

to-morrow. Out on them all, say I," continued Gerald, his brow flushing with indignation. "Where is my lady May? I have some news that will surprise you both."

"Come with me," replied his sister; and she led him up a flight of stairs.

The door of the first room was open, and displayed to view five or six beds, each containing a sufferer. It was a hospital; but one in which our modern ideas of comfort did not prevail. But, if loving care and a free outpouring of all their knowledge—all they had to give—could avail, the inmates of Lady Elizabeth's Hospital were well off. And very touching were the fervent expressions of gratitude which burst from the lips of the patients. Gerald passed from one bed to another to exchange a greeting with his men. In the middle of the room, standing by a table on which medicines and salves were placed, was Lady Elizabeth Nugent, the widowed Countess of Kildare. She was advanced in years, but her tall, slight form was still unbent, her dark eyes were full of light; it was only the lines that furrowed the noble brow, and the hair white as silver, but rich and luxuriant still, which told that the summer of her life was gone. She was speaking earnestly to a young woman, wife to one of the men, who shared in the nursing, and the expression of her sweet and earnest face was visible as Gerald and Mary advanced towards her, and stood waiting for a moment until her orders should be finished.

"Welcome, dear Gerald!" she said. "Are there more arrivals to-day?"

"Several, dear Lady," answered he, stopping to kiss her hand with a gesture of the deepest respect; "and if your good offices are ended, I would fain crave speech with you."

Lady Elizabeth left the ward, and ascending another flight of stairs, led the way into the only sitting-room she and Mary O'Neill possessed. It was poorly furnished enough, but a fire of turf was burning on the hearth, and a beautiful picture of the Mother of Sorrows was the chief ornament of the room.

The trio drew near the fire, and Lady Elizabeth gently insisted on Mary's lying down on a rude sort of couch saying, "If Henry is coming to-night I have no

mind for a chiding from him for not guarding his May blossom better."

"Now, Gerald, the news," cried Mary.

"Who dost ye think hath written to the O'Neill to-day, and for the third time also?" demanded Gerald.

"The Holy Father," cried Mary.

"Ormond," said Lady Elizabeth.

"Neither one nor 'tother. What think ye of Charles Stuart?"

"The King?" cried the ladies, in amazement. "Oh!" said Mary, starting to her feet and clasping her hands, "is he true at last? Is he wise at last? Have our prayers been heard? Will he at length make terms with the O'Neill, free Ireland, and save his crown?"

Before answering, Gerald looked at Lady Elizabeth. There was no expectant eagerness on her face.

"None of this, May," said her brother. "He writes to demand the enlargement of my Lord Montgomery of Ards."

"Is it the rebel to his own rule?" asked Mary, in amazement.

Lady Elizabeth sighed deeply, "Alas! what hope for us with one so weak?"

"But I do not comprehend," persisted Mary; "Montgomery is his foe."

"Yes, May, but Charles is in the power of the Scots, and to please them and pander to them he stoops to this—stoops, too, to ask this favour at the hands of the man he has deeply wronged, whom he would if he could, befool."

"Whose step is that?" enquired Gerald, stopping suddenly in his narrative.

"Only Father Lee on his last visit to the sick, I think," said Lady Elizabeth.

"Oh, no," cried Mary; blushing springing from the couch, she hastened from the room.

Her two companions smiled, and left the husband and wife to have their joyful meeting for a few moments unobserved.

Gerald leaned his arms on the table, and bowed his head on them with an air of deep despondency.

"Come, Gerald," said Lady Elizabeth, "soldiers must never despond. You are young. What if the struggle be long and protracted? victory will come at last."

"Never," replied Gerald.

"For shame on a Fitzgerald to doubt the valour of Irish arms!"