

find wanting. This faithful retainer, whom for our present purpose we shall call Kelly, was summoned to his master's presence and the nature of the wager that had been laid was fully explained to him. The condition required that he should proceed forthwith to the haunted ruin, there call three times upon the alleged spirit, and as proof of the execution of his errand, produce on his return a spray of the ancient elder growing against the western gable of the old church.

True to his reputation Kelly expressed his willingness to undertake the task, merely stipulating that to accomplish it he be given the use of de Burgh's sword and favorite horse—a request which was cheerfully granted. The sword according to popular belief, had come down as a cherished heirloom from some Anglo-Norman ancestor in the dim past, and possessed in addition to its intrinsic qualities—said to be of the finest—a certain occult virtue. The horse, a magnificent specimen of the Irish thoroughbred hunter, was never known to quail before any obstacle at which it was faced, provided that its rider had won its confidence. Its owner's and Kelly's were the only hands that could be trusted to bring out what was best in the "garrawn bawn," the name by which de Burgh's equine favorite was known.

Having made the necessary preparations for his daring ride, Kelly was soon galloping through the Kilvarra demense on his way to the ruined church. The storm, which had raged for several hours was now at its highest. Its violence had blown down not a few trees, one or two having fallen sheer across the avenue. Indeed, rider and horse, as with slackened speed, they were picking away through these obstacles, narrowly

escaped being caught under the boughs of a tall larch, as yielding to a terrific gust direct from the sea, its roots gave way, and the tree fell with such force as to bring more than one of its weaker fellows with it. The noise sent clattering about Kelly's head, the storm-driven birds that had sought shelter in the grove. It was pitch dark, besides, except when the gloom was pierced by a flash of lightning. Had Kelly not been an expert horseman, and had he not known every inch of the way, feeling it now rather than seeing it, as he proceeded through the wreck and tangle of the fallen trees, he must inevitably have come to grief. His progress so far absorbed all his thought, demanding his unremitting attention. But once clear of the woods and out upon the open, and when the lights of the castle sank in the darkness behind him, he began to realize the dangerous errand upon which he had been sent. By no means free from the superstition of his class, and thrilled only too often by the ghost story told in the ancient tongue by the fireside of a winter's night—when the very atmosphere seemed charged with weird influences, and the Celt's capacity for realizing the unseen was unrestrained—Kelly needed all his native courage to summon from her uncanny haunt that sinister figure of whose dread power tale after tale, such as he had heard them from childhood, now recurred to his mind, filling it with strange visions. The high-road upon which he had just come was oppressively lonely. No house or familiar lights was in view. The hour, "the very witching time of night, when church yards yawn," added to the oddness of his errand, and presently, as a flash of lightning lit up for one trying instant the haunted ruin, scar-