

"I doubt them not my Lady. Had the O'Neill but the rule in this land, yea, even though we have lost opportunities and committed blunders, we might yet redeem the cause. But, when we see that man, born to command, whose great victory struck awe amidst our enemies, whose deeds were recounted even in great London town, where they cried about the streets, the 'bloodie fyghte by the Blackwater,' this man to whom Charles is compelled to stoop, because he has sense enough to see he is in reality our chief; when I see this man, I say, browbeaten, despised, pushed aside, I despair for Ireland."

Henry, with his wife clinging to him, now entered the room. He smiled; only it was a sad smile, at Gerald's glowing face. He kissed Lady Elizabeth's hand, and seated himself by the side of his wife's couch.

Gerald went on, "You know my words are sooth, Henry, though you keep silence."

"It is my father's will I should be silent," answered Henry, "and that suffices."

"Oh! that the O'Neill would listen to reason—would tell the Lord Nuncio we can manage our own affairs without him."

"Gerald, hush!" said Lady Elizabeth.

"I pray you speak not thus of him whom we are all bound to honour."

"The Nuncio is keen-sighted withal," observed Henry. "I mistake much if the truth be not dawning on him. It hath been his duty to try and reconcile those feuds that ought never to have arisen; and I believe he is becoming convinced that while my father will yield in all things to his advice, Preston gives not in an inch."

"Of course not," cried Gerald; "he palavers to gain time—throws dust into my Lord Nuncio's eyes—and schemes to compass his end. Oh, May! who think you is his first aide-de-camp? an old companion of yours and mine."

"I cannot imagine whom you mean, Gerald."

"What think you of Roger MacDonald?"

"Roger! is it possible?"

"Very possible; but imagine his having left the O'Neill's army and joined that of his bitterest enemy in whose

veins Saxon blood runs thick. 'Tis for some grudge, without doubt."

"He was disappointed, you know, about Eveleen," said Mary; "but I could hardly credit he would have so revenged himself."

"God forefend that Eva should ever be his wife. He scowled at me one day with a brow black as night, and yet I have never harmed him."

And said Lady Elizabeth's gentle tones, "If a man can stoop to revenge himself because a woman rejects him, and, as in Eveleen's case, for the holiest of causes, black would be her fate if she had become his wife."

"He is a clever man," remarked Henry, "with a bold assurance. I saw him in deep and long secret conference with the Nuncio not many days ago. But enough of him to-night. Time presses, and I thought you would desire to hear the O'Neill's answer to the king, so I prayed him to let me bring with me the draft of what he hath written."

"Thanks, Henry," said Lady Elizabeth, cordially. "Read; we listen with eagerness."

Henry drew a paper from his vest and read—

"May it please your Majesty—

"I received your Highness' letters of the eighth and twentieth of October, and the tenth of January last ensuing thereof, to set at liberty, the Lord Viscount Montgomery of Ards, who was taken prisoner by my forces in June last. I most humbly beseech your Majesty to accept of these my reasons as my apology, and excuse me for not complying with your Majesty's pleasure herein for the present; for I do and will ever profess to be one of your Majesty's most loyal and obedient subjects, and will, in testimony thereof, be ready upon all occasions to observe your commands.

"But, dread sovereign, be pleased to understand that the Lord Viscount Montgomery of Ards hath sided these two years past and more with the parliament rebels of England, in open hostility against your Majesty, and especially against this nation of Ireland; and therein hath been more eager and active than any of his party, he being commander-in-chief of all the horse of his party in the province of Ulster; here