his mind a doubt—a fear that the gentlemen might be right, the Dean even might be right, in their estimate of the Land League.

Stephen was not in the least shaken in his nationalism. He still believed whole-heartedly in the right of Ireland to regulate her own affairs. But he heard and read very disquieting things about the Land League. He recognised that the Irish tenants were often hardly treated, that their position was singularly insecure, and that many landlords failed to do their duty. He did not like the methods which were adopted to set those wrong things right. He dreaded extremely lest the battle of nationalism—the struggle of Ireland against England—should be left unfought, while men engaged in another battle, a class struggle, in which Irishmen should be pitted against Irishmen. He thought that in such a battle very horrible things would be done, that fierce passions would be let loose, that mutual distrust and hate would separate Irishmen from each other in such a way that a whole generation would have to pass before union would be possible again.

He had, ever since he heard of the meeting at Cuslough, been conscious of these doubts and fears. But he had put them behind him; had locked them in at the back of his mind. Now the Dean had let them all loose. Stephen was forced to face them and deal with them. He was worried and uncomfortable.

CHAPTER XII

IT was whispered in the village that Eugene Hegarty was getting to be "queer." A man had lived in Dhulough once who had become very "queer" indeed. In the end he had threatened his wife with a carving-knife, had even

tried to cut her throat. The woman had screamed aloud. Neighbours had come to her rescue. The police had taken the man and put him into the lunatic asylum. In the earlier stages of his malady this man had shunned human companionship, had taken long, solitary walks, had showed himself wholly uninterested in local affairs. The symptoms were manifest in Eugene Hegarty. The inference, to most men, was obvious and sure. The village people whispered it. Dean Ponsonby hinted and nodded. Mr. Manders spoke of Mrs. Hegarty as a woman greatly to be pitied.

Stephen thought he knew better. Eugene Hegarty was not mad nor likely to go mad. But it was undeniable that he was becoming further and further separated from the people around him. He was living a very lonely life. Stephen's intercourse with him had not been constant or close, nor had it been very fruitful. Partly the fault was Stephen's, partly Hegarty's, who was reserved and shy. But such as it was the intercourse had left an impression on Stephen. He felt that the clergyman was one who would judge the problems of life by a standard not conventional; measure things otherwise than by the foot-rule of expediency.

In his perplexity he felt a desire to talk to Eugene Hegarty. He walked over to the rectory. The appearance of the maid who opened the door to him was surprising. No longer sluttish and barefooted, she was excessively, apparently uncomfortably, trim and neat. She had been decked, washed, combed for an occasion. He was shown into the drawing-room, and realised at once that he was to share in a festivity. The room, like the maid, was decked and washed. Mats and antimascassars were clean and stiff. The large oval table in the centre of the room shone excessively. Even the covers of the volumes containing the works of great British poets which lay on the table had been polished till the gilt letter-

ing on their backs was very bright. In the middle of the table, under a glass shade, stood a curious, branched ornament with white satin flowers attached to its extremities. Originally it had formed part of Mrs. Hegarty's wedding-cake. The table itself was supported by a single leg, a sort of thick stem which spread itself a few inches above the floor into four carved knobby roots.

At this table sat Mrs. Hegarty and Mr Manders side by side. The British poets, which usually lay at exactly equal distances from each other on white mats, were swept from their regular ranks and jostled each other, Cowper having even thrust a corner of his gilt cover into the middle of Pope's *Moral Essays*. The wedding-cake ornament was pushed out of its proper place in the centre of the polished ellipse. In front of Mrs. Hegarty lay a small book, open. It was not one of the British poets but a treatise on palmistry, a science just then beginning to attract the attention of women who had nothing particular to do. Beside the book, flat and supine on the table, lay Mr. Manders' two shapely, brown hands.

"Oh, Mr. Butler, I am so glad to see you Do please come and show me your hands. I am dreadfully puzzled. Mr. Manders has no line of life at all, and yet you know he's quite alive."

Mr. Manders, standing behind his hostess, winked at Stephen. It is possible to wink in an extremely vulgar manner, as the comedian in a comic opera winks when taking the audience into his confidence over a dubious joke. It is possible also to wink in such a way as to suggest self-satisfied delight in some stratagem successfully accomplished. In such a way do Prime Ministers wink at their private secretaries when they promise the English people a bill which will finally settle the Irish difficulty. There is also a friendly and wholly delightful wink which invites the recipient to come and take part in some very amusing game of make-believe. It was with a

wink of this kind that Mr. Manders greeted Stephen. He was enjoying himself very much with pretty Mrs. Hegarty, and enjoying himself so innocently that he welcomed a friend to a share of the fun.

"It's Mrs. Hegarty's birthday to-day," he said, "and Mr. Hegarty has given her a book on the black art because he thinks she spends too much of her time reading the Bible."

"Do be quiet," said the lady delightedly. "You know that Eugene wouldn't give me such a thing for the world."

"Mr. Hegarty has gone away," went on Mr. Manders, "because we found out that he was going to be an archbishop and afterwards start a public-house. It was all down in the lines of his hands. And when we found it out, he couldn't deny that it was very likely to come true."

Mrs. Hegarty had firm hold of Stephen's right hand. She spread it out with gentle force.

"Now, Mr. Manders," she said, "you find the map at the beginning of the book. Do please be serious. Here's a cross—no, a star, in the middle of the mountain of the moon. Isn't this the mountain of the moon? Let me look."

She leaned over Mr. Manders' shoulder, giggling with joy. Life in Dhulough rectory was very dull for Mrs. Hegarty. She was a woman fitted to shine at social gatherings in fashionable places. She would have cheered with unfailing smiles the young man who pours cream into the teacup with the remark "Say when," and goes on pouring after the victim of his attentions has said "thanks," or "now," or "no more, please." She would have always appreciated the subtle compliment which the same young man pays afterwards with the sugar-bowl in his hand: "Surely *you* don't require sweetening?" Or his later quotation from *Hamlet* on the occasion of offering a chocolate-cream: "Sweets to the sweet." To Dhulough rectory there never came any young

men with engaging manners and polished wit. Mr. Manders was past the first blush of his youth. His hair was touched with grey and, on one part of his head, thin. But he had a merry eye and a very pleasant smile. Stephen Butler, almost her only other visitor, was young, but he was very stiff. It was hard to get any fun out of him. She preferred Mr. Manders in spite of his failing hair, but she never gave up hope of making something out of Stephen.

"It is the mountain of the moon," she said. "Now please look on and see what the star means. I know it means something. You'll find it on the last page but two."

Mr. Manders carried off the book. Standing near the window he began solemnly—

"'A cross on the mountain of the moon means marriage to a dark-haired lady of title who——'"

"There," said Mrs. Hegarty, "'a dark-haired lady of title,' and you are dark yourself! Do you like dark hair, Mr. Butler? And a title too! How lovely!"

"Wait a minute," said Mr. Manders; "'who will take to drink in middle-life and try to poison her husband by giving him deadly nightshade in his coffee at breakfast.'"

"Oh, I am so sorry," said Mrs. Hegarty.

Mr. Manders winked at Stephen again. This time Mrs. Hegarty caught him in the act.

"Oh!" she cried; "you're making it all up as you go along. I know that's not in the book. Give it to me till I see. Give it me at once."

She made a dart across the room. Mr. Manders with amazing activity rushed round the table waving the book derisively. She pursued him, catching at the table as she swept round it, so that it rocked on its single leg and shed two of the British poets on to the floor. Mr Manders in his efforts to escape set a heavy foot upon Dryden, cracking his back. Mrs. Hegarty stopped, panting.

"Please catch him, Mr. Butler. You stand there and I'll chase him round to you."

Mr. Manders winked again. Stephen stood helpless, growing hot and red. He could not bring himself to pursue Mr. Manders round a shiny oval table, across a green carpet with a floral pattern on it while two British poets waited to trip him. He knew quite well what he ought to do. He ought to catch Mr. Manders by the arm, hold him with simulated effort until Mrs. Hegarty's hands were almost on him and then, after a vehement convulsion, let him go again. He ought to join in the pursuit, fall perhaps, certainly sweep away more British poets. He ought to keep the game up till Mrs. Hegarty's hair began to come down and her beautiful eyes danced yet more merrily with delighted excitement. But he could not bring himself to do these things. He knew that he was a prig, a starched, superior person, the most objectionable kind of man there is, one with too much dignity to join in the games of a child. But there was no use arguing with himself. He couldn't do it.

"Well," said Mr. Manders, "as it's her birthday we ought to give her back her book. What do you think, Butler?"

"Do," said Stephen. "I'm dying to hear the rest of my fortune. You'll go on reading my hand, won't you, Mrs. Hegarty?"

He owed it to her. He couldn't chase Mr. Manders. He stepped warily among the fallen poets; but he did his best to be agreeable, to redeem his character. He held out both hands—

"Please go on, Mrs. Hegarty."

"You believe in it, don't you, Mr. Butler? I'm sure Mr. Manders doesn't, though he pretends he does. But you do really, don't you? If you do, I'll go on; but I won't have my book laughed at. All sorts of very clever people believe in it. The gipsies, you know, tell people wonderful things, and I want to be like that."

Mr. Hegarty entered the room. Stephen grasped at his opportunity.

"I ought to have told you before," he said, "that I want to speak to Mr. Hegarty this afternoon on a matter of business—particular business, rather important business."

Mrs. Hegarty gaped with astonishment. It was impossible to imagine that any one could transact business, important business, with her husband.

"I am sorry," she said, "that we have kept you. I didn't know. My husband was in the study all the time, weren't you, dear? I could easily have sent for him."

"Oh, it was my own fault," said Stephen. "I forgot all about the business till I saw him. The palmistry was so fascinating, you know, and I was—I was enjoying myself."

Mrs. Hegarty smiled responsively. She quite believed that Stephen had been enjoying himself. She had been enjoying herself, and Mr. Manders had, quite plainly, been enjoying himself. There was nothing strange in the supposition that what amused them amused Stephen.

"Well now," she said, "be off, the two of you, and do your business, whatever it is, and come back again. We'll read up the book while you're away, and tell you all about yourself and your fortune afterwards."

Mr. Hegarty led the way into the little study and offered Stephen a chair. Then he sat down himself and looked at his visitor. He shared his wife's astonishment at the idea of any one wanting to do important business with him. Stephen sat silent, puzzled. In fact he had no business of any kind to do with Mr. Hegarty. He had spoken unadvisedly in the drawing-room, feeling at the moment nothing but a strong desire to escape, at any price, from the necessity of having his fortune told by Mrs. Hegarty and Mr. Manders. Now, face to face with the expectant Mr. Hegarty with-

out any definite business to talk about, he began to suffer for his rash words. Thus are men punished for the pleasures they avoid in life. A duty can be shirked on any excuse. The flimsiest lie will serve him who runs away from an obligation painful to fulfil. No one is brought to book for such excuses, or obliged to daub over his assertions with putty of truth. All the world understands the excuses and lies for what they are, and every one is patient with the liar. But the man who tries to escape his pleasures must make his position good. The excuse of illness will not serve him who wants to avoid a tea-party unless he can display to inquirers a visibly spotted skin. It is impossible to flee from the beautiful eyes of a lady palmist on the plea of serious business without producing afterwards a schedule of accounts, a lease, or some such document.

Mr. Hegarty sat patient, mildly expectant, looking at Stephen. He wanted to help the young man to the point if he could, but being unable to form the vaguest guess about what the business might be, he failed to do anything effective.

"Well?" he said at last.

"Would you mind if I smoked?"

"Not in the least. Please smoke."

"It's a habit with me, and I talk much more comfortably with a pipe in my mouth. But are you sure your wife won't object to the smell?"

"Oh, dear, no. The fact is she never comes into this room. And in any case she doesn't mind. Mr. Manders often smokes in the drawing-room."

Stephen slowly filled his pipe. He made up his mind to tell Mr. Hegarty about the lecture which the Dean had given him. He struck a match, and held it to the bowl. He drew several whiffs of smoke and looked round him. He had never been in Mr. Hegarty's study before. He noted the bareness of the room, the scanty rows of books, the tattered patch of carpet, the ink-

spotted writing-table with the iron cross upon it. His eyes rested on the iron cross, and the feeling came upon him that the man who dwelt with this bare, rigid symbol of suffering for a companion might have some word to say, some help to give. He saw the worn kneeling-mat and the picture above it, noted the stiff stupidity of the sheep among the thorns, and the tender face of the Shepherd Who bent over it. Before this picture Eugene Hegarty prayed. Stephen remembered the unaccountable wave of emotion which had swept over him in the little church on that first, dark Sunday years before, when he had received the sacrament from Eugene Hegarty's hands. He realised suddenly that he could speak to the dull, unkempt man before him of great things; that he would find behind the peering, stupid-looking eyes understanding and sympathy; that no emotion could be so lofty as to lie beyond the range of one who looked daily on that stark iron cross, and knelt often before the Shepherd and His sheep. He felt, too, that speaking to Eugene Hegarty he would come to understand himself, would disentangle the troubled thoughts, strip bare to view the shrouded pains which vexed him.

"I had," he said, "a visit from Dean Ponsonby to-day. He had a long talk with me."

Mr. Hegarty stirred in his chair, a little vexed. He believed that he understood now what Stephen Butler's important business was. The Dean had sent the young man there to remonstrate about some duty left undone, some affair neglected. There were many such duties and affairs which appealed strongly to the Dean about which Mr. Hegarty did not care at all. He felt a slight sense of resentment. It was not quite fair to send a layman, his own parishioner, to talk to him about such things. Almost at once the feeling passed. He waited for what was to come, humbly ready to endure rebuke.

"He gave me a great talking to," said Stephen,

with a slight smile. "He told me very plainly what he thought of me. He said that I was engaged in stirring up strife and disloyalty; that I was false to my class and my religion. He told me that gentlemen and good men would hate and despise me. He made me feel snubbed, and"—Stephen's tone altered—"the worst of it is that I'm not sure he isn't right."

Eugene Hegarty's face lighted up suddenly. He became intensely, absorbingly interested in what he heard. This was the business then, the "important business." It was not an affair of money, of houses or lands. It was not a reproach of his own feeble, half-hearted ecclesiasticism. It was something of a kind real to Eugene Hegarty, the trouble of a human soul. This was of incomparably greater importance to him than the finances of the church or world.

"He was speaking, of course, of my politics," said Stephen, "of the party I belong to and the new way that things are going now."

"Ah, Mr. Butler, I knew long ago that trouble would come on you. I knew that I was going to bring trouble into your life when I gave you the paper I found in the old parish safe, the copy of your grandfather's oath. Are you sorry now that you ever saw it?"

"No. I am not sorry. I think I should be where I am to-day, on the side I am, doing the work I am doing, even if I had never seen the paper. I do not mean that it made no difference. It has made a difference. I have, so to speak, leaned back upon it when I doubted and wavered. It has been a strength to me, but I should have been where I am without it."

"Are you sorry now that you have gone in the way you have? Do you think you are wrong?"

"No. I have not been wrong. I have been right and am right. I am for Ireland, for my country, my own country—for her freedom, for her happiness, for her good. I am not wrong.

Look at Ireland as she is to-day. Think of all——"

"Wait," said Mr. Hegarty. "I do not want you to argue with me about your politics, your hopes, or your plans. I have nothing to do with such things. I do not understand them. They only weary and perplex me. I wanted to know only one thing, and you have told me that. You believe that you are doing what is right. Your lips say so. And I have stronger testimony than your words. I have listened to the tone of your voice. I have seen the fire that is within you shining in your face, in your eyes. You believe what you say. You are trying to do right, not for any gain or praise that it will ever bring you, but just because it is right. I have still stronger witness even than your voice and your face. I have watched your life for years now, your daily life, the acts and words of times in which men forget to pose. I know that you believe in what you are doing."

"I do," said Stephen, softly, humbly. It was strange to him that he should be dominated by Eugene Hegarty, by the man who, of all men, seemed the feeblest. But he made no effort to assert himself. He waited patient of guidance and leading.

"Then," said Eugene Hegarty, "be brave. Go on."

"I will go on. But for bravery—— It is very hard to be condemned and despised, but I dare say I can face that well enough though it is lonely, but——"

"You are lonely." Mr. Hegarty interrupted him. "I am sure of it. But has not every man who lived for a principle been lonely? It is not, I think, possible in this world to do simply what is right without being blamed and hated for it. If such a thing had been possible, would not Jesus Christ have accomplished it? He, of all men who ever lived, stood most plainly and simply

for the highest good. And what was the record of His life? Read St. John's Gospel and you will see. A pleasant way enough at first—men and women listening to Him. Then, as they began to know Him and understand what He meant, a growth of distrust and opposition. Then anger and slander and hostility. Then the culmination of it all, when He stood with Pilate on the steps; the savage hatred of the priests, the mad blood-lust of the people. It is all traced out for us, step by step, from the day when the simple peasants praised the wine He made for them in Cana of Galilee, till—till—they passed by the cross He hung on wagging their heads at Him. That was His story. Why should yours be different? Can it be otherwise for any of those to whom God has given a message to deliver to man, or a cause to live for? How can it be different for you unless you grow frightened and turn back?"

Stephen sat silent. His eyes left Eugene Hegarty's face and rested on the cross.

"I hope," he said, "I trust that I shall not go back."

Stephen's mind worked rapidly on what he had heard. He knew St. John's gospel, believed that he knew it well, but he had never understood it before, or seen in it what he saw now. He went back over the familiar chapters, many of them learned by heart in childhood and not forgotten. Light broke on him. He saw the Saviour afresh, saw Him now, not as a remote Deity, shrouded in sanctity, but as a man, a man with a principle in life, with a truth to proclaim, a cause to labour for. He saw the pastoral beginning of the life, all sunshine, kindliness, gentle hopes; the feasting with the peasant people in Cana, the talking to the woman at the well. He saw the beginnings of misunderstanding, doubt, offence, and saw that they were inevitable because Jesus lived for truth and goodness. He traced, remembering incidents and whole chapters, the first hostilities, the grow-

ing dislike, the darkening hate. He realised the passionate longing of the enemies for the blood of Him Who still stood calmly for the truth. He understood afresh the furious shouts of priests and people when Pilate said "Behold the Man!" He could not draw his eyes away from the black cross upon the table. The cross was for him then, more than it had ever been before, a source of strength.

But he was not satisfied. Strength was not all he wanted, was not what he chiefly wanted. He was no weakling, no coward. He was not afraid of standing alone. Yet he had admitted to himself, and had said to Eugene Hegarty, that he felt lonely. He knew now more clearly than when he began to talk what it was he wanted. It was not an assurance of Divine companionship on a road known to be right. It was not further conviction that the road had been right so far as he had travelled it. It was guidance now at a critical point, at a parting of ways, at a crossing where the signposts were broken and illegible. Very confusedly, with many repetitions and much stumbling, he explained what was in his mind. Mr. Hegarty understood him with wonderful quickness. Some such problem, different in its details but essentially the same, must have been familiar to him.

"I myself," he said, "have never found it very difficult to do what was right once I knew it. I have often been sorely puzzled to decide what was right. That is how you feel."

Stephen nodded.

Eugene Hegarty began to speak slowly in single, short sentences, with long breaks and silences between them.

"You must not do things which are plainly wrong.

"You must not go such ways as necessitate your doing wrong.

"I do not understand your politics or the ways

of them, but you must do only what is right.

"The windings of the ways of the world are many and confusing, but right is right and wrong is wrong. A lie, for instance, is a lie, in public life or private.

"The right and wrong of single, simple acts is clear, not dubious. You must not reason about such right and wrong.

"A kind of life or a policy which necessitates doing single wrong things cannot itself be right."

Stephen rose at last, after a longer pause than usual, and held out his hand.

"I cannot thank you," he said, "but you have done much for me."

At the door of the room he turned.

"I will ask you to pray for me."

"I do pray for you. I have done so ever since I knew you. Is it not the chief part of my duty to pray for you? It is also my delight. You need not fear that I shall forget you."

Eugene Hegarty did not follow his visitor from the room. He turned to his familiar place; knelt as he had knelt a thousand times; saw the Good Shepherd and the poor lost sheep in the brambles; prayed.

Stephen, passing the drawing-room door, heard voices and laughter. Mrs. Hegarty and Mr. Manders were merry. He walked softly, hoping to escape them, but they heard him.

"That you, Butler? Come along. We've got your fortune ready for you."

The door opened, and Mr. Manders caught him by the arm. Mrs. Hegarty's voice reached him—

"What a time you were about your tiresome old business, and I'm sure it was only Dogherty's cow grazing in the churchyard. I always said it was horrid to let it. But do come in."

"I was thinking of going home," said Stephen.

"Nonsense," said Mr. Manders. "Mrs. Hegarty has got a beautiful cake waiting for you,

her birthday cake. I'm trying to guess whether she is twenty-two or twenty-three or twenty-four, and she won't tell me when I'm right."

Stephen was led in. They gave him pieces of birthday cake which had hard sugar on the top and sweets with almonds in them stuck in the sugar. They told him his fortune for him, promising a beautiful bride, a narrow escape, a serious illness, and at last the fulfilment of his heart's desire.

CHAPTER XIII

THE historian who undertakes the task of writing the history of Ireland during the nineteenth century will have need of a natural fondness for oratory to help him through his task. He will, of course, like all historians, have to read State papers, the letters of eminent men, and quite a number of biographies. But more than any other historian, he will be obliged to read through speeches. We have, all of us, a taste for making speeches, and being a people with a sense of fair play, we all listen to each other's speeches; knowing that the men who speak to-day will be listening to us to-morrow. As our cheers encourage them, so in due time will their cheers hearten us up to fine flights and great words. There have, of course, been a few people prominent in Irish history who have not made speeches at all; and there have been others who meant a good deal of what they said. It has been the misfortune of the first class to have had their reputations drenched into a condition of soddenness by the oratory of their admirers since they departed from the scene of action. The second class have generally said so much more than they meant that their plans, intentions, policy—whatever they meant to start with—have been lost to sight amid the whirling flights of