

Ever since the day on which the church of Kilvarra had been demolished by a flying detachment of Cromwell's troopers, it was affirmed by the people of the neighborhood that an evil spirit in the shape of a woman, haunted its ruins, several of them having seen her—a weird, spectral figure—during the "uncanny hours" of night. Among the peasantry the apparition was known as *Sprid Lambh fadah dhuv*, (the Spirit of the Long Black Hand). The hapless wight who had seen it would tell with bated breath, how in one terrible glance he had caught sight of a dark mysterious figure, as it glided from the interior of the ruin, stood in the broad moonlight at the main entrance, and raised aloft a long black hand, as if in menace or malediction. To the beholder the apparition boded ill, for to him or his, memorable misfortune was said to come. Conjectures as to the origin of this ghostly visitation differed. It was variously regarded as an instrument to avenge some foul deed perpetrated within these walls; as the spectre of that faith and nationality whose light the stern Puritan had so ruthlessly striven to extinguish, and as the harbinger of the woes that followed in the wake of that trail of blood and fire which marked his campaign in Ireland. But of its disappearance, with the story of which we are now concerned, we are not left in doubt, if we accept the settled belief of the neighborhood as it is preserved to us in the legend of the Long Black Hand.

A mile or two from the ruins, there stood at the time of our narrative, one of those Anglo-Norman castles, which, ever since the days of Earl Strongbow had served as fortress as well as manor house for one or other of the warlike de

Burghs. Around and within its thick grey walls waged many a fight between defenders and besiegers. In later and less distinguished times it was noted for the profuseness of its hospitality and the social charm that succeeded the feudal extravagance of a ruder age.

In the dining-hall of the castle there had gathered, one tempestuous night in autumn a numerous and distinguished company. The list of ordinary guests had been enlarged by a party of English military officers, comrades in tent and field of the lord of the manor who had seen service in many a hard fought field, under the command of that great captain who had given to English military history its most heroic page. The halo of Marlborough's victories still lingered; and here in this quiet nook by the Atlantic, one of his bravest lieutenants was spending the close of a life brimful of stirring experiences. Maurice de Burgh had risen to high rank in the army, and could have obtained higher, but advancing years, and the ebb of military glory that succeeded the full tide of Blenheim brought with them the calm thought and philosophic reflection that come to all men when the hot blood no longer courses through the veins and enthusiasm fails to respond to the call of ambition. Yet there were times when the old fire blazed up, and never more brightly than when, as now he was surrounded by men who had shared his tent and with him the perils of the battle field. On the occasion in question, memory was busy. Reminiscence after reminiscence of the old soldiering days was related—incidents of splendid daring and heroic courage; chivalry had not yet passed away and its knights were not few. The well-known hospitalities of his