbouring country. When at last I rose to take my leave, I was so warmly pressed to stay for dinner, that I felt too pleased and flattered to refuse. Shortly afterwards, some friends who were staying at the house returned from their morning walk, and I was formally introduced to Mrs M—, Lord and Lady C—, Miss P— and Lady L—. In the manner of all these new acquaintances I noticed how instantaneously their first scrutinizing and somewhat supercilious look at me was changed, on the mention of my name, to one of respectful politeness: so great is the magic of a name, when that name is associated with the importance which society accords to birth and wealth. At dinner I was seated between Miss P— and Lady C—. To me these ladies then appeared the most uncommon, though I have since discovered that they were the most common, specimens of womankind, Miss P— was an enthusiastic musician and admirer of poetry, especially the poetry of Scott and Moore. It is a pity that Byron had not then become famous. How she would have adored him! What her family and fortune were, I cannot exactly say. Both were, I believe, respectable. As for her personal and

natural qualities, she was rather pretty, if blue eyes, good teeth, a perpetual smile, and a never-varying red and white could make her so, in spite of red hair, a short clumsy figure, a broad hand, and a voice which had not a single tone free from affectation. Lady C— was a fine large woman, highly rouged, and dressed rather more *à la Grecque* than ladies of fifty generally think correct. She spoke with remarkable self-possession; and whether compliments or sarcasm, wit or wisdom, politics or poetry, it was with a voice perfectly unchanging, accompanied by a fixed stare, which, according to the subject discussed, appeared sometimes indecent, sometimes supercilious, always displeasing, and always unfeminine.

These two ladies, however, were just the sort of women best fitted to diminish the embarrassment of a shy and inexperienced young man. They were eternal talkers and loose observers, and my little blunders in established etiquette escaped unheeded. They were not serious blunders. Although no guests ever joined our family meals at home, the refinement of my father's tastes and habits scrupulously maintained, even in the most careless privacy, all those little forms and customs which exist in well-bred families. Moreover, I was a most miscellaneous reader, and not less familiar with all that class of fiction which paints the manners and habits of society than with the more serious literature of ethics. A good novel should be, and generally is, a magnifying or diminishing glass of life. It may lessen or enlarge what it reflects, but the general features of society are faithfully reproduced by it. If a man reads such works with intelligent interest, he may learn almost as much of the world from his library as from the clubs and drawing-rooms of St James's.

How often during dinner my eyes wandered to that part of the table where Ellen St Aubyn was sitting! How intently were they riveted upon her, when her bright cheek was turned away from me, and yet how swiftly were my looks averted when they encountered hers! After the ladies had withdrawn, the conversation was as uninteresting as after-dinner conversation generally is. I took an early opportunity of retreating to the drawing-room to make my adieux, but, with a hospitality truly Irish, I was again pressed to prolong my stay, at least for that night, and to send a servant to Castle Tyrone, with a message informing my father of the cause of my absence.

'Do pray stay,' said Miss P—, 'for I have a great favour to ask of you.'

'Why should you go?' cried Lady C—.

'What's the matter?' added Lady L—, who was somewhat deaf. 'Surely Mr Glenallan is not going; the evening is setting in, and see how hard it rains.'

'It will be quite an insult to Rose Cliff,' chimed in Lady St Aubyn.

To this I could answer nothing, but I looked at Ellen, who blushed as my gaze met hers, and I bowed a delighted assent. The servant was sent, and I remained. The whole of that evening I sat by Ellen, and that evening was therefore one of the happiest of my life.

In the course of our conversation, I asked her who lived in that deserted and ruinous building which had so fortunately attracted my attention.

'It is,' said Ellen, 'the last descendant of one of the oldest and once most powerful families in Ireland; and that house, the only one left of all her ancestral possessions, gives you a good idea of its inmate. She is very old, and apparently very poor; yet she never appears to want, and with all the noble but mistaken pride of high lineage, she would starve rather than accept assistance from anyone not of her own kindred. Her age, her poverty, her loneliness, and something certainly mysterious in her manners and habits, have gained her the reputation of a witch throughout the neighbourhood. When I was quite a child, I found her one morning stretched in a fit, by a well near her house, where I suppose she had gone to draw water. I was fortunate enough to procure assistance in removing her to her own home, where she soon recovered, and

ever since that time she has regarded me as an acquaintance, though she is averse to frequent visits, and will never permit me to contribute to her scanty comforts. Today I visited her for the first time since many weeks, but every time I see her she leaves upon my mind a remarkable and I may almost say a fearful impression.'

I was just going to ask some further questions, for I felt deeply interested in what I had just heard from Miss St Aubyn, when to my vexation that provoking Miss P— came up to us and said, 'Dear Mr Glenallan, now it was so good to stay, because I wished it. Don't be vain at my wishing it, for I am going to tell you why I did. You have read, of course, Scott's beautiful poem of "Rokeby". Well, I am making some drawings descriptive of the most striking scenes in it, but I never can draw figures out of my own head. I must have a model, and I want to paint Bertram and Redmond. Well, I have been everywhere and looked at everybody to find an appropriate model, and all to no purpose, but when I first saw you, I said to myself, "Oh, he will just do for Bertram," and so, . . . la, thank you, that look is just the thing. Pray keep so. Now don't move a muscle till I get my pen. cil. Dear, how provoking, if you ain't laughing I Well now, since I saw you talking and laughing so cheerfully with Miss St Aubyn, I thought you would do for Redmond too, so will you let me have your profile for Bertram, and your front face for Redmond? Thank you! I knew you would. I feared at first it might be rude to ask you, but—

Despair
Made us dare,

and I have tried everywhere. First I thought Lord C— would do, but he is so very pale and thin, and then I thought of Mr M—, but he is so very red and fat, and then I looked at Colonel B. E—, but he wears his collars so high that I could see nothing but his nose and eyes, and if I was to take them with that immensity of black hair round them, people would think I had drawn an owl in an ivy bush. Well, you will do very well. With a little management, that is. You must throw your hair off your forehead, and take off your neckcloth for Redmond, and . . . la, if here ain't Lady St Aubyn coming to ask me to sing. What *shall* I sing? "Young Lochinvar" or "When in death I shall calm recline"?"

I stayed a week at 'Rose Cliff', and that time was sufficient to attach my heart to Ellen St Aubyn by the finest and firmest ties of love. She was, indeed, all that was fitted to command the worship of a youthful and ardent enthusiast. Her face, her figure, her temper, her heart,—all were formed in the perfect purity of female loveliness.

VI

It was in the middle of the day that I took leave of 'Rose Cliff'. The morning had been wet, but the weather had cleared up by noon, though dark clouds in the distant horizon foreboded a return of storm before night. One of my servants had come with my horses from Castle Tyrone, but I had sent him on before me. Lovers know how sweet is the charm of a solitary ride when solitude is peopled with delicious hopes and remembrances that convert it into a paradise. I had not ridden more than three or four miles upon my way when a very heavy shower coming on drove me for refuge to a neighbouring farmhouse. Here I stayed so long that the evening was already far advanced before I recommenced my journey; but the rain had ceased, and the way was too short to make the lateness of the hour a cause of any inconvenience. I was little more than seven miles from home, when my course was crossed and again stopped by a stream which the recent

rain had so swollen as to render it perfectly impassable. I knew of a different road, but it was much longer and rather intricate, and the increasing darkness made me very doubtful whether I should succeed in tracing it out. However, there was no alternative. I must proceed or recede, and of course I chose the former. I had gone some distance when the road branched off in three directions, and I left the choice between them to the discretion of my horse. The event proved how mistaken is the notion entertained by some people about the superior sagacity of those animals. Although I put my horse to his fastest speed, the night came upon me, still completely ignorant of my course, and evidently no nearer home than before. Suddenly I heard a noise behind me, and two horsemen dashed by me, without heeding or answering my loud inquiries as to time and place. I felt all my Irish blood boiling in a moment, and resolving to have some more courteous response from these strangers I galloped after them as fast as my horse's weariness would permit.

They had not gone above a hundred yards before they abruptly turned down a narrow lane, the winding of which completely hid them from sight; and while I was deliberating whether I should follow them, down a road evidently out of my way home, I saw a light which, from its bright and steady beam appeared to proceed from some house, about a mile distant. There I am sure, thought I, of finding either a guide or a lodging, with perhaps the chance of catching those ungallant gentry into the bargain. So, keeping my eye upon the light, and my horse still at a rapid pace, I reached in about ten minutes the door of a small house. The sign-board, hanging over it, indicated that the place was meant for the entertainment of man and beast. I had a faint idea of having seen it before, in my rides and walks, but I took short time to examine its exterior. The door was fast. I could, however, distinctly hear low voices within, but my loud knock was only answered by an instantaneous and profound silence. I twice repeated it without any other result. My third effort was answered by a voice which asked, 'Who is there?'

'I want,' said I, 'a guide and a lodging; open the door immediately.'

Another silence was followed by a gruff command to go away, and not to disturb honest men, at that time of night.

'Hark you,' said I, 'this house is a public one, for the reception of strangers, and I know there are some in it at this moment. Open the door therefore, or refuse at your peril.'

Another voice now replied with a deep curse, and a third added,

'Let him come in and take the consequences.'

'No,' cried the one who has first spoken, 'he shall not come in.'

Then I cried, 'I will break open the door.' And suiting the action to the word, I placed my shoulder against it with some force.

It immediately gave way. There was a narrow passage between the threshold and the room whence the voices had proceeded.

Immediately on my entrance, a man strode out before the door of this room, and eyed me with a menacing attitude.

'Are you,' said I, quietly, 'the master of the house? If so, I will trouble you to take care of my horse.'

There was an appearance of surprise in the man's countenance. Of this I immediately took advantage, and gently putting him aside, I walked into the room.

I must own that I repented of my temerity on the first view of its interior. In the centre of the apartment there was a large oaken table, around which were seated about twelve or fourteen men. The greater number of them were wrapped up in large cloaks, which, with the addition of slouched hats and muffling handkerchiefs, effectually concealed each man's person. At the head

of the table stood, in an angry attitude, one man more closely disguised than the rest, for he wore a black mask; and by his right side sat a woman of advanced age. Her features were the most strikingly commanding I ever saw, and her style of dress, which was somewhat in the Moorish fashion, enhanced their imposing effect. The table was spread with papers, which appeared to have been thrown together in great haste and disorder, probably at the moment of my unexpected intrusion; and before each man was placed a brace of pistols, ready cocked, and a drawn sword.

There was a momentary pause. But the dark disguises of the forms around me, the weapons before them, and the lateness of the hour fully proclaimed the unlawful character of their meeting. I felt a strong inclination to retreat from a house where I was evidently no welcome corner. Whether this design appeared in my looks or motion, I cannot say; but, on a sign from him who appeared to be the chief in this unhallowed assembly, a man rose from the table, advanced to the door, bolted and locked it, and quietly returning to his place, laid the key beside his pistols. This I looked upon as a very unfavourable omen; but, resolved, if possible, not to betray my alarm, I turned to the large turf fire, and made some remark on the coldness of the night.

‘Was the weather,’ said the man at the head of the table, ‘the only cause of your trespass upon our society?’

‘Sir,’ said I, ‘if I have intruded upon you and the company of these gentlemen, you will, I trust, excuse me, and believe that my motive was really and solely the wish I expressed before I entered, to obtain a guide to the nearest town. If I am not mistaken, this house is intended to receive all who seek its shelter, but as I cannot conceive that anyone among you is the landlord, will you allow me to look for him, and accept my repeated apologies for having so unintentionally disturbed you? Sir,’ I added (turning to the man who had secured the door), ‘will you have the goodness to let me through?’ And so saying, I walked, with a sort of despair, to the entrance.

‘Stay,’ cried the chief in a voice of thunder, and pointing one of his pistols towards me, ‘if you move one foot further, your blood be on your own head.’

I felt my indignation rise, and not caring to suppress it, ‘By what right,’ I cried, ‘will you or any man detain me? If, as you say, I have intruded on your company, can you with any reason object to my withdrawing from it?’

Before the chief could reply another man rose suddenly from the table. ‘Stranger,’ said he, ‘look around you. Is not one glance sufficient to convince you that you are among those to whom concealment is necessary, and do you think that we will permit you, not only to endanger our lives, but also imperil the salvation of our country? No! I repeat it, no; it is not our lives that we regard, and as for myself, I scorn this vain meanness, of meeting in darkness and disguise, to concert and execute schemes for so noble a purpose as the liberation of our country. Know us for men in whose ears the groans of Ireland have not fallen in vain. In silence we have seen our constitution insidiously attacked and betrayed. In silence we have submitted to the laws and commands of a tyrannical Government, which grinds us to the dust, while it mocks us with the pretence of friendship and union. In silence we have heard our religion traduced, and seen our nobles robbed of their rights, whilst yet meanly crouching at the court of their conqueror. In the senate of a land not ours, we have no voice to complain, no force to cry for justice. Whilst our rulers boast of tolerance, we are crushed beneath the weight of their bigotry. More than victorious Rome ever imposed upon our tyrants they have inflicted upon us, and all this we have borne, writhing but unresisting. But endurance is exhausted; we can no longer sit helpless in our ruined homes, whilst our dependents, our parents, our wives, our children, are daily and hourly

sinking around us, beneath the horrors of famine. They ask us for bread and we have it not to give them; yet though they are perishing beneath our eyes, we will no longer uplift, in the vanity of supplication to our oppressors, hands to which the sword can alone restore the liberties we have lost, and the lives we are losing. There is not one of us here assembled who has not sworn an oath which, if maintained, will liberate his land, but if broken turn against the bosom of its betrayer the swords of his comrades. There is not one of us whose life is not consecrated to the freedom of his country, not one of us who is not ready to shed his blood in that sacred cause. But think not, stranger, that our strength is but the frenzied paroxysm of despair. It is a deeply established and elaborately organized power. At the slightest sign from each one of the men before you, as many thousands are prepared to flock to the standard of Ireland, and when that standard is unfurled, there is not throughout the whole people of this land an honest man whose name will not be enrolled in the ranks that follow it. Our councils are secret, but our cause is sacred. It is sacred because God is the God of mercy and justice, and for justice and for mercy we contend. Yes, although now we assemble in darkness and disguise, ere long the sun of a reviving nation will rise upon the hosts that are gathering in the watches of the night, and the clouds that still obscure its brightness shall be scattered upon the wings of the morning. Such, stranger, are the men in whose presence you stand, and with their fate linked the fate of Ireland. Judge, then, whether we can suffer you to leave us at the risk of our destruction.'

'No, let him die,' shouted the chief. 'Let him die,' echoed the voice of every man in the room, and their swords gleamed in the dim light of it.

'Hear me,' I cried, 'hear me first, and then murder me if you will, for I am in your power.'

'Hear him,' said the man, who a few moments before had turned their wrath against me. And at his word every sound died away into silence.