

cely a minute's ride before him, a chill as of the grave passed over him, and for a moment he lost self control. But only for a moment. For against the unmanly weakness the keen sense of honor and unswerving fidelity to duty that had characterized him, rose in protest. He shook off the fear that had been on the point of numbing him. Resuming his firm seat in the saddle, and preparing himself for the worst, he approached his destination.

Proceeding first to the elder tree growing against the church gable, he plucked a spray which he carefully placed in the breast pocket of his jerkin, not, however, without an instinctive awe as he thought of the desecration involved in the act. He heard the ivy flap against the old wall and then saw it rise as gust after gust struck its fastenings. He glanced through the dilapidated windows at the interior, where everything lay in impenetrable darkness, and now felt that the decisive moment had come. With a clear and unfaltering voice he called upon the ghostly tenant of the ruins; *Sprid Lambh Fadach Dhuv, wilthu ashti?* ("Spirit of the Long Black Hand, are you within.") Twice was the question put but no answer came back. For the third time, the words rang out, clear as the note of challenge from a trumpet, above the noise of the storm. Then from a distant recess from within the walls, in a voice that might well shake the stoutest heart, "I am; and worse for you the hour."

Horse as well as rider quivered at the tone in which the words were uttered. But there was no time to analyze emotions.

Kelly turned his horse's head homeward and was over the enclosing church wall at a bound. In his capacity of huntsman dur-

ing those irregular intervals which the age had allowed to peace, he had frequently led the ancestors of that combination of daring riders afterwards known to fame as the "Galway Blazers," and as such "had taken the brush" at the close of many a hard chase. But never, as he confessed to his hearers, when he came to speak of the midnight ride as a reminiscence, had he been borne at such headlong speed in the saddle as now. A terror that seemed human had seized his horse, spur or whip it needed not—every nerve and muscle were strained in its mad rush for home. Yet not too fast for the cause. For Kelly felt that instead of being the hunter, he was now the hunted—a fated Reynard being run to earth. He had reached the border of the castle wood before he could safely look back at his pursuer. The sight that in that hasty glance presented itself was such as to test the bravest. Following him, and almost within a bound of the saddle was a dark spectral figure in the shape of a woman with long dishevelled hair against which the wind and rain were beating. The face from which the hair was thus swept back, revealed a ferocity and rage fiendish in their intensity, whilst a long black hand was outstretched as if to strangle both rider and horse in one fell clutch.

The instinct of self-preservation came to Kelly's aid at this critical pass. Gathering all his strength for one supreme effort, he drew the prized de Burgh sword as the spectral hand grasped the horse's mane, and struck the blow. An unearthly shriek, rising wild and loud, like that of a baffled demon, the rebound of his noble horse when the unnatural burden was flung off, the appalling sight of a black hand severed at the wrist dangling from the mane,