

## EVELEEN'S VICTORY;

OR,

## Ireland in the Days of Cromwell.

A TALE BY THE AUTHOR OF "TYBORNE,"  
"IRISH HOMES AND IRISH HEARTS," &c.

## CHAPTER THE TWELFTH.

After the ladies' return from their visit, Mary and Lady Elizabeth devoted all their time to comforting the fugitives who came to them from every quarter. Every day some of their faithful messengers ventured into Dublin to make some purchase, while their own skilful hands were busily employed making clothes for the sufferers, especially the women and children. The winter was an unusually severe one for Ireland; and not many weeks had passed when the peasants came to announce that Father Fitzsymons had fainted away the previous Sunday at the conclusion of his Mass, had been borne to his hut, and lay there, hardly able to speak or breathe. Lady Elizabeth's orders were sufficient for them. A stretcher was prepared with plenty of coverings, and a party of strong men organised, who would bear the worn-out laborer to the welcome prepared for him.

It was accomplished, and when Father Fitzsymons was safely laid in the bed so carefully arranged for him, his many devoted friends were wonderfully cheered.

As soon as he could speak after the exhaustion of his transit, he turned with a smile to Lady Elizabeth.

"I was not worthy, then, to die somewhat after the fashion of blessed Francis Xavier."

"Forgive me, Father," she answered meekly, "if I have robbed you; 'twas more than our poor hearts could bear."

He tried to reply in some playful words; but coughing cut him short, and presently a gush of blood from his mouth deluged the bed-covering.

For many days after this he could not utter a word. He spoke only by his looks, which were as bright as ever, while on his features there dwelt an habitual peace and repose beautiful to behold. By degrees he became able to

speak a little, though his strength ebbed day by day.

Mass was said daily in his room; for many of his brethren in religion, in one disguise or another, contrived to visit him. Nor was that all; as the news of his whereabouts, and of the fatal nature of his sickness became known among Catholics, many other priests came to see him. Franciscans, Carmelites, Dominicans, and many of the secular flocked to his sick bed. His vigorous intellect, and the peculiar joyousness and hopefulness of his character, had made him universally beloved and looked up to. Tears were rolling down the cheeks, not only of women but of men, at the thought of losing him. Priests, who had themselves to be leaders in the hard struggle—to sustain the burdens of others—to encourage the down-hearted and strengthen the sinking soul—had been wont to come to him in their own hours of doubt and despondency. He was one of those—and there are some like him, only always too few, in every age—beside whose death-bed men are wont to stand and say, "What shall we do without him?"

The once clear, silver-toned voice could only utter faint whispers now; but as one after another of his brethren or friends knelt down to his pillow to tell him for the last time the secrets of their souls, his murmured response seemed to satisfy them. One after another rose up and left the room, as though they had received a strength to bear them onwards for a brief though sharp struggle—as though they realised that he, like the true father of their souls as he had always been, was but going home, to wait for them on the eternal shore.

Lady Elizabeth one day seated herself by his side to read a paper to him, which she held in her hand. When she had finished he said, "Child, I hardly approve of that; it will leave you too little for yourself. I do not say keep what will sustain your rank; for that I know well you despise; but these are troublous times. You may have to fly into exile; and in Flanders, France, or Italy, the sum you reserve for yourself would not be sufficient."

Lady Elizabeth's face was radiant as she bent towards him.