who had adopted new tactics—outrageous, unfair, ungentlemanly tactics, said the older men—and he, hearing vaguely of their doings, had agreed. What if these men had hit on a new way of using force—a way that was not hopeless? It might be that by insulting the dignity of England, by outraging the decencies of public life, by defying all the unwritten rules which regulate the actions of gentlemen, by doing things never done or dreamed of before, they might oblige Englishmen to listen at last. Reason clearly was useless. He had tried it, and he knew. Force, as Rafferty knew the use of it, was hopeless. All the armed men were on the other side. But there might be, there was, a middle way, a new kind of force which unarmed men could use.

CHAPTER X

IN the village of Cuslough there are three principal buildings. The police barrack stands at one end of the street, a neat, two-storied house, with whitewashed walls. Five windows face the road, three in the upper story and one on each side of the door below. All of them have black, loopholed iron shutters flung back and fastened to the wall on each side. Behind these men armed with carbines or rifles might lurk securely and fire upon a mob outside. These shutters were erected at the time of the Fenian scare, when retired military officers used to write letters to the newspapers every day detailing plans for fortifying country houses. In those days governments were more honest than they have been since. It was not pretended that the police was a civil force, existing for the protection of Irish citizens from thieves and vagabonds. It was frankly owned, by loopholed shutters and otherwise, that a military garrison held the country down. In front of the police barrack was a stretch of neatly raked gravel; beside it was a trim garden where flowers grew, vegetables flourished, and two skeps of bees made a pleasant humming in the summer time. The gravel in front of the barrack and the garden beside it were the only neat things then in the village of Cuslough. The barrack itself, was by far the best-kept building.

Half-way down the street stood the public-house, Paddy Heverin's establishment. There were other public-houses in the village—five more of them, but Paddy Heverin's was the largest and the grandest. Like the police barrack, it was a two-storied building and had a slate roof. Outside the door was a litter of broken packing-cases and a pile of empty porter barrels. One window was decorated with bottles containing brandy, whisky, gin, ginger cordial, and some rarer beverages. The other window displaved an assortment of mixed goods, rolls of flannel and tweed, tobacco pipes, castor oil, and even, oddly enough, a number of tooth-brushes. A splendid picture of a steamer rushing over a glassy sea occupied a place of honour in this window. Paddy Heverin was a dealer in things in general and an emigration agent. He was reputed to be a wealthy man, and probably report spoke the truth. There is a good deal of money to be made in Ireland out of the sale of whisky and porter, and a good deal out of the sale of tickets to America. Also, although the fact was not proclaimed in the windows of the shop, Paddy Heverin was the banker—that is to say the money-lender—of the community. Almost every one was more or less in debt to Heverin.

Further on, at the far end of the street from the police barrack, stood the Roman Catholic church, a long building with pebble-dashed walls. But here and there the dashing had peeled off and left bare patches of rough stone exposed to view. The windows, save that their sides curved upwards into a point, had no appearance of ecclesiastical design. They were filled with small diamond-shaped panes of glass. Their woodwork and the doors at the west end were painted, apparently long ago, after the fashion called oak graining. The building was cruciform, and all four gable ends were decorated with plain black iron crosses.

From the doors of this church the people streamed on Sunday after midday mass. A few forming a kind of bodyguard for Paddy Heverin, turned to the left and passed out of sight into the public-house. But most of the crowd went the other way. By far the greater number of them were men. The women had attended an earlier mass, and were at home doing the business of their houses. The men slouched along the road in groups. There was little talking and no laughing among them. A Connacht crowd is still a depressing thing to see. There is no romping, no singing, no shouting of jests among the young people; no briskness of vigour among the middle-aged. Then, during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, a heavy sadness hung over all Ireland. The people were dejected, cowed, almost hopeless. These men dragged their way slowly along the road. They passed the last house of the village, and then the great gates of Lord Daintree's demesne, where the ornamental gate lodge stood and an army pensioner peered at them curiously. Then for a mile the road was shadowed by Lord Daintree's high boundary wall and the branches of his trees which stretched over it. Opposite the demesne wall, nearly a mile from the village, was Dean Ponsonby's church, which had once been, and still was called, a cathedral. Beyond it was another wall, not so high as Lord Daintree's but high enough to shut out all view of the rectory within. Between these two walls the road ran, gloomy, like a tunnel.

But there was an end to the walls at last, and the slouching groups of men emerged into the open and the sunlight. Below them to the left lay Paddy Heverin's field, the scene of the meeting they had come to attend. At one end of it, up against the wall which shut in the demesne, was a platform, rudely built of rough planks laid on empty porter barrels. Some of the men entered the field at once. More of them sat on the low boundary wall; others stood in groups on the road.

There was a noise of wheels coming from the direction of the village. Some one said—

"Here they are."

But there was little movement or sign of excitement in the crowd. A few heads were turned and a few eyes looked down the road. That was all. Then a high dog-cart, drawn by a swift, fine horse, came in sight.

"It's not them at all. It's the agent," said some one.

Mr. Manders drove up and stopped in the middle of the crowd. He was on his way home from church, and wore, as men did then on Sundays, a silk hat and a long frock coat. A few of the men deliberately, even ostentatiously, turned their backs on him. But most of them stood staring apathetically at the good horse with its glittering harness and the fine clothes of the gentleman who drove it.

"What are you doing here, boys?" asked Mr. Manders. His tone was cheery and friendly. He liked the people among whom he had lived for years—liked them, though he sometimes bullied and always despised them.

No one answered him, but one or two men, the older men, took off their hats and held them in their hands. Mr. Manders' eyes swept round the crowd. Then singling out one of those who stood with his back towards the trap, he spoke again.

"Johnny Darcy, you've got a tongue in your head. Speak out, man, and tell me what you're all here for."

Johnny Darcy turned slowly, and displayed a sulky face.

"What business of yours is it what we're doing?"

"Take off your hat when you speak to a gentleman." There was no friendliness in Mr. Manders' tone now. His words were sharp and clipped short. Darcy hesitated for a moment, but the man's ancestors had been serfs for generations, and the old instinct of obedience prevailed. He raised his hand and lifted his soft felt hat. Then pausing he scratched his head, as if to show that it was for his own comfort and not out of respect for Mr. Manders that he raised the hat. Finally he removed it from his head altogether, and stood holding it in his hands. But there was still sulkiness in his face, and an evil, furtive glitter in his eyes. Mr. Manders surveyed him for a minute in silence. Then he spoke to the crowd, and when he did so almost every man removed his hat.

"I know well enough what you're here for. You're here to let yourselves be persuaded into the same kind of blackguardism that's going on in other parts of the country. Now you take my word for it, boys, it won't do. Do you hear me? It won't do. You know me, and the kind of man I am. You won't frighten me out of doing my duty, and if you try, it will be the worse for yourselves. I know what I'm talking about and you don't know what you're doing. You'll be sorry for yourselves if you go on with this business. You're respectable men the most of you, with wives and families and homes of your own. You've nothing to gain and everything to lose by coming here to listen to some infernal agitator or other who doesn't care a rap about you so long as he makes enough money out of you to pay for whisky to fill his dirty skin. Now, if you've any sense left in you, you'll go quietly home."

"Faith, your honour's right." The words came from a wizened old man who stood on the outskirts of the crowd. Mr. Manders looked round and recognised the speaker. He would have been better pleased if it had been some one else. This old man had a summons out against him for poaching. Mr. Manders would sit in judgment on him in the Petty Sessions court next day. He suspected that this testimony to the wisdom of his words was uttered with an eye to the effect it might have on the severity of the sentence to be passed for the poaching. No one else spoke, but men eyed each other furtively, fearfully. Each man wondered how far the advice of the agent had appealed to his neighbour.

Mr. Manders whipped his horse and drove on. He believed that he had done right, a plainly, unquestionably right thing. He had heard and read of the Land League, then just started. He believed it to be a conspiracy of men bent on avoiding the payment of just debts. He foresaw that the spread of the conspiracy would involve the country in a sharp struggle; but of the final issue of the struggle he had not the slightest doubt. He and his class would be put to great trouble, great expense, and, possibly, some risk. But they would win. Law and common honesty would be vindicated. The payment of debts would be enforced. The men who entered the conspiracy would be beaten in the end, but not until they, or many of them, had suffered frightful misery and loss. The agitators—the self-seeking and abominable demagogues, who for their own purposes deluded the unhappy people—would escape scot free. This was Mr. Manders' view of the situation. His mouth was set firm as he realised the nature of the struggle before him. There was a fierce light in his eyes when he thought of the men whose speechifying would work the mischief.

After the agent disappeared there was some low talking among the men on the road. They gathered into new groups. There were signs of wavering among some of the older men. Then Johnny Darcy spoke—

"Is any of you going home? I say, is there any man wants to go home? If there is, let him go and be damned. And let him mind himself after. The dark nights is coming on. Let him mind himself. That's all."

Mr. Manders was plainly a strong man. Mr. John Darcy was apparently an unscrupulous man. It is not pleasant to be placed between two such forces. It is especially unpleasant when your body is half starved and the courage gone out of your heart; when you are likely to want no courage at all very soon, because you are to be starved right out in the course of the following winter and spring. Few men under such circumstances play the part of heroes.

Again there came the noise of wheels approaching from the village. This time a car came into sight quickly followed by another. On the first sat Mr. Paddy Heverin and three of his chosen friends. They had a jovial, almost a reckless, air. Mr. Heverin was certainly not half starved. A bulging paunch strained the buttons of his attire. His companions may have been stinted in the matter of food, but they had apparently had enough to drink since they left the church. On the second car sat Father O'Sullivan and a strange gentleman supposed, and quite rightly, to be the Member of Parliament, whose speech was to be the event of the day.

Johnny Darcy took off his hat and called for cheers. A wavering, half-hearted response was all the crowd gave. Mr. Manders' advice stuck in their minds. Could it be that they were going to commit themselves to some great act of folly?

Mr. Heverin walked across the field to the platform. Men's hats were doffed to him. It was a bad thing to owe rent to Mr. Manders; but it was an infinitely worse thing to owe money to Mr. Heverin. In the case of rent the sum was fixed. It was oppressive, terrible, impossible perhaps, but it was fixed. A man knew what he owed and could face the worst. But what man, whose name once found a place on Heverin's books, could tell how much he owed? Pounds were scraped together and paid across the counter. Baskets of eggs were carried into the shop by weary wives, fowls fattened with meal that might have fed children were brought at Christmas time, the services of boys and girls were given, but the debt grew no less. There might be hearts bold enough to refuse homage to Mr. Manders, but not Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego would have failed to abase themselves, under similar circumstances, before Heverin.

Heverin mounted the platform.

"Fellow-countrymen," he said, "and country fellows! Men of Connacht, yes, and men of Ireland, assembled on this momentous occasion to break for ever the chains of the yoke with which tyrants have bound you."

At this point the orator's memory failed him. He had written out and learned off by heart an impressive speech. It was all of it, his friends assured him, quite up to the level of the opening sentence. But who can answer for the tricks of a treacherous memory? Who would suspect a memory of playing tricks at all after being so recently invigorated with three bottles of porter and six glasses of whisky? But Mr. Heverin struggled on. He involved his audience in various metaphors. Links of chains and shining swords were forged; the green fields of old Ireland and the flames of hell struggled together in his sentences. The audience listened with equal indifference to invocations of ancient heroes, Members of Parliament and local tyrants. Then a recollection of the prepared peroration, or the last sentence of it, flashed on Mr. Heverin.

"I call upon you to welcome the gentleman, the patriotic gentleman, who travelling over sea and land, braving the terrors of the roaring deep and the poison of the foeman's steel, has come to-day to point you out the road to liberty."

Mr. Heverin wiped his brow with a large spotted pocket-handkerchief and descended. He took his seat on a stone and leaned back against one of the porter barrels which supported the platform. He had done his duty by Ireland, and there were two newspaper reporters present.

The Member of Parliament succeeded him. He also spoke largely, flamboyantly. But there was a difference. This man was in earnest. He had in him a fire which burned. He wanted something and wanted it intensely. But the men before him, the lean, overwrought toilers in barren fields, remained indifferent, dull. The speaker paused and looked at their faces. Was it possible to rouse in these men the frenzied love of freedom, the passionate devotion to Ireland, which burned in him? He made his appeal. He flung out great sentiments, clothed in ridiculous bombastic words. The crowd did not cheer. Then changing his subject he spoke to them about the land.

"It should be yours," he said. "It was your fathers' long ago. Strangers have come and robbed you of your heritage. Strangers lay their rents upon you and make you pay. They threaten you. You and your children starve."

At last he caught their attention. Here was something that touched them. Now they knew the meaning of what he said.

"You toil," he went on. "You labour late and early. Your wives work with you in the fields. Your children go hungry. The rain comes in through the roofs of your houses and drips upon you while you sleep. The strangers take the fruits of your toil. They eat the harvest of the fields that your hands drained and fenced and ploughed and sowed and reaped. They eat it and grow fat."

They cheered him now. The thing he said was true. Had not they passed by the painted gate lodge of Lord Daintree's house, the habitation of his menial, a place far better to live in than the best of their cabins were? Had not Mr. Manders driven past them with a sleek, strong horse and glittering harness?

Then came the appeal that they should band themselves together as their fellow-sufferers did elsewhere; that they should resist oppression, win fair terms for themselves, gain security, comfort, and a good reward for all their work. The crowd was apathetic no longer. Backs bowed with long toil of digging, straightened in response to his words. Into eyes, hitherto expressionless of every emotion save patient endurance, came the light of resolve. Instead of accustomed despair there was a sudden gleam of hope. Could such things be? Security, comfort, good reward, could such things be on this side of paradise?

Father O'Sullivan followed the Member of Parliament. The people knew him. As Father Staunton's curate he served Cuslough chapel. But never before had they seen him look as he looked then. His face was grim and set and strong. His body was tense and stiff. His two hands were clenched tight. His arms lay like rigid bars straight along his sides.

"Men," he said, "last year twenty of you who are tenants on the Snell estate were evicted from your farms; where are those twenty and their families now? Some have gone across the sea to America. You will know them no more. They will not return or see their native land. They went in sorrow. In sorrow they will live.

And yet their lot is happier than that of those who remained. Where are they? Some have found shelter in the homes of their neighbours. They are eating the bread of charity, the bread of dependence; eating it in bitterness of heart because there is not enough of it for them and you. They are miserable. But there are worse than they. Where are the rest? Where are ten out of the twenty families? Some, little children and weak women, are in their graves. May God have mercy on their souls! They are at rest. But the men who are strong and cannot die, the women and the children for whom no merciful release has come? Where are they? Paupers in the prison they call a workhouse. Paupers, branded with a shame that will be upon their children and their children's children after them. Are not these things true?"

There was a deep murmur of assent, a sullen, angry growl. The men before him knew the facts, understood the meaning of them, even better than he did.

"And before this year is past twenty more of you, and next year twenty after that, will be cast out from your homes, driven to exile or death or shame. You know that this also is true.

"Is there any remedy? I say there is, if you are men enough to take it. I ask you to break no law of God or man. I ask you to do no more than you have every right to do. But I ask you to do it without fear, without shrinking, without favour to friend or brother or child."

The crowd hung silent upon his words, breathless with expectation. Slowly, in the simplest possible words, with many repetitions lest his meaning might be mistaken, he repeated the advice given already more than once in Ireland; placed in the people's hands a weapon more terrible than gun or pike, the weapon whose use no laws devised as yet have availed to check. He bid them shun, treat as a stranger and an enemy, the man who took a farm from which another had been evicted.

"Neither eat nor drink with him. Neither buy nor sell with him. Let him and his wife and his children be as lepers and outcasts. Do not take him by the hand. Do not help him in his work. Do not talk with him. Do not pray with him."

He ended. The crowd which had gathered in the field broken-spirited, nerveless cowards were men now. They shouted, waved gaunt hands, stretched lean arms up to heaven, swore aloud that they would fight to the last the battle which lay before them.

Paddy Heverin, greatly moved by the priest's words and inspirited by the contents of a bottle he had emptied since he spoke, struggled to his feet.

"It's a proud day," he said. "The proudest in my life. Let me shake you by the hand, Father. I will shake your hand if every landlord out of hell was to bid me let it go. Give me your hand, Father, and let me shake it."

He held by the edge of the platform and stretched out his right hand. It was not the priest's he caught, but Johnny Darcy's. But that mattered very little to him. He wrung it, waving it from side to side and declaiming—

"I'll take an honest man by the hand—any honest man. I'm an honest man, and so is Father O'Sullivan, God bless him; and you're an honest man, and we're all honest men, and I'll take you by the hand, 'And if the colour we must wear is England's cruel red——'"

Johnny Darcy conveyed him, still breathing out patriotism to the tune of "The wearing of the green," to his car. Sympathetic admirers hoisted him, not without difficulty, on to the seat. So rapidly had the new spirit of mutual help spread among the people that there was a contest for the honourable duty of sitting beside Heverin and holding him safe. It was Johnny Darcy who secured the privilege. Two more of the great man's admirers climbed on to the other side of the car. One of them, to lighten the burden of Darcy's responsibility, stretched an arm across the well of the car and gripped Heverin's coat collar. The party reached Cuslough safely, and the three ministering angels, reaping the reward of their charity, drank to the success of the Land League and the glory of Ireland in the room behind Heverin's bar. It was understood that they drank at their host's expense, therefore they drank freely. Heverin himself slept off the effects of patriotic endeavour on an uncomfortable horsehair sofa in the parlour.

CHAPTER XI

THAT man has a sense of the picturesque who first applied the word revolution to those upheavals which every now and then alter the appearance of society. The ancient Romans, avoiding metaphor, called them simply new conditions; but this man—Frenchman, German, Englishman, or whatever he was—saw society as a huge cart-wheel. It was stuck in the mud, and a team of exhausted fates tugged at it with no better result than now and then to make it revolve spasmodically, jerkily. No doubt in a perfectly ordered society, the socialist state of modern dreamers, the wheel would roll slowly, evenly, so that no one would remain underneath it long enough to have cause for complaint, or on top long enough to really enjoy himself. But we have not yet achieved this smooth rolling. Our wheel remains fixed, stuck fast, while those underneath groan horribly, and those on top become convinced that its position is part of the fixed order of the universe. They cannot believe