

long-absent one return to the hearth which he had made desolate. The harsh voice of war was silenced and was remembered only by those aching hearts which must mourn their blighted hopes till they should cease to beat. The fields again waved with yellow corn and the grass grew fresh and green over the unconscious forms of foes, once met in the deadly conflict, but who now lie side by side beneath the green sod.

"Home! home!" exclaimed the Colonel, who had left his native land but a few years ago, with an ensign's commission and a maiden sword, with which to carve a proud name in the annals of his country. Fate had been kind to the brave boy, and had turned aside the showering bullets which spared not those of noble birth and lordly wealth who stood by his side. "Home! home!" shouted the shrill voice of the drummer-boy, as gaily he tossed aloft the cap from a head which had looked upon dismal scenes of carnage and horror, and had reposed calmly on many a battle-field which a grey head might shudder to contemplate. "Home!" echoed Fitzgerald, as a smile flitted across his pale care-worn face, while enfeebled by the many wounds he had sustained, and in broken health and spirits, he once more sought his native land.

As Fitzgerald approached his ancestral home he pictured the joyous reception his return would meet, and anticipated the welcome repose he would once more enjoy in the bosom of his family. Captain Fitzgerald's estate was situated in one of the northern counties of Ireland, amid the rich and varied scenery with which some of that portion of the Emerald Isle abounds. It had come into his possession only about two years previous to the time when we introduced him to the reader. He was a younger son, and had inherited literally the portion of that superfluous member of a family, namely, an ensign in the army. He had distinguished himself upon many occasions during the long continental war in which he had fought, and to his own bravery he owed the rank which he had attained. Upon the death of his elder brother he had succeeded to the ancestral estate. Since that period he had anxiously desired to retire from the army and to reside at Ardmore, but he would not return thither till peace should be proclaimed, and his services no longer be required by his country. He had married while abroad, and Constance was a child of the sunny South pre-eminent for beauty even among the lovely daughters of Italy. She was descended from a noble and distinguished family of Florence, but her house, like her country, had fallen from its ancient greatness. Fitzgerald had wooed and won her for his bride, and she had accompanied him through the vicissitudes

which attend a soldier's life, till fearful that her health and that of her child might suffer by the frequent dangers to which they were exposed, he had conveyed her home to Ardmore, where she had continued to reside anxiously expecting the return of her husband. A stranger in the land, though tolerably versed in its language, and easily adopting the customs of those around her, the time passed heavily away, and to one of such an ardent nature as Constance, life would have been insupportable, had it not been for the incessant cares which her child demanded, and the cherished hope of Fitzgerald's speedy return. She had lately received a letter from him, informing her of the death of O'Donnel, and intimating his intentions towards the son of his departed friend. He also spoke of his near prospect of seeing her again, and the step of Constance became light, and her dark eyes shone bright and happy, as when in the careless untroubled days of her girlhood, she had lightly touched her guitar by the banks of the Arno.

Again Fitzgerald trod his native soil, and with as much haste as his enfeebled health would permit he journeyed towards his home. It was night when he reached the portals of Ardmore. As if mourning the absence of its lord, even the mansion wore a cheerless, gloomy aspect. The spacious hall which, in former days, was brilliant with lights, and across whose windows light forms were wont to glide, was now forsaken and left in utter darkness; but above, from the chamber which he knew was tenanted by Constance, there shone a solitary lamp clear and bright as the star of love.

The old and faithful servants hastened forward to greet their master as soon as his arrival was known, but hardly waiting to return their joyous welcome, Fitzgerald hurried onwards to meet his wife. Imagination alone can picture the delight with which Fitzgerald was received by her, whose heart had never been free from alarm while her husband was absent and exposed to countless dangers, which, with woman's love, she multiplied and exaggerated.

"But, dearest Constance," interrupted Fitzgerald ere he had replied to half her anxious enquiries regarding his health, "I have not yet beheld our child."

"Nay, forgive me, Edward," she replied, "in my joy at seeing you again, I selfishly forgot that another dear one must share your caresses."

So saying, and leaning on Fitzgerald's arm, Constance led the way to the chamber where the child reposed. Conducting her husband forward, she raised the lamp so as to throw the light upon the face of her babe.

"Is she not lovely, Edward?" exclaimed the