

middle age, with dark complexion, and sunburnt, as one who had braved the weather both by sea and land. His hair was iron grey; his eye, dark and piercing, and the face bore the impress of a mortified life, and of an ardent and ever active charity.

The travellers rode on in silence—passed their late companions on foot without any sign of recognition; and on reaching the town, again crossed a bridge, and entered the hostelry of the "Golden Harp." Here the merchant received a warm welcome under the title of "Master Douglas," whom mine host supposed was come to Drogheda to take ship for the Orkney Isles. "For I have heard," added he, "that the captain of the 'Good Hope' will set sail for those parts in a few days from this."

"You have divined aright, my friend," said Master Douglas, smiling.

"I intend to make another voyage with my good companion, Captain Murphy; and meanwhile I will tarry here, an' it pleases you."

"It pleases me marvellously well, good sir," replied the host. "I trust that with all these voyages your honour is growing rich. And thou knowest," continued he with a grin, "the company of rich merchants is always desired by us poor publicans, though it must be said with truth, Master Douglas, thou art too sparing of our good cheer."

"Perhaps I am not so rich as you deem," answered his guest.

"Nay, sir; it is surely nought but some great gain that can tempt you to peril your life on the stormy seas, and in that cockle shell of a craft of Captain Murphy's, for those far distant islands, where, men tell me, folks are well nigh savages."

The merchant smiled.

"Truly it is the hope of great gain that tempts me, mine host; but then, thou and I might differ in opinion as to what that great gain is."

"Gold of no light weight, sir," retorted the publican, grinning; "a bag of that too heavy for my best horse to carry is the lightest sum that would make me peril life and limb;—but why stand I chattering here?—sure and your honour will dine at once?"

"Not so," said the merchant; "I had refreshment on the road. I will dine

and sup together, and if you will care for our nags, my servant and I have business in the town."

So saying, the two sallied forth into the narrow and dirty streets of Drogheda, and, quickening their steps, began to mount a hill which led them in the direction of S. Lawrence's Gate. Conspicuous on their left as they approached the gate, rose the beautiful Magdalene steeple of the Dominican Priory.

The travellers bent their steps towards the gate, beneath which they rejoined their former companions, the pedlars. They stood for a moment under its shelter, and those of them who had seldom visited Drogheda, gazed with admiration at the beautiful specimen of architecture which overshadowed them. It consisted of two lofty circular towers of four stories, between which was a retiring wall pierced like the towers with loopholes; on the town side each story was divided by a platform of timber extending from tower to tower, and enabling the loopholes to be used for the defence of the city.

Drogheda had already sustained one severe siege, and had been so well defended by Sir Henry Tichborne and Lord Moore, that Sir Phelim O'Neill (who commanded the Ulster army before the arrival of Owen Roe,) had been compelled to raise the siege. But troublous times were not over, and the garrison of Drogheda were on the alert.

The four travellers now, formed into one party and proceeded along a narrow lane. Here and there was a mud cabin, but soon even these disappeared, and the party seemed to be advancing towards the open country, and to a thick wooded part which lay on their left. It was a fair scene: there were cornfields and green meadows, hedges and wild flowers; while far beneath their feet on the right lay the noble river, the shipping, and the irregularly grouped buildings of the town. In a few minutes they reached the wood, and as they drew near, they perceived that the trees were not so thickly planted together as they appeared in the distance. But there were spaces of pasture land between, on which a few cows were peacefully grazing. On one side, indeed, nature had formed one of her