

## CHAPTER THE FOURTH.

Before evening fell, Terence's story was found to be perfectly true. A small troop of soldiers, tired and dust-stained, but flushed with triumph, rode into the valley, headed by Sir Luke Fitzgerald and Henry O'Neill.

Wild and vociferous was the welcome they received. The soldiers were well fêted by the servants, and the officers warmly welcomed by the ladies and Father Egan. Eveleen and Mary by turns were clasped in their father's arms, while Bride paid all sorts of compliments to Captain O'Neill, to which he replied in the same merry strain; but his eyes wandered rather wistfully towards his Mary, as if he had many a secret he desired to pour into her ear. Before long Mary and himself had contrived to make their escape to the garden, and there, no doubt, pacing beneath the trees, while the full summer moon, in all her radiance, flooded the landscape with golden light. Mary had a full and particular account of the battle of Ben-burb.

Be that as it may, Eveleen, Bride and Father Egan gathered eagerly round Sir Luke and listened with rapt attention to every detail he could give of this great victory.

"'Twas indeed a glorious sight," said Sir Luke. "The morning of the battle not a man in our army but drew near to Shrift—from our general himself to the meanest runner in the camp. We had crossed the Blackwater and encamped beneath the Ben, from which the place takes its name, and on the summit of which stands the ruined castle."

"A mighty stronghold once," observed Father Egan.

"You say truth," replied Sir Luke. "Would that it were in its ancient strength, and filled with a goodly garrison of our army.—Well, to continue. In the earliest dawn of June 5th, we were all astir, and after our shrift were finished, an altar was erected in sight of all the men, at which Father Fitzsymons said Mass. The O'Neill and all his officers, and crowds of the soldiers took the Body of the Lord; and when Mass was ended, the good Father spoke unto us a few words—brief, but with deep import—and then, all kneeling humbly on our

knees, he imparted unto us, by virtue of the power which he had received from our very honored and most reverend Lord, the Nuncio, the apostolic blessing."

"Oh!" said Eveleen, clasping her hands, "what a scene! what a moment! Was ever army, on the eve of battle, more visibly blessed by God before?"

"What next?" demanded Bride, breathlessly; "did you rush upon the foe?"

"Not so quick, so quick, fair Brigid," said Sir Luke, smiling. "First and foremost 'twas for the foe to rush upon us. We were waiting for him. But before all, after the priest had done, the O'Neill went forth to speak to the army."

"Oh! tell us what he said," burst in both girls together.

"'Twas a fine sight," exclaimed the old soldier, his weather-beaten face lighting up as he recalled the scene. Up rose the men after the priest's blessing; they stood all in their ranks like one man. In the midst, but raised above us all, stood the O'Neill, bare-headed, his helmet held by Henry, who stood on his right; and in his clear voice, which everyone could hear distinctly, he spoke thus:

"Behold army of God, the enemies of your country! Fight valiantly against them to-day; for it is they who have deprived you of your chiefs, of your children, of your subsistence, spiritual and temporal; who have torn from you your lands and made you wandering fugitives."

"Such a shout as answered him these old ears of mine never may hope to hear again.

"Surely; then, they rushed forward?" cried Bride. "Why, after that, I could not have been still an instant."

"If you were a soldier in the O'Neill's army, Mistress Bride," said Sir Luke, "you would have to stand still or move forward as your chief bade you."

"Marvellous is it," continued he, turning to Father Egan, "to see the power O'Neill hath obtained over our wild fellows: You know, Father, that though our men can never be outdone in bravery, they have lacked that order and discipline which these beggarly Puritans possess in full. But, these four years, since the O'Neill hath been at the head