



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 FIRST.

It was a lovely morning in June, and the bright sunshine lit up with its rays a fair landscape. The scenery was not magnificent, it was only one of those valleys with green meadows and rich foliage, which may often be found beneath Irish skies. Apparently the valley contained but one habitation, but if a minute observation had been made a cabin here and there could have been discovered hidden in a thicket or underneath the shade of an overhanging bank, for in the sad days of which I write the Irish peasantry were forced to make their dwelling places hiding places also. But the principal house in the valley could not be concealed, although it was sheltered by large elm trees. It was a long, low house of gray stone, with a thatched roof; behind it were the out-houses belonging to a large farm, in the front a sort of court-yard, and at one side a flower-garden, bearing marks of careful cultivation, and through which ran a little stream, babbling as it went along to the wild flowers which decked its banks in rich abundance. It was a quiet, peaceful-looking place in itself, but at the moment at which my tale opens it presented a busy and stirring scene. The valley was half filled with horse-soldiers evidently about to

start upon an expedition. The neighing of the horses, the clanging of swords and spurs, the confused hum of voices filled the air. At the door of the gray stone house, however, was a group upon whom many eyes were fixed. A crowd of barefooted damsels, and of wild-looking *gossosons*, who had been running about hither and thither, bidding the soldiers farewell and imagining that they were some how or other helping in the bustle of departure, were now standing still riveted to the spot by the scene. At the door stood a splendid Spanish charger of roan colour, and as he raised his stately head when his rider sprang into the saddle, he looked as if he knew well that he was destined to bear to deeds of high enterprise a princely born rider. It was, indeed, a noble form which bestrode the horse.

Tall, and finely proportioned, with an eagle eye, dark hair just tinged with grey, and worn longer than usual, a high and massive brow, a mouth which spoke of mingled firmness and sweetness—his bearing and whole expression that of one born to command. Such was the chieftain on whom the hopes of Ireland were then fondly set. Such was the noble Owen Roe O'Neill, the heir to the earldom of Tyrone, who had returned from Flanders to Ireland to set his country free or perish in the attempt. Hanging over his horse's mane was a fair girl of about eighteen, a winsome creature to behold. The rich glow of her cheeks, the sparkle of her true Irish hazel eyes, the clustering auburn curls which fell from beneath