

her little coil, made a lovely picture. She was trying, as she leant on Fidolis, as she had long since named the charger, to hide the tears that came welling to her eyes, and still the sobs that made her slight form tremble.

"Ah, then, my brave Eveleen," said the chief, as another young girl stepped from the threshold and came toward him, bearing in her hand his sword, which she had prayed him to let her buckle on; "there is my foolish Mary crying. I shall tell her," and he bent low and whispered so that only Eveleen and Mary could hear him. "She is not fit to be a soldier's wife." Shall I tell Henry so when I meet him by the Blackwater, and bid him tear a certain lady's glove from his helmet, for she needs no true knight any longer?"

Mary's fair head was bent lower still, but a deep pink glow was mantling her slender throat.

"And now, Eveleen, buckle on my sword," continued O'Neill. "Ah, my good blade, thou art of Spanish make, 'tis true, but the hand that bears thee is an Irish one, and will wield thee for Ireland well."

"Dear and noble chief," said Eveleen, as she kissed his hand, and then looked up with reverence into his face.

She was about a year older than her sister, and though there was a strong resemblance between them they were not cast in the same mould.

Eveleen was a graceful, fragile-looking creature, with a pure clear complexion into which any passing emotion would speedily call up a rosy glow. Her pale brown eyes were large and soft, her hair was just tinged with gold, and a little drawn back from her face, and there was an expression of such unearthly purity and peace on the fair mouth and high white brow that an artist would have loved to paint her as the "blessed among women."

The clear sound of a bugle rent the air; a hasty firewell, and the general rode forward to take his place with his troops. Proudly waved the banner of the "Red Hand," while cries rent the air as the troops defiled past, followed by the general and some officers of his staff.

"Long live Owen Ruadh! long live the O'Neill! long live the King of Ulster!"

Hand in hand the sisters stood while the long line of soldiers could be seen winding in and out of the thick trees; then, as they reached a turn in the valley, they were gradually lost to sight.

The sisters stood till the last sound of the bugle died on the air, the distant trampling had ceased, all was still. Then Eveleen and Mary passed within doors, and going to the foot of the crucifix poured out earnest prayers for the success of the army, and then they went to their daily tasks and to bear that burden which is so often a woman's lot, to watch and to wait while those she loves are far distant in peril and in strife.

Eveleen and Mary were the daughters of Sir Luke Fitzgerald, an old and faithful friend of Owen Roe O'Neill. The two girls, indeed, looked on the chief as a sort of second father. Unable, as almost all the Irish Catholics were, to procure any sort of fitting education for their children at home, Lady Fitzgerald had lived for many years with her three children at Louvain, and there contracted the closest intimacy with the wife and family of Owen Roe. The ties that bound the two families together had been drawn closer still by the betrothal of Mary Fitzgerald to Henry O'Neill, the eldest son of the chief, and already a gallant officer in his father's army.

About a year before our story opens, Lady Fitzgerald's health had failed, and that strange longing which so often comes upon an invalid fell upon her; a longing once more to see her native land. Her eyes ached at the sight of the dull old streets of Louvain and the flat landscape of the surrounding country. She pined for her own green Erin, for the fair hills and dales of her southern home. Her husband and son were both in the Irish army, and the sick mother longed to be near her dear ones. So she and her daughters set sail for Ireland, and after a long and stormy passage landed at Drogheda. Lady Fitzgerald was so weakened by her voyage that for a long time she could not go further, but remained under the hospitable roof of a friend in Drogheda. As soon as she grew a little better she was moved to a country house belonging to the same friend a