companion on the night of the murder. He was less sure about it when he went away.

"I'll get the best man I can to defend him," he said "But I doubt if it will be a bit of use."

CHAPTER XXIV

THE doctor took the place of Mr. Manders at Stephen's bedside. He, like Nurse Lewis, was worried and irritated by the change in his patient. Next morning he came again and looked grave. He was anxious. He spoke of things which might happen or were happening, things with long names derived, as the names which doctors give to diseases often are, from Greek words. Later in the day he telegraphed to Galway for another doctor—a man with something more than a local reputation for skill and knowledge. He, in turn, said obscure words and, since Stephen Butler was a man of some importance, passed on the responsibility of giving the final decision. A very famous surgeon was sent for and came all the way from Dublin. He was a baronet, and Mr. Manders paid him a fee suited to his eminence in his profession and his station in life. In return he greatly gratified the first and second doctors by repeating their Greek words, and gave it as his opinon that Stephen Butler would not live. He turned out to be perfectly right. Stephen died.

They buried him in the vault where the dust of his father, his grandfather, and other remoter Butlers lay. Dean Ponsonby, for the second time in the course of three weeks, read the funeral service in the little churchyard of Dhulough. Mr. Manders, a smitten man, from whose eyes the laughter had departed, stood by and sprinkled the clay upon the coffin. The people of the two villages crowded to the funeral. With them came

the farmers from the remotest corners of the estate; men in white flannel jackets, and grey trousers; girls with bare feet, in crimson petticoats, grey shawls, and checked head-handkerchiefs; old women, who crouched round the walls of the graveyard and peered out from the shawls which covered them; children, boys and girls, clad alike in single garments of flannel, gathered at their waists. The freshly turned loose earth on Carrie Hegarty's grave was trampled hard and flat by bare feet and heavy boots.

When the last words of the service were said Dean Ponsonby passed slowly into the church. Old Dogherty, the sexton, with tears rolling down his cheeks, and three of Stephen's servants bore the coffin into the vault. Mr. Manders stood bareheaded watching them. Then from the women in the crowd there burst a howl of grief. The older men joined in it. The younger, with faces screwed up and contorted in the effort to maintain an appearance of self-control, wept silently. The first outburst of grief passed, and the people waited. The aged crones, who crouched by the walls like hooded votaries of death and horrible decay, began to keen. First one and then another of them cried the phrases of a chant, while her sister hags droned dissonant accompaniment. Their mothers and grandmothers before them had keened over the graves of other Butlers of Dhulough. These keened with wilder grief. They were experts in the art of bewailing the dead. Again and again they had been called on to express their people's horror of the grim fate which lay in wait for all of them. Over the drowning of the young fisherman; over the death of the girl-mother, conquered by her labour pains; over the timely passing of the crippled patriarch, they cried alike a terrified defiance of the relentless force which dragged living creatures out of the sunshine into the dark.

Now with intenser fear and more heartrending

horror they keened for Stephen Butler. Whom would death spare if it did not spare one who was rich and brave and strong and young? There was present in their minds the sense that they wailed for the last of a great race, for a man who, like his ancestors, had stood for his country, had been the friend of the people, had loved the land. Present also was the feeling of his youth, a deep resentment against the injustice of death which laid capturing hands upon the young. But most of all, these old women, full of a pagan delight in the force of life, felt the futility of the existence of a man who died childless, the utter waste of Stephen Butler's youth and strength. No woman had lain in his arms. No man-child lived to call him father. No girl, even, had drawn life from him before his own life was quenched.

The wind moaned far out over the sea, and gusts sweeping up from the beach tossed the garments and hair of the people in the graveyard. Wisps of grey sea-fog chilled them. Then denser fog and fine rain came, borne by an increasing wind. The keening ceased. The old women drew their shawls close over their heads. The children moved away in little groups. Here and there, regardless of the fact that the ground was hallowed by prayers strange to them, men knelt beside the vault and uttered words of supplication. Not till late in the evening, till the roof of the church and the gravestones and the walls dripped with cold rain, did the last of these mourners turn away and go home.

Mr. Manders treated Stephen Butler's commands about Rafferty's trial as a sacred charge. He engaged, at his own expense, an able barrister to defend the old man. All that could be done was done to persuade the jury of his innocence. In those days the upper classes in Ireland were frightened, and frightened men take no chances. Rafferty and Sheridan were tried in Belfast. A Connacht jury might or might not regard the

evidence in deciding upon their verdict when the case had any connection with the agrarian struggle. A conviction, if the case were strong against the prisoners, might be hoped for in Belfast. Against Sheridan the evidence was overwhelming. He was found guilty and sentenced to be hanged. Against Rafferty the evidence was sufficient. There was a train of circumstance, a series of facts, which taken together were very difficult to explain away. The old man had been seen on shore on the evening of the murder. He had been met on the avenue of Dhulough House by Mr. Manders and Major Thorne. His gun had been found in the sunk fence by the police. His boat was seen on the beach by a police constable at eleven o'clock, so that it was obvious that he did not return to his island until after the murders had been committed.

The lawyer whom Mr. Manders engaged did his best. He advanced a theory that the gun had been stolen from the island, that Rafferty, missing it, had come on shore to search for it; that, suspecting some mischief, he had gone up to Dhulough House to consult Stephen Butler; that he had afterwards gone to look for Sheridan and the other unknown murderer whom he suspected of stealing the gun. The lawyer's account of Rafferty's actions was in reality perfectly true; but it struck the jury simply as an ingenious and far-fetched hypothesis. Behind the circumstantial evidence lay the fact that Rafferty was a Fenian, and had been condemned years before for his share in a desperate conspiracy. To the minds of the respectable citizens of Belfast this was a damning record.

The judge, in summing up the evidence, tore the pleading of the lawyer to tatters. If Rafferty had gone ashore to recover his stolen property, why did he not proceed at once to the police barrack? The jury appreciated the judge's point.

To each of these Belfast shopkeepers an appeal to the police under such circumstances would have been an entirely natural thing. If Rafferty suspected, said the judge, that his stolen gun was to be used for any felonious purpose, why did he not warn Major Thorne? Major Thorne was a magistrate, and it was admitted that Rafferty had met him on the avenue of Dhulough House. Again the jurymen felt the force of the reasoning. Each of them regarded magistrates as the enemies of evil-doing and lawlessness of all kinds. Besides, was not Rafferty a Fenian? The judge told them not to be influenced by the fact of Rafferty's previous imprisonment. But how could they help remembering it? Fenians were men who took up arms in open rebellion, and that to the mind of the respectable citizen was a crime hardly discernible from murder. It was inevitable that Rafferty should be found guilty. It was equally inevitable that he should be sentenced to death.

Sheridan, awaiting execution, confessed his own share in the crime and solemnly swore that Rafferty was innocent. He swore that he himself had stolen the gun knowing it to be a good one and suitable for his purpose. Nobody in authority believed Sheridan. Nobody wanted to believe him. It was necessary that life should be paid for with life, so that the majesty of the law should be vindicated so that order should be restored to Ireland. There was evidence enough against Rafferty. He was hanged.

A few days after the execution Mr. Manders sat in his office with a large box of papers beside him. They were old letters, memoranda, receipts, and newspaper cuttings collected from the drawers of Stephen Butler's writing-table. Mr. Manders sorted and docketed those which seemed of any interest, and threw any which were totally useless into a waste-paper basket. A cheery fire burned in the grate behind him. As he worked a clerk entered bringing him a

letter from Lord Daintree. It dealt in the first instance with some matters relative to the management of the estate; but the old gentleman seemed to have plenty of leisure, for when his business was disposed of he rambled on, covering several sheets of notepaper with reflections on the recent events at Ohulough. The letter was dated from Lord Daintree's club in London.

"Father Staunton called on me yesterday on his way to France. He told me that he has resigned his parish and means to end his days abroad. From the look of him I should say that he hasn't long to live. I never saw a man more cut up than he is. He has some notion of settling down in Brittany, near a convent of which his sister was once an inmate. He showed me a letter he received from old Rafferty, written a few days before he was hanged. The greater part of it was in Irish which I could not read, but I was very much struck by a quotation with which it ended—

> Ego Dit's opacos
> Cogor adire lacus, viduos a lumine Phœbi,
> Et vastum Phlegethonta pat'

I don't know the lines. They sound like Virgil, but I don't believe they are in the Æneid. They are interesting because they show that the old man died a Pagan. "*Lacus viduos a lumine Phœbi.*" That way of thinking about the hereafter is not Catholic. It is not even Christian. It is purely pagan. I don't think any the worse of it for that. I dare say the guess is as good as any other."

Mr. Manders paused in his reading. He was not sure that he knew what Lord Daintree meant. He himself had a clear-cut creed, a definite scheme of the future, an authorised map of the world beyond. He had never been tempted to doubt its authenticity. It struck him

as foolish, if not impious, to talk of pagan guesses being as good as Christian certainties.

"I hear that Hegarty is leaving Dhulough too. Poor fellow! I'm sure he's hit hard, and he is not the sort of man to stand up against a blow. I'm not likely to be back in the near future, so you and Dean Ponsonby will be left, like Lion and Moonshine in the worthy Athenian weaver's play, to bury the dead."

Mr. Manders was not well-read in English literature. He missed the point of the allusion; nor would he have been inclined to admire its aptness even if he had caught it.

"I suppose the Dean sometimes dines with you now? Next time he does you might ask him from me how recent events square with his theory of a wise and kindly Providence which overrules human affairs. You and I have got off nearly scot free, although we were, I suppose, more or less responsible for a good deal of the trouble. Snell, who perhaps deserved to suffer a little, is perfectly contented and happy. He keeps adding to his really marvellous collection of old coins by means of the modern coin which you collect for him, rack-renting and evicting his tenants. On the other hand, Mrs. Hegarty, a pretty little woman though supremely silly, and Stephen Butler, a model landlord, and, even from the League's point of view, something of a patriot, get killed. Sheridan, a dreamy sort of boy, driven half-mad by what he took for oppression, and Rafferty, who appears to have been quite innocent, are hanged for killing them. The good Dean's Providence had no business to connive at such proceedings. Even I, who am not particularly wise and not at all benevolent, could have managed much better if the guiding of events had been left to me. For the good of society in general I should have arranged for Heverin to be hanged. That fellow is a scoundrel, and will live to prey upon the people after our day is over.

I strongly suspect that his little finger will be thicker than our loins ever were. I should also have hanged John Darcy and a couple more like him. Some of those blackguards must have had a hand in the shooting. It really vexes me to think that they have escaped the gallows. I foresee, with a feeling of cosiderable disgust, that they will become leading politicians, and have unlimited opportunities for getting drunk. The condition of Ireland under their guidance is not pleasant to contemplate. Providence has a good deal to answer for."

Mr. Manders growled. He was a man who liked to roll out a good round oath, who had no objection to a joke with a sacred subject. He did not like what he called "damned, cold-blooded profanity"; and Lord Daintree's letter seemed to him full of it. He felt all the more angry because the indictment of Providence was singularly damaging.

The end of the letter puzzled him without restoring his good humour.

"What are you going to write upon Stephen Butler's tombstone? I suppose that Quaker cousin of his from Belfast will want to display some singularly inappropriate text. I shouldn't wonder if he suggested 'His end was peace!' By the way, is that a text? You might ask the Dean to look it up. If I had the settling of the matter, I should put—

"'Stephen Butler—the last Irish gentleman who was fool enough to be a patriot.'

"There may be others, of course, in the future; but by the time they turn up, people will have stopped reading our inscripton.

"After all, he was a fool. I don't use the word in any offensive sense, merely as the world uses it. If by any chance old Rafferty is wrong about the '*opacos lacus*' and the Dean is right; if there really is a sort of general reckoning up, and we all have to put in an appearance on a

Judgment Day, then I imagine Stephen Butler's particular kind of folly will turn out to be one of the few things which it is worth a man's while to go in for seriously. I've tried a good many sorts of folly in my day, and I've tried what's usually called wisdom. Most of them look pretty well now—on the stage with the coloured lime-light on them—but if there is such a thing as daylight, I can quite imagine that the rouge and the rags will have an uncommonly shabby appearance."

Mr. Manders laid Lord Daintree's letter aside, covering it carefully with a paper-weight, and resumed the work of dealing with Stephen Butler's papers. The various piles of letters and memoranda on the table before him grew larger, and the waste-paper basket gradually filled. He came near the end of his task. He took from the box beside him a stained and discoloured parchment envelope. It was endorsed in stiff, old-fashioned writing. The ink was faded to a brown colour, but the words were quite legible. Mr. Manders read them—

"For my son Antony. And I charge him to bind his children after him as I have bound him."

Mr. Manders looked at the envelope with some interest. He guessed that the writing must be that of the old Stephen Butler. He wondered what the envelope contained. Hitherto his glance through the papers had revealed nothing very exciting. This envelope stimulated his curiosity. He opened it and drew out a sheet of parchment. He read slowly the account of the swearing of the oath in Dhulough Church, and then, with a feeling of horror, the words of the oath itself. He laid the parchment on the table before him. Its ends curled up, and it fell into folds along the deep creases which crossed its surface.

Mr. Manders knew that it was a document of some historical interest, that it might very well

be regarded by the next heir of Dhulough as a valuable family possession. He was not moved by antiquarian sentiment. He cared very little for the feeling of the next heir, who had still to be sought for among remote kindred of the Butlers. He regarded the oath as an act of extreme folly, and the record of it as a dangerous thing. It might conceivably affect some one else as he thought it had affected Stephen Butler. He took it up and tried to tear it across. The folded parchment resisted his strength, his fingers slid along the greasy surface of it. The document remained untorn.

He laid it down and looked at it again while he lit his pipe. Then there came to him a recollection of a passage of the Old Testament which Dean Ponsonby read aloud in church once every year. There was a king of Judah who found himself obliged to deal with a dangerous document, probably a parchment which it was not easy to tear. Mr. Manders' eyes twinkled.

"I can't do better," he said, "than follow the example of Jehoiachim the son of Josiah."

He took the penknife from his pocket and cut the parchment into four pieces. He threw them one by one into the fire which burned on the hearth, and watched them until they were consumed.

Nowadays there is no longer a prophet Jeremiah to write again the words that were in the first roll for the benefit of the Butlers of Dhulough and their class.

THE NORTHUMBERLAND PRESS, THORNTON STREET, NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE