

"Roger Leix!" cried the Friar, "we are letting the precious moments go by in idle and unavailing talk. What men are there here? There must be some. What number?"

"Hardly five hundred—and these but indifferently armed—and Hugh O'Byrne's horse."

"Five hundred—five hundred!" cried the enthusiastic Friar. "Roger Leix, you are losing your old faith and courage. Five hundred! What cannot be done with five hundred men in a good cause, and fighting under the banner of the Church? The arm of God is with them—who shall gainsay it? Who shall stand up against it?"

"You speak with the faith of a martyr, Father Tully—rather than with the knowledge of a soldier," said Roger Leix, smiling at the fervid enthusiasm of the Friar, but with a smile that was strongly tinged with mortification and disappointment.

"I tell you, Roger Leix, that faith is better than worldly knowledge. Faith has triumphed before over human strength, why not now? Was it not the faith of Gideon that triumphed over foes innumerable? The spears that girt Samaria were thick as sands on the sea-shore. What routed them? Faith, and the blessing of Heaven. What set in flight the countless legions of Sisara? Oh! man of faint heart!—and yours was once and of late the gallant and resolute one—believe that God is with us and you will triumph. I promise you victory, for the hands of our enemies are red with innocent blood, and God will avenge it. I, who know it, preach to you! Muster your forces, and though they carried nothing stronger than rushes from the Mullawn in their hands, the God of battles will make them stronger than their foes."

There was something that seemed inspired in the words of the indomitable young priest. The light of inspiration seemed to glow from his eyes, and the halo of the prophet and martyr to surround his head. Roger Leix was struck by it, and, resisting the promptings of prudence, caught up some of his enthusiasm.

"It shall be as you say," he said; "men have worked miracles in the battle field under the spur of high belief—why not now? How far may the forces be from Julianstown?"

"They must be close on the bridge by this," said the Friar, with eager delight.

With an inquiring glance at Maurice as if to see what he thought of all this, Roger O'Moore tapped with his heel on the boards. The noise brought a messenger in, to whom he whispered something, and who immediately departed. Presently the sound of hurrying footsteps were heard on the stairs, and a group of officers came crowding in breathless at the call, many of them girding their swords on in evidence of the haste with which they had come.

"Gentlemen," said O'Moore, "important news has come. Our patrol has misled us, or they have been misled themselves. We have had a more correct informant, and this is the news he brings."

Whereupon the Colonel proceeded to put before them the condition of things as described by the Friar.

With complete unanimity they agreed at all hazards, and with the remnant of the forces left them, to meet the advancing foes. The fog that lay heavy on the face of the morning favoured an ambuscade or surprise. They departed as hurriedly as they had come, and O'Moore despatching one or two to take stealthy note of the position and strength of the advancing force and report immediately, preparations were made with all expedition to get the troops under arms.

So active were the officers and so ready the men, that by the time the three gentlemen had prepared their plans and descended the stairs they found the troops gathered together from the various houses in which they were billeted and arrayed in line on the streets—a not unpicturesque array in the quaint old village.

The men were dressed in every kind of uniform. Some that had been equipped at the expense of the Irish lords looked gallant and brave enough, but others who had joined the rising from remote parts, or with but a vague idea of what soldiers were, looked singularly wild and undisciplined.

But it was in the arms that the singularity and variety chiefly lay. Here was carried a new musket, its stock inlaid with silver. The next man held a blunderbuss. Farther over, gripped by a giant, was a scythe, more dangerous and formidable-looking than all—the wide belt of thin cold steel glistening with murderous hue in the fog. If the peasant who held it that glancing blade got free swing with it, then heaven help the foeman who stood before him! Other men held other weapons of offence—some a spear whose tapering point showed that it had seen military service before, another a pike, whose roughly-hammered top showed that it had been lately improvised for purposes of warfare; and some had no weapons but the huge horse pistol which, when once discharged, was for no further use for combat, and left its owner completely defenceless; and many bore nothing but the naked axe and hatchet.

Noticing all these with rapid glance, Maurice looked towards Roger Leix. This army was so different from anything he had been accustomed to, that Maurice's heart filled within him at the sight of the uncouth, unarmed, and undisciplined array. An unconquerable sense of humiliation pervaded him.

The same feelings, the same sensation, must have pervaded Leix's breast, for he turned his head aside in order that he should not be seen, and so Maurice's inquiring glance fell on unanswering eyes. But it was not lost on the Friar, who knew its meaning and its import, and said, sternly:

"It is not pomp and splendour that win battles or achieve victories. It is valiant hearts, a good cause, and the blessing of God! They are unworthy of victory and court defeat who think otherwise."

Maurice stood abashed, and felt that the rebuke was not undeserved. And at that moment there came in single file, with drawn swords, sweeping down between them and the line of foot soldiers and from me so swiftly that they were passing by almost before they knew they were coming—a squadron of horsemen. For several minutes they passed by, so swiftly that the face of no man was visible, as he bent lower over the pommel of his saddle, carrying his uplifted sword in his hand, and in a cloud of dust vanished as if they had

been some airy vision flitting past, and it was not until the last of the line suddenly stopped his flight, and, nearly throwing his horse with the sudden action on his haunches, sat motionless in his saddle opposite them that they realised who it had been.

"O'Byrne!" said all three, simultaneously, as the cloud of dust dying away disclosed the rider's features, and showed the gallant horsemen who stood before them.

"Yes, gentlemen, it is I. But there is not much time for talking, the enemy is at hand. Goote's forces are not a bugle's sound away. They are crossing the arches of Julianstown bridge this moment."

"We know that," said O'Moore, over whose face the horsemanship of the fearless Wicklowman had thrown a look of admiration. "We know that. Your news is a little late, good Hugh."

"You do! How?"

"Friar Tully brought the news."

"Friar!—eh?" said O'Byrne, turning to look at the latter. "You here! How did you escape? You bear a charmed life. Your presence is an omen of success. Friar, no cause could fail with your bold heart to back it!—and these men?"

"Are ready to march to meet them. Sorry we cannot make a better show," said O'Moore, with a recurrence of his gloom.

"Pooh! man, said O'Byrne; "that's nothing. It is skill and fearlessness that win battles and not fine display. Strong arms and bold hearts—eh, Friar?" said he, cheerily.

"Bravely spoken," cried the excellent Friar; "that is what I said myself. If the hand of God—"

"Gentlemen, there is no time for talking," said the Wicklowman, suddenly interrupting, "the enemy will soon be across the bridge of Julianstown. We must march to meet them. The fog is on our side. Let your men line the road on either side of the wood of Truach until they are in your midst. Throw them into disorder suddenly, and whilst they are panic-stricken, I and my men shall be upon them. Don't you think so, Maurice?"

"Generally, I agree with you," said Maurice, "but I don't know the ground."

"I do. I have been around it and along it since the dawn. See!"

He pointed to his horse's flanks, on which the perspiration had been churned into foam, and at the flakes that exuded from his mouth. He had evidently not let the hours slip by in slothful rest and repose.

"What say you, Roger Leix—*you* know the ground?" asked O'Byrne, backing his horse, his perfect horsemanship making man and animal look like one.

"I agree with you, Hugh."

"And you, Friar? Your enthusiasm is better than skill at the present moment. What say you? Shall we avenge Wicklow and send the murderers for judgment, their hands still red with blood?"

"Your plan is good," said the Friar. "Even as He smote the hosts of Sennacherib—"

"Good!" said O'Byrne, gaily. "Seldom was Scripture quoted to more useful purpose before. And now, gentlemen, there is not a moment to be lost. The road runs through a wood—the wood of Truach—this side of the bridge of Julianstown. Line the sides of it with your musketry and pikemen. Let the men fall into the trap. Reckon on me to be at hand. Will you come with me, Maurice? We have ridden so long together you might like to continue it. I fancy cavalry work is more in your way."

So with a nod to his late companions, he leaped upon his horse and was soon riding off with his friend.

"Roger Leix is looking downcast and disappointed," said Maurice, as they trotted forth to join the troop.

"His heart is broken, Maurice. You see, in organising this rising he based his hopes mainly, almost entirely, upon the capture of Dublin Castle. It was so easily done, it was such a certainty of success, that failure seemed impossible; but it was lost in the most simple and untoward manner, and by the agency of the wretchedest creature! And Rory thinks that it is an omen of failure—that nothing else will compensate for it!"

"I must say, so do I," said Maurice.

"Pooh, man; nonsense! The only loss was the loss of the stores and ammunition packed there. And we shall get these from France and Spain in time. But what weighs upon him most is the conviction that he has brought all the Irish families into the rebellion, and if it fails there will not be the name of one of them left in the land, nor an acre in their possession. A heavy responsibility, no doubt; but he thinks too much of it, and the shadow of failure weighs unaccountably upon him. For myself, I accept the risks; and if I fail I shall see my states go to the stranger cheerfully enough; and, if I live, shall take service once more in Spain. If I fall, why—there's an end of it. But, see—here we are!"

They had by this time come up to the swift squadron of horsemen who were awaiting silently the coming of their chief.

Meantime, and as soon as they had departed, O'Moore called his captains around him and informed them of what was intended, and where there were to be disposed to await the coming of the troops. The information came on most welcome and acquiescing ears, and in a short time they formed up, and moved forward to the place appointed.

(To be continued.)

The Countess of Aberdeen is about to become the editor of a new penny monthly magazine, which is to be brought out towards the end of the year under the auspices of the Haddo House association. The publication is principally intended to interest young women and mothers.

Nothing undermines absolutism so quickly as when an absolutist makes it ridiculous. This is what the young Emperor of Germany is doing. His references to his grandmother in his Heligoland speech are a case in point. "She governs her land," he said, "with a far seeing eye and with lofty wisdom. She attaches value to living in friendship with me and my people. She values German officers, and loves the tones of German melodies." This would be exquisitely funny if it were not so deliciously silly.