

THE IRISH STUDENT.

BY S.

CHAPTER I.

— 'Tis hard to lay into the earth
A countenance so benign! a form that walked
But yesterday so stately o'er the earth!

WILSON.

Come near! ere yet the dust
Soll the bright paleness of the settled brow,
Look on your brother and embrace him now,
In still and solemn trust!
Come near! once more let kindred lips be pressed
On his cold cheek; then bear him to his rest!

HEMANS.

It was the eve of battle. The beseiging army lay beneath one of Spain's proudest cities. The camp presented the scene which generally precedes the day of battle. The toil-worn veterans, to whom the prospect of the morrow's conflict conveyed no novelty, lay extended on the green sward sleeping calmly, as if this night might not be the last which would ever throw its dark shades around them. To them the approaching death struggle was nothing new. They were prepared to risk their lives again as they had so often already done.

But there were younger and more sanguine spirits among that warlike host, whose hearts beat tumultuously at the prospect of the coming strife. Though toil-worn and weary no sleep was permitted to rest upon their eye-lids. They sat apart in groups talking of the eventful morrow, and many a youthful soldier in imagination beheld the laurel to crown a head, which, before another sun should set, would lie cold and lifeless as the sod upon which it should rest. There were fair-haired boys there also, the darlings of fond mothers, and heirs to lordly domains, whose thoughts might be read in the proud exulting smile which lit up their faces as they imagined the joy with which many a loved maiden would listen to the recital of the gallant part they bore in the morrow's conflict, whose glowing cheek and tearful eyes would bear witness to the interest she felt in the fate of the far-distant one. Alas! such is the dream of life in peace as in war! Where imagination pictures the future she exhibits to our view all that is bright and beautiful, but reality, when the dread moment

arrives, draws the curtain aside and points to a—tomb!

Apart from their comrades and engaged in conversation, sat two officers. One was still youthful in appearance, while the other had hardly yet passed the prime of life, and both were distinguished by their noble mien even among the martial forms around them.

The countenance of the younger wore an air of deep dejection, and his mind was evidently engrossed by less sanguine hopes than those which occupied his brethren around. His companion had marked the vacant eye, and observed the absent air with which he listened to the conversation which he endeavoured to maintain, with a view to draw him from the deep dejection so unusual to him. At length, failing in all his efforts to arouse his usually cheerful companion, Fitzgerald ceased in his attempts, and allowed his gaze to follow that of his friend, which rested on the bright moon as she calmly and silently sailed through the blue heavens above. As he looked upwards he also fell into a deep reverie, and visions of his island home came thronging upon him. He thought of his fair young wife whom he had left there, and of his only child, but it was with a confident hope that he would soon again behold and embrace them. Lost in a pleasing dream of home and happiness, Fitzgerald forgot even the anxiety which his silent friend had occasioned, till he was roused by the pressure of a hand upon his shoulder, and turning he beheld his brother officer looking in his face with a solemn earnestness which awed him.

"Why, O'Donnel, what ails thee to-night," he exclaimed. "I never beheld thee in such a mood as this. We have fought side by side in many a bloodier conflict than the morrow promises to witness. Thou hadst always the brightest eye, and led the foremost charge in every battle. Surely you cannot expect a defeat to our arms."

"On the contrary," replied O'Donnel, "I feel confident that we shall conquer. But, Fitzgerald," he continued, looking sadly into the face of his friend, "did you never experience a chill creep over the heart, a dark presentiment of coming evil? But, no! you have not; such gloomy