



## PROLOGUE: Early Summer, 1798

MacCarthy was light-headed that night when he set out from Judy Conlon's cabin in the Acres of Killala. Not drunk at all, but light-headed. He carried with him an inch or two of whiskey, tight-corked in a flask of green glass, and the image which had badgered him for a week. Moonlight falling on a hard, flat surface, scythe or sword or stone or spade. It was not an image from which a poem would unwind itself, but it could be hung as a glittering, appropriate ornament upon a poem already shaped. Problems of the craft.

Halfway to Kilcummin strand, the sullen bay hammered flat to his right, and to his left a low stone fence, he took the flask from a back pocket of his long-tailed coat. Within the coloured glass, in the clear light of summer's evening, the whiskey was a drowned moon. When the flask was empty, he sent it on a high arc towards the shore. Like moonlight's glint upon water. Or its glow upon her rounded breast. No, the image demanded a flat surface. Until he had the image, he would be its slave.

At Matthew Quigley's tavern, a long, low cabin across the narrow road from the rock-strewn strand, he put his fist to the door, knocked, and

waited. Quigley opened it for him, a short, bandy-legged man, bald, with a large head round as the full moon.

"You are late," he said.

"I am," MacCarthy said. "I had better things to do."

"You did to be sure," Quigley said. "In the Killala Acres."

"It is where I live," MacCarthy said. Quigley stood back, and he entered the tavern, bending his neck to the low door. He was a clumsily built man, tall and raw-boned, with long arms reaching towards his knees from heavy, sloping shoulders. It was a ploughboy's body, and a ploughboy's head, thatch of coarse red hair like a beacon fire on a hill, long, thin lip.

Three men sitting by the cold fireplace looked up towards him, and one of them spoke. Malachi Duggan, a heavy bull, shoulders hunched forward. "You are late."

"So it would seem," MacCarthy said. "I don't own a watch."

But he did. A handsome gold watch as thick as a turnip, given him years before by some gentlemen of North Kerry after a poetry competition, with branches and sprays of flowers traced upon its casing. Useless now, smashed one night in Newcastle West, the casing bent, and a litter of cogs, wheels, and springs beneath the splintered white dial, a shattered moon.

"You will take a drop," Quigley said, and filled a glass for him.

"He has never been known to refuse one," Phelim O'Carroll said. "Have you, Owen?"

"'Tis a modest boast," MacCarthy said, and sat down with them. O'Carroll the widower, with a strong farm held from the Big Lord himself; he worked it with his nephew, a harmless half-cracked creature, and a half-dozen labourers. The fourth man was Donal Hennessey; he held less land, but he had two growing sons, and a strapping handsome wife, with long legs and smooth lovely haunches. She had been shaped expressly for the purpose, but Hennessey would have little knowledge of such matters. She gave him children and that was the bargain.

Hennessey did not matter, nor O'Carroll, nor Quigley. Duggan mattered. He sat facing MacCarthy, hands on heavy knees. The eyes were pale blue, watchful; round as moons.

"We have been waiting for an hour," he said. "An hour spitting into a dead fireplace while we waited for a schoolmaster."

"Sure it couldn't have been too hard for Donal and Phelim here, with Matthew Quigley's good whiskey to keep them company. It was hard for a man like yourself who never has a thirst." MacCarthy raised his glass to Quigley.

"It is not for a joke that we asked you here," Duggan said.

"It is your help we want," Hennessey said, placating. "You can help us."

Whiskey, raw, burned MacCarthy's throat, and then spread its warmth through him. Light from the unglazed window fell upon the glass: imprisoned fire.

"Only a letter," Duggan said. "There is a letter that we want you to write

for us in English. A letter to a landlord. You know the kind of letter we need, and there is none of us can write it."

"You cannot be serious," MacCarthy said. "'Remorseless Tyrant beware. Long has your heel been ground into our neck.'"

"We are serious, right enough," Hennessey said.

MacCarthy spoke in English. "'A terrible vengeance will fall upon you. Tyrant beware.'"

"By God, that must be beautiful English. You rattle that out like an agent. What did that mean, Owen?"

MacCarthy did not answer him. He spoke to the watchful bull, Duggan, heavy dark head balanced easily on thick-muscle neck.

"What is it to be, a warning to the agent of the Big Lord?" He shook his head. "He would use it as a wad to start his fire."

Matthew Quigley, greasy-apronned, leaned forward to refill their glasses, Hennessey's, O'Carroll's, MacCarthy's, his own. Duggan had no glass.

"It is no warning this time," Hennessey said. "And it will not go to the Big Lord's agent. It will go to Captain Cooper here in Kilcummin, to tell him what we have done after we have done it. We are going to hough the cattle that he has turned into the new pasture."

Slashed tendons and bloody bellowing in the night.

"Write your own letter," MacCarthy said.

"An easy thing for you to say, Owen," O'Carroll said. "You have no land to worry about. A schoolmaster has only his books, and who would take those from him?"

"You would," MacCarthy said. "You would take the fine words that are in them. Do you not think the magistrates would wonder who sent Cooper a letter in handcrafted English?" He saw himself standing before the magistrates, and his letter being passed from hand to hand. "Much better you scratched out the letter yourselves, ignorant men confessing an ignorant crime. Draw a coffin on it, is what the Whiteboys used to do in the old days. Cooper has enough Irish in him to understand a coffin."

"It is no crime," Quigley said, "when slaves ask for simple decency."

"Is it not? The magistrates would quarrel with you there, and so would Hussey in the Killala chapel." Whiskey lapped at the edges of his spirit. He drank again.

"A priest has no understanding of these matters," O'Carroll said.

"I know," MacCarthy said. "He has no land. If you mean to protest slavery, you might put in a word for your own. There are no worse slaves in this barony than those poor lads you bring in from the hiring fair and keep half starved on potatoes an honest man would not throw to sows."

"Now that is a hard saying, Owen," Hennessey said. "Poor Phelim does the best he can for those lads. He has the life squeezed out of him by the Big Lord's agent, and so do I. And well you know it."

MacCarthy drained the whiskey. "But you have no need to look abroad for slaves, have you, Donal? They are bred for you at home."

Puzzled. "My sons, do you mean?"

"Do you call them so? There is no great resemblance." In a corner of his imagination, the mother of Hennessey's young sons stood wide-legged by cabin door.

"This is a letter that you will write," Duggan said. The others looked towards him. MacCarthy watched their eyes. They followed where he led, hard farmer, bully, faction fighter. Three years ago, on a fairday, he led the men of Tyrawley against those of Erris, stout stick in hand, neither pleasure nor anger shaping the creased, stolid face. Leaning against the gable end of the Belmullet tavern, MacCarthy had watched, disdainful and awed. "You will use your fine English for this letter, and it will be a long one. You will say that this will happen whenever a farm is taken for pasture by any landlord or any middleman. And there will be no other warnings. We want that known."

"You want that known," MacCarthy said. He held out his glass and Quigley refilled it. A poet's privilege. "Four men in a tavern want that known."

"There are more than four, Owen," Hennessey said. "You may be certain of that." He was a marvel. Insults dripped from him like rain from a cow's flank.

"The Whiteboys of Killala," Duggan said. "You will sign it that way. The Whiteboys of Killala."

"The Whiteboys of Claremorris were on public view two years ago," MacCarthy said. "Two of them, in Castlebar, outside the courthouse. Gibbeted and soaked in tar." Beyond the window, a corner of the moon. Elegant, aloof.

"Out of how many?" Hennessey asked. "The people will be with us in this."

"By God they will," Duggan said. For the first time he smiled.

"Not my people," MacCarthy said. "I am from Kerry." Clear water and bright cliffs; bird song.

"You are here now," Duggan said. "In the barony of Tyrawley. You would do well to remember that. It is not four men in a tavern. It is a matter for the men in all the townlands."

"I do not think so," MacCarthy said. "You have a grievance to pay Cooper for, because he turfed out the O'Malleys to make pastureland, and you have given yourselves a grand name, the Whiteboys of Killala."

"'Tis a good enough name," O'Carroll said.

What did it matter? The Whiteboys of Macroom, the True Men of Bruff, the Honest Men of Tralee. For thirty years now they had been starting up in one place or another, and the end was always the same, bodies on a gibbet. But this was a strange year for Whiteboys, with every pedlar and travelling man bringing stories into Mayo of the great fighting in Ulster to the north and Wexford far off to the south. They had not been Whiteboys, those United Irishmen. Now they were nothing at all. Two months ago, the armies of England had smashed them.

"It is a very good name," Duggan said. "Every landlord in Ireland knows it, and he knows what it means. There will be cattle killed and fields burned, and there is worse that could follow after. This is nothing new in Mayo. There are bodies of agents and bodies of bailiffs sunk in the bogs of Belmullet, with their eyes squeezed out of their heads and their backs cut to ribbons by thornbushes."

His voice was flat, but his lips glistened with spittle. He wants this. The thick, square fingers could fasten on bailiff's throat, tear punishing thornbush from the earth.

"Ach, there is no choice, Owen," O'Carroll said. "If the landlords turn to grazing we are done for. It is happening in other places. There is no argument we have but the Whiteboys' letter."

MacCarthy turned towards Quigley. "A tavernkeeper has no land. What is all this to you?"

"Well now, Owen. I have no land it is true, no more than a schoolmaster has. That is true for you." He took MacCarthy's glass and filled it again with the calm, colourless whiskey. "But a man should stand in well with his neighbours. That never hurts him, whatever his trade."

MacCarthy turned the glass around in his hand. The room was darkening. Beyond the window, the evening light had turned to the linnet-wing softness which stands at the edge of night.

"This is a foolish business you have in mind," he said to Duggan. "Great risings have now been stamped out in Ulster and in Wexford. There was a travelling man last week in Killala who said that gallows stretch from one end of the County Wexford to the other, and burned cabins. And no count will ever be made of all who were killed with musket and sword. He said that there are more English soldiers in the country now than have been here since the Boyne. They are in Tuam in their thousands, and they are in their thousands in the city of Galway."

"I heard that travelling man," O'Carroll said. "He had more to say than that. He said that for a month the army of the Gael was victorious in the County Wexford."

"Great comfort that was to them when they stood on the gallows," MacCarthy said.

"There are not thousands of British soldiers in Tyrawley," Duggan said. "There is only Captain Cooper and his tinpot yeomen. Protestant shopkeepers and tithe proctors. What was happening away off in Wexford or in Ulster is no matter here."

"There were thousands of them risen up in rebellion," said MacCarthy. "All of the County Wexford, and all of Carlow and all of Wicklow and parts of Kilkenny. They tried to fight their way out of Wexford. They were going to bring their rebellion to all of Ireland. They went this way and that way, but there were English soldiers on all the roads. And when they could think of nowhere else to go, they climbed a hill and waited for the English cannon to blow them to pieces."

Beyond the power of his imagination. The roads of Wexford clotted with

people, their pikes a winter forest against the horizon. Priests rode in their van. Faction fighters drove them against yeomen and militia. They prodded cattle before them into battle. He heard again the words of the travelling man: "There were great encampments of the people on the plains and along the rivers. They captured town after town, Camolin and Wexford and Enniscorthy. They burned Enniscorthy." Only two months ago. All over now.

"The people of Wexford were fools," Duggan said. "Captain Cooper will satisfy me. And after him, Gibson."

"Gibson is your own landlord, is he not?" MacCarthy said. "I thought that you would find time for Gibson."

"Then Gibson," Hennessey agreed. "But after him the agent for the Big Lord. By God, I hate that Creighton. He is the worst tyrant in Tyrawley."

"He does as he is bid," MacCarthy said. "The Big Lord off in London sends him a letter of instructions. That is how it is done."

"I will send him a letter, by God," Duggan said. "The Whiteboys of Killala will send him a letter."

"So that is to be the way of it," MacCarthy said, "and then a fourth and then a fifth. You have a great budget of work for me there."

"You will be safe enough, Owen," Hennessey said. "We will all be safe enough. There will be five hundred Whiteboys in Tyrawley."

"It will not stop at the bounds of this barony," Duggan said. "There are men I know in Erris, and across the Moy in Sligo."

"We are not fools," Quigley said. "We have met with this fellow and that fellow. And we have made out an oath."

"To be sure you have," MacCarthy said. "An oath is a Whiteboy's first order of business. The more mouth-filling the better." Seventeen seventy-nine, a barn close to Tralee in Kerry, and MacCarthy just turned eighteen. Frightened, boastful faces gathered around a candle. He would burn away parts of his past if he could, all the nights of the Whiteboys' moon. Fellows with blackened faces, white smocks pulled over their coarse frieze, baggy stockings peeping underneath, creeping across wet fields towards cattle. The night air a sudden jangle of bellows and shouts.

"We are not fools," Duggan said. "We know how to do this."

"You do, to be sure," MacCarthy said, draining his glass again. "You are grand fellows. It was well worth my long ramble northwards from Kerry to meet such grand fellows."

"Corn and oats will bring good money to the landlords," Hennessey said, "but cattle will bring better. The landlords will give farm after farm to the cattle, as Cooper gave them the farm of the O'Malleys."

The landlords had no choice and the people had no choice and the magistrates would have no choice but to hunt them down and hang them. It was like a proposition in Euclid, straight lines driving towards a point. That is what happened twenty years before, in Kerry and in West Cork. He had seen Whiteboys drink their victories in chapel yards, and he had seen them swing at the rope's end. What of me, he thought; have I a choice?

"We did not bring you here so that you could argue with us, MacCarthy," Duggan said. A question answered.

"No more do I want arguments," MacCarthy said. He took Quigley's jug of ill-tasting whiskey, and filled his glass to the brim. The parting glass.

"That is not true," Duggan said. "You would be happy to sit arguing here while there was any of that stuff left in the jug. You are a slave to it, and every man here knows it."

"We are all slaves," MacCarthy said. It tasted better now, soft and cool. "Slaves to this or slaves to that. I will write your letter for you, and I will write it with my left hand. But I will take no other action with you or for you, and I will take no oath. You will bring blood into the streets of Killala and Kilcummin, and it will not be the blood of landlords."

"Some of it will, by God," Quigley said. "If our blood is spilled, so will theirs be. We will bring the bright edge of the knife to them."

MacCarthy looked at him, despising the round, complacent face. The room was dark now. The face floated in dying afterglow, a fatuous moon. MacCarthy suddenly hurled his glass into a corner of the room; whiskey splashed across his hand.

"Listen to him," he said to Duggan. "Listen to that man. That is the kind of man you will have with you, who has never seen blood save for the blood of cows and pigs. He will be drinking his own bad whiskey and making his boasts and he will drink and boast you up the steps of the gallows."

"But you have seen blood," Duggan said, with his humourless irony.

"I was schoolmaster in Macroom when Paddy Lynch was hanged with five of his followers. I saw his feet reaching for the air and I saw his face. That brought me close enough to blood."

"By God that would take away a man's appetite," O'Carroll said to Duggan, but he smiled nervously to take the edge off his words.

Duggan shifted to face him. "If we are careful and quiet there will be no hangings in Tyrawley."

"In Castlebar," MacCarthy said. "They will load you in carts with your wrists tied behind you and take you down to Castlebar and try you there and hang you there. If you have a hundred men, you will have ten informers and if you have five hundred men, you will have fifty."

"Will you listen to this man?" Duggan said to O'Carroll, his voice rough with contempt. "A man who owns nothing in this world but a sack of books and half of Judy Conlon's bed. Let you listen to him, and in two years' time there will be nothing left in Tyrawley but graziers and cowherds. And Judy Conlon."

"Be careful how you talk, Duggan," MacCarthy said, standing up. What use would I be against him, with his hands like great hams, smoked and seasoned by the blackthorn and holly of the faction fights. "By God," he said to the others, "it is once in a while a great comfort not to have land."

"It is," Matthew Quigley said. "A great comfort. If we do not forget loyalty to our neighbours."

"Owen is not the man to forget that," Hennessey said. "Sure, what life

would a schoolmaster have if he did not stand in well with his neighbours?"

"None at all," Duggan said. "No life at all."

MacCarthy remained standing. "My thanks to you for the whiskey, Matthew. To which of you am I to give the letter when I have it written?"

"As well to me as to another," Quigley said. "I will walk down to the Acres for it tomorrow evening."

"Not the Acres," MacCarthy said. "Nor my schoolhouse either. I will meet you at Tobin's tavern."

"Sure don't be in such a hurry, Owen," Hennessey said. "Have you no song for us?"

"A song, is it? A pity I haven't Paddy Lynch here to teach you to dance upon air. Poor Paddy, he was a true artist. He learned the mystery of that craft, but he told it to no one."

Only Quigley laughed. "You are a witty man, Owen. A witty man when you have drink taken."

"That is often enough," MacCarthy said.

"Safe home, Owen," Hennessey said.

He took a last look at them, indistinct now in the dark room. What harm will they do, four men in a tavern by Kilcummin strand? No, three men and a bullock with brains. A bullock with eyes as round as moons.

Outside the tavern, the moon mocked him. Full, perfect. It fell upon rock and strand and black bay. The night air was chill. Far to the west, Downpatrick Head, fierce-snouted peninsula, and the lonely, savage barony of Erris. To the south, the Nephin Mountains, stretching towards Achill Island. To the east, the Ox Mountains, in the softer county of Sligo. A hard land indeed, after the sweet kingdom of Kerry, and the cheerful bustle of Cork. The wildest and poorest county in Ireland, the people of Galway said of Mayo. Well were they qualified to judge such matters, poor creatures.

His path followed the line of the bay, narrow, uneven. Ahead of him, Killala, cupped by low hills. At their centre, on Steeple Hill, the ancient, upthrust arm of a round tower, black against the darkened sky. What man could know the age of such towers? Far older than the Dane, some said; older than the Sons of Milesius and the coming of the Gaels. Perhaps so. It was a land where history was measured by ruins, Gaelic fort and Norman keep. Not even the round towers marked the farthest line of wrack, for were there not the dolmens, and the queer underground burial chambers, immense, as though for giants?

He entered Killala at its western end, past cabins with fishing nets hung out to dry upon their walls, and walked along narrow, winding streets. He paused by the open door of Tobin's tavern, whose sign he could make out with the moon's help: the Sign of the Wolf Dog. Even the names they gave to places of cheer were faintly ominous: stiff-bristled mastiff, lips curled back from fangs. He was Ovid, banished to wild Tomi. From the tavern, a tide of murmurs spilled out into the street. Perhaps the travelling man had more to tell them about the broken rising in Wexford. Thousands of men

upon the roads of Wexford. Towns had fallen before their onslaughts; militia and yeomanry had been beaten, scattered bodies, red-uniformed, upon thick-grassed fields. Pedlars and travelling men were now their Homers and their Virgils, tales carried to distant taverns.

MacCarthy almost entered, but then walked on, past Hussey's Catholic chapel, newly built and awkward with embarrassment beside the trim shops of the Protestant merchants, Bassett, Beecher, Reeves, Stanner. Once they had been wealthy; once Killala had been a thriving town. Now the trade was all in Ballina, southwards at the base of the bay, on the road to Castlebar. Poor Protestant merchants of Killala: poor Reeves, poor Stanner. Right-angled to the street, facing the market house, the Protestant church, and the residence of Broome, its clergyman. In its old, flourishing days, Killala had been an episcopal see; Broome's house was still called "the Palace," a large, wind-battered building of cut grey stone with tall, handsome windows. Walking beside church and bishop's palace, MacCarthy left the town, past scattered cabins, past the large, low hut where, from late autumn to spring, he held his school. All instruction offered in grammar and navigation, Euclid's *Elements*, Ovid and Virgil, bookkeeping and metaphysics. Offered but not accepted, save by a few of the brighter lads, an eye on the priesthood. The others wanted only sums and catechism, a smattering of English. But they loved the sonorities of Latin, the changelings in Ovid, the stories MacCarthy had picked up on his years of wandering across Munster. Tricked into knowledge with the honey of anecdote. He climbed a low hill to the Acres, two rows of cabins, walls of rough stone washed white, discoloured thatch.

He pushed open a door. Against one wall, mattress of straw on low frame, Judy Conlon lay asleep. He lit a candle of tallow set in a clay dish, and then stood beside her. Kneeling briefly, he ran a finger gently along the line of her cheekbone. She stirred, and a small hand moved to the tangle of black hair. He put the candle on a table set against the opposite wall. Ranged across its far side, his two dozen books: the *Aeneid*, Keating's *History of Ireland*, the *Eclogues* and the *Georgics*, some volumes of Shakespeare, *Paradise Lost*, a box which held his copies of the poems of O'Rahilly and O'Sullivan.

He opened the two boxes which contained his craft. In the larger one, his own manuscripts, poems completed, poems to be remade, his translation of the first two books of the *Metamorphoses* into Irish, his sheets of blank paper. In the other box, a small brass bottle of ink, a sharp knife, his assortment of pens, grey goose for poetry, black crow for business. He placed paper and ink before him, sharpened his quills, and dipped a black feather into the ink.

In the early morning, when he felt Judy standing beside him, he was still sitting at the table, moving a grey goose feather across the page, scratching out a word, adding one, scratching that one out. Absently, with his hand, he moved along the line of her leg, cupped her haunch. A small girl, the hand had not far to travel.

"Where were you last night?"

"That is no concern of yours."

"It might be."

"It might be, but it is not. I was at Matthew Quigley's."

"What possessed you to go out there, with three fine taverns in Killala?"

"The Sign of the Wolf Dog. That would put a thirst on a man, right enough. I felt a need for the quiet beauty of Kilcummin strand."

She ran her hand through his red hair. "You can be a terrible liar, Owen."

"I can. It is a poet's way of reaching for truth."

"There is not a sin you commit for which your poetry is not the excuse. Is it a poem that you are writing now?"

"It might be the start of one. I won't know for a while."

"That is Irish you are writing. I can tell the difference now."

"It is in Irish that all my poems are made. This will be a strange one, if it ever takes shape." He put it aside, and took a fresh sheet of paper. "I have been all the night at it. My backside is numb. There was a fine handsome moon last night. It was worth seeing."

"Did you think of me when you saw it?"

"I did, of course."

"Liar."

She cut slices of bread, buttered them, and handed him one. It was not a bad life at all, he thought. Buttered bread every day, as suited his craft and his calling. He was far above all the poor fellows who had only their potatoes, and perhaps a bit of salt fish. And he had a lovely small girl to slice it for him, and to open her bed to him. There had been better times in Munster, but there had been worse. When he finished the bread, he wiped his hands carefully along the side of his breeches, out of respect for the good paper.

"Judy, in the days before I came here, used there be many evictions, the way the O'Malleys were turned out by Captain Cooper?"

"When haven't there been evictions? Wasn't my poor husband's own brother turned out, and now he is perched on the side of the mountain?"

"Who was his landlord?"

"The Big Lord himself. The Big Lord gave orders from London, and Mr. Foster who was the agent in those days turned out Hughey and his family. He must have done something that the Big Lord didn't like, and the Big Lord turned him out."

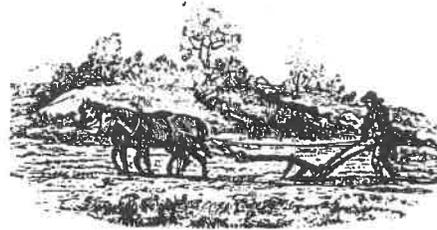
"He must hold a heavy grudge against the Big Lord."

"Sure what good would that do? But he keeps wondering what thing he did that was wrong."

Patient beasts. Like their own cows, they are moved about, uncomplaining. Of less value than the cows, for they cannot be brought to market. Like cattle, they stand motionless in the fields, fearful of rain in one season and of drought in the next. Evicted, they walk the roads or climb the hills.

Duggan had his work cut out for him. Southwards in distant Wexford and northwards in Antrim, a bare two months before, men such as these had toppled down towns and regiments. Not here.

Lingering, regretful, his hand touched the night's work. Grey goose and black crow, maimed cattle and the virginal moon. He drew the sheet of blank paper towards him, and picked up one of the black quills.



# 1

*From An Impartial Narrative of What Passed at  
Killala in the Summer of 1798,*  
by Arthur Vincent Broome, M.A. (Oxon.)

Some years ago, when I first took up the pastoral care of the wild and dismal region from which I write, I was prompted to begin a journal in which would be set forth, as I encountered them, the habits, customs, and manners of the several social classes, with the thought that it might someday furnish the substance of a book with some such title as *Life in the West of Ireland*. I rightly feared that time would otherwise hang heavy on my hands, and I have long been aware of a capacity for slothfulness which can reveal itself when my life lacks order and direction. And it was clear to me that few portions of His Majesty's realms are less known than this island, which might for all purposes be adrift on the South Seas, rather than at our doorstep. Before setting forth from England, I had made it my business to read Mr. Arthur Young's *Tour in Ireland*, a sage and clear-headed book, bountiful in its information, liberal and enlightened in its temper, but being nevertheless exactly what its title claims it to be, the account of a tour. My work would have the advantage of a prolonged and steady contemplation of the scene, a natural history, as it were, of life in County Mayo.

Alas for good intentions! The journal did have for a time a spare existence, scattered notes set down in the excitement of my encounters with novel scenes and faces, and with a society at once picturesque and alarming.

But like others of my projects, it stumbled to a halt after some months, and long lay gathering dust upon a shelf in my library. Where these notes are now I cannot say; perhaps they served to start a fire, this being a fate which locally befalls loose sheets of paper. They would have served no large purpose, however, for my early impressions were all, as I now know, misleading, this land being as treacherous as the bog which stretches across much of its surface. It is, in a most exact sense of the word, an outlandish place, inhospitable to the instructions of civilisation.

My present purpose, more practical and limited, is to offer as fully and as impartially as I can, yet without idle digression, a narrative account of those events which, a few years ago, bestowed upon our remote countryside a transient celebrity. Those events, however, were given their particular shape by the collision of an extraordinary event with an extraordinary society. It is therefore necessary that I present at the outset my own halting and puzzled sense of that peculiar world which was to provide a theatre and actors for my drama.

A map reveals Mayo as a county on the western extremity of what has been, for the past several years, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. At the time of which I write, of course, Ireland was in theory a separate nation, possessing its own parliament, yet sharing with England King George as its sovereign ruler, and being much under English influence. Of its illusionary and fictitious "independence" I shall have something to say hereafter. It is more to the present point to observe that the events which I propose to unfold played their part in bringing down the much-boasted but trumped-up "Kingdom of Ireland." Thus do large and stately changes have at times their origins in crude and remote circumstances.

Were I to have the colouring of that map of Ireland, Mayo would appear upon it in browns and blues, the brown of hillside and bogland, arched over by an immense sky of light blue. Save when it rains, which, alas, is often. It is raining as I write these words, steadily and copiously, and shrouding from view the bay towards which my library faces. My parish is centered upon the town of Killala in the barony of Tyrawley, once a bishop's see and a prosperous community of coastal traders, but for decades past in a state of sore decline and disrepair. There are other towns in Mayo, of course: Ballina, our successful rival to the south; Westport on the western coast, the seat of the Marquis of Sligo and graced by his elegant mansion. But there is only one town of true consequence, Castlebar, the capital of Mayo as it is grandiloquently termed, and the town towards which all the roads of Mayo lead. A Muscovite garrison placed upon the border of Siberia must have a similar appearance, although, like all the towns of Ireland, it is built entirely of stone, save for the mud cabins of the very poor. It has streets, a courthouse, a church, a gaol, a market house, a military barracks, the houses of prosperous merchants. And yet all seems provisional, gaunt, slender buildings huddled together against the immen-

sities of sky and land. For to speak of County Mayo in terms of its towns is entirely deceptive. The impression which it first makes upon the eye and mind is that of limitless and inhospitable space, the vast, dreary expanse of bogland westwards from Crossmolina, the steep and lonely headlands and peninsulas. It is its own huge and sombre world, and by contrast with it, the flanking counties of Galway and Sligo present a civilised aspect which is, unfortunately, entirely spurious.

Neither is it a populous world, if we restrict our consideration to what would in England be termed "the county families." Within a morning's or a day's ride, I could then have claimed as neighbours some fifty or sixty families of the gentry and the near-gentry, these latter being locally termed "half sirs," or "half-mounted gentlemen." Close at hand, within the Killala and the Kilcummin boundaries, I had as neighbours, among others, Peter Gibson of The Rise, Captain Samuel Cooper of Mount Pleasant, George Falkiner of Rosenalis, my especial friend, as these notes will reveal, and, on the Ballycastle road, Thomas Treacy of Bridge-end House. At a greater distance, involving arduous travel along wretched roads, stood the estates of George Moore of Moore Hall, Hilton Saunders of Castle Saunders, Malcolm Elliott of The Moat, and a score of others. All of them, save only Moore and Treacy, were members of my parish, for it is one of the most notorious facts of Irish life that those who own the land and those who till it are severely divided by sect, the landlords being Protestant almost to a man, and the tenants and labourers being Papists.

To speak thus of our county society is to ignore its absent centre, for dominating over our barony and those adjoining it are the estates, imposing and at first sight endless, of Lord Glenthorne, the Marquis of Tyrawley, or as he is called here, in a phrase taken from the Irish, "the Big Lord." The term falls with a faint blasphemy upon the ear, and Lord Glenthorne does resemble our Creator in that, having this vast domain at his disposal, he has elected to absent himself from it. In this there is nothing unusual, for the resident Irish landlords are for the most part the smaller ones, with estates of a thousand acres or less, while the great men of property are absentees, a circumstance which many hold to be contributory to our manifold woes. Lord Glenthorne, however, has chosen never to reveal himself, not even for brief visits, and yet so vast and so eminent is his place in our scheme of things that he has achieved on peasant tongues a legendary stature, a fathomless creature, beyond good or evil. In point of fact, before taking up my present charge, I was presented to him in London, where I found him to be a small, mild man of middle years, simple and unaffected in manner, and attentive to his religious duties. I was to meet him also a second time, much later, on which occasion I was to form a more distinct impression of him, perceiving then that he was in every sense a lord.

To ride from here to Ballina is to ride for mile after mile beside the walls of his principal demesne, walls so high that a man on horseback can scarcely see over them, and all of cut stone. On occasion, the road will rise,

and the traveller can glimpse in the distance, beyond sheltering plantations, the lovely form of Glenthorne Castle, a vast Palladian mansion which will seem to have floated down upon these inhospitable lands by some magical feat out of the *Arabian Nights*. And this illusion will be heightened if he reflects that this palace, for it is nothing less, stands waiting, staffed and doubtless furnished with unknown splendours, for a prince who has never visited it. It was far different in the days of his father, who indeed resided there from time to time, and who has left behind him most exotic and disreputable legends. But the traveller afoot sees nothing of Glenthorne Castle. He sees only the high, endless walls, and he may be pardoned for thinking that an army laboured to put them into place, or such nameless legions of slaves as built the Pyramids of Egypt.

And such legions there are. In speaking as I have done of the "society" of Mayo, I have used the word in the common but un-Christian manner which excludes all whom we do not choose to see. If we admit to view the peasants, and that multitude of labourers who are infinitely more wretched even than the peasants, ours is not at all a lonely world. It is a populous, even a teeming one. They swarm like bees from their cabins, of which the meanest are made of mud, as a child builds by a riverbank, and they are everywhere, for they fasten upon every unclaimed acre which can sustain a blade of grass or a potato bed, and the hills are crisscrossed and crosshatched by fences made of the boulders which have been carried away by hand so as to expose every inch of arable land. Some few are prosperous, although precariously so—graziers and strong farmers and middlemen, but what of the numberless thousands of their coreligionists? It will be noted that here I have stumbled into the common Irish practice of confounding a social and a sectarian division. For beyond dispute there are here two worlds, "our" small Protestant world of property and their multitudinous Papist world of want.

I affirm most sincerely that distinctions which rest upon creed mean little to me, and yet I confess that my compassion for their misery is mingled with an abhorrence of their alien ways. Begin then with creed, but add to this that most speak a tongue not merely foreign, but as grotesque as the prattle of Sandwich Islanders, that they live and thrive in mud and squalor with dunghills piled before their windowless cabins, that their music, for all that antiquarians and fanatics can find to say in its favour, is wild and savage although touched upon occasion by a plaintive, melancholy beauty, that they combine a grave and gentle courtesy with a murderous violence that erupts without warning—pates smashed for pleasure on a fairday, cattle barbarously mutilated, bailiffs put to death with crude tortures—that they worship foetid pools as holy wells and go on pilgrimage to clumps of rock, that their eyes look towards you with an innocence behind which dances malevolence. Yet I avow my sympathy for them, and wish that I might serve them better, or at all.

How else can they live, poor creatures of the Father? The peasant has his

few cows and pigs, his brief crops, but all must go to pay the landlord, every forkful of beef, every grain of oats, and he himself and his family must live on potatoes and milk. And he is fortunate, for worse there are who hold no land at all in the law's eyes, but crouch upon the mountainside or huddle near the bog. They travel with their spades to the hiring fairs, where they stand like slaves upon the block. In late winter, when the potatoes have been exhausted, they wander the roads to beg. And what of those who hold a bit of land but cannot meet the rent? A good landlord, like my dear friend Mr. Falkiner, will let it hang for a season or two, provided that he himself is solvent, but many landlords are mortgaged heavily to the Dublin banks and moneylenders and they too are pressed down by the system. Many others are not true landlords at all, but middlemen to whom the land has been let for reletting, and many of these employ the barbarous practice of the "rack rent." And there are many landlords great and small who, like Captain Cooper, when grazing proves more profitable than letting, will turn out his tenants to beg or starve upon the roads. I have myself seen families huddled in the sides of hills where they had hewn out holes, entire families, the small ones cowering and rooting beside the gaunt form of the woman.

A system more ingeniously contrived, first for the debasement, and then for the continuance in that debasement, of an entire people cannot easily be imagined. On this subject I lack both the eloquence and the lucidity of George Moore of Moore Hall, a most astonishing man to discover in such parts as these, being an historian of some note, enlightened and humane in his views, and a friend of Burke, Fox, Sheridan, and other notabilities. To attend to his acerb, sardonic voice as he discourses upon the ills of Ireland is to be confirmed in one's despair, for he has never a remedy to suggest. And yet despair is rightly held the one unforgivable sin, and I have striven mightily against it.

I have striven also to find common ground with this multitude, but with scant success. I except here Mr. Moore and also Thomas Treacy of Bridge-end House, for these are accounted gentlemen, and I have always regarded their Papistry as chivalrous adherence to a persecuted sect. And I except also, strange though this may seem, Mr. Hussey, the priest in Killala, for he is himself almost a gentleman, being the son of a prosperous grazier in the midlands. Often, it has seemed to me, he has been more dismayed than I am myself by the barbarous life and manners of those to whom he ministers. I sought, though, in my first year, to make the acquaintance of the scattering of Papist "half sirs," such men as Cornelius O'Dowd and Randall MacDonnell, but these two in particular, to speak bluntly, I found to be irreligious men, unless we account fidelity to whiskey, horses, and wanton women to be a form of devotion; and this sorry estimation of their characters was amply vindicated by the violent courses of action which they took in the events which I shall narrate. Beneath that level, of course, were farmers and servants who both understood and spoke English, indeed some who had mastered the art of writing it. But always, below the surface

of our pleasant interchanges, I could feel the tremblings of the great chasm which separated us, as though we met to parley on the quaking face of a bog.

I propose to set forth in this narrative whatever I have learned of that singular and most unfortunate man, Owen Ruagh MacCarthy. He once came to me at my bidding, for I wished to dispose of some books, and believed that he might make use of them in his "classical academy," a kind of hedge school in which children were given the rudiments of an education and older boys were prepared for the seminaries. I confess that I had my misgivings, for I had often seen him in the village, a tall, wild red-haired creature with a loping stride, notoriously given to drink and bad company. His earlier reputation was equally daunting, for it was said that he had wandered, or more exactly had been swept, northwards from his native Kerry to Cork and thence through Clare and Galway into Mayo, flitting from troubles with the law, some said, but according to others pursued by posses of outraged fathers and husbands and brothers, for he could keep neither his eyes nor his hands from any woman of appropriate age and here his tastes were catholic in the nondenominational meaning of the term. And yet this was a man who possessed fluent Latin and had a good knowledge of Virgil, Horace, and Ovid. More astonishing yet, I have been informed by Treacy of Bridge-end House, a fanatic upon the supposed accomplishments of his race, that MacCarthy was a poet not lacking for fame, his verses being memorised and circulated in manuscript from Donegal to Kerry. I asked Treacy to render several of these into English for me, but he replied that the rhythm and metres, if such be the proper terms, could not be accommodated to English, so that words and sounds would be quarrelling together like husband and wife, an instructive view into Irish attitudes towards matrimony.

At any event, and to end this digression, MacCarthy may for all one knows have been a second Ovid, but his words are locked forever within a barbarous language, which history has sentenced to silence and the plough. Upon this occasion, I assured him that I felt keenly the unhappy lot of his fellow countrymen, and suggested that this might somehow be improved if they were able to experience more completely the safeguards of English law. He responded with the verses of some other poet, which he then put into English for me, Treacy notwithstanding: "Troy and Rome have vanished; Caesar is dead and Alexander. Perhaps someday the English too will have their day."

I challenged him as to the meaning that he derived from this dark utterance, and he replied it meant only that Greece and Rome had once been empires, and England was now in its turn summoned to greatness. I told him that I did not for a minute suppose it to mean any such thing. Rather did it express the sullen vengefulness which the Irish peasantry notoriously nurse, and which, like their superstitions, distracts them from seeking proper and rational solutions to their problems. Then I reflected:

What solutions? Well-meaning Protestant clergymen write books and tracts for them, urging them to dress neatly, when in fact they are half naked; to tell the truth, when only a lie will shield them from a rapacious landlord; to be sober, when the only comfort lies drowned in a bottle.

He then smiled at me, as though he had read my thoughts, and the smile altered his coarse, heavy features, suggesting a lively if sardonic intelligence. In an obvious effort to change the subject, he picked up a small book from the pile which I had set before him, a translation of Le Sage's romance of *Gil Blas*. "It is well I know this one, Your Reverence. I had it in the tail pocket of my coat when I was on my ramblings, years ago. No better book for the task." I discovered then that he had in fact a smattering of French, as was not uncommon, apparently, among the schoolmasters of his native Kerry, where there had earlier been much traffic with France. It was from Kerry and Cork that, until some ten years before, lads were shipped off to the seminaries at Douai and Saint-Omer or as recruits for the Irish brigades in the French army, and there was also a brisk smuggling trade. Not merely the last but all three of these enterprises were forbidden by law, but this seemed not to trouble MacCarthy at all. Herein may be discovered yet another sorry consequence of those abominable penal laws by which, for a century, the Papists were kept in a condition of semi-outlawry.

I found it curious in the extreme, this conjunction of *Gil Blas* and the French language with the coarse-moulded cowherd who stood before me in his long-tailed coat of rain-coloured frieze. Upon this occasion and those others when I talked with MacCarthy I was most favourably impressed by his transparent love of words and of books, though doubtless he apprehended these latter in a crabbed, provincial manner, and by his bearing, which was easy but at no time offensively familiar. And yet there was also about him something which did give me offence, a sly, slight mockery as though he knew, as well as I did myself, that we used the same words in quite different ways. How little we will ever know these people, locked as we are in our separate rooms. And often I have glimpsed him in another mood, stumbling drunkenly homewards, more beast than man, towards the bed he shared with some young slut of a widow. The course which he later followed saddened but did not surprise me. He dwelt deep within the world of his people, and theirs is an unpredictable and a violent world.

What most weighed down upon me in my first years in Mayo was that all seemed agreed, rich and poor alike, that the dreadful circumstances to which I have alluded were changeless, woven from a history of so thick a texture that it could never be pulled or tugged to a more acceptable shape. I am no manner of a radical. I know that the laws of human economy, like those of astronomy, are inexorable and strict. Yet I cannot escape the feeling that here these laws have been pulled awry, as comets and meteors are pulled down upon the earth. The poor we shall always have with us, but need we have them in such numbers, accounting at the very least for a simple majority of the population?

But the few remedies which have been proposed are more hideous than the disease which they affect to cure. Thus I have heard it proposed, by men no more inhumane than most, that the recurrent famines are Providential, and will in time bring down the population to a proper size, but this I hold to be blasphemy. Or, again, take the matter of the Whiteboys, which has its role to play in my narrative. For some thirty years these agrarian terrorists had been a scourge upon the land, ravaging countrysides, murdering bailiffs, maiming or killing cattle, pulling down the fences which enclose pastures, inflicting crude and loathsome punishment upon enemies and informers. In some few places their ambitions were satisfied; rents were lowered, or the expansion of grazing was halted. But in most, the Whiteboys were hunted down as stags and wolves are hunted, and were then destroyed. As destroyed they had to be, for civilisation cannot abide such savagery. Famine or terror: what a fearful brace of proffered remedies!

And of what assistance is religion itself? I shall say little about the Church of the people. Doubtless it has been deformed and brutalised by the century or more of persecution which it has endured, and doubtless too it exercises a moderating influence upon its children, and yet I cannot profess to a great sympathy. Mr. Hussey, as I have remarked, is a man of education and good manners. Few sights were more ludicrous than that of Mr. Hussey in his silver-buckled shoes, picking his way into some cabin where his presence was required, all but holding his nose against the stench. In his chapel, which had been erected with the assistance of Mr. Falkiner and other of the more liberal-minded Protestant gentry, I believe that he inveighed steadily alike against Whiteboys and against the superstitious practices of his auditors. And yet far more typical of the Roman clergy was his curate, the egregious Murphy, the son of peasants and a peasant himself, a coarse, ignorant man, red-faced, young, stout, with the voice of a bull calf. Risen from the people, he could offer no example to them. And when the crisis fell upon us, he demonstrated that he shared to the full their darkest passions. Neither was he cleanly in his habits, and of his fondness for the bottle there is abundant evidence.

But of my own Church, what can I say, save that it is the Church of a governing garrison? My church, unlike those in many other parishes, is well attended, and here I claim some credit for my sermons, which are not empty vapourisings upon obscure Scriptural texts, but are addressed to the daily business of life. And yet when I look to the bare white walls and slender windows, to the two battleflags which Mr. Falkiner's great-great-grandfather brought home from the wars of Marlborough, to the plaques erected to those who fell serving our sovereign on the fields of France and Flanders, when I look to my parishioners, stiff and erect as turkeycocks or conquistadors, then the troubling thought occurs to me that I am less minister to Christ's people than I am priest to a military cult, as Mithra was honoured by the legions of Rome. Here, I think at such truant moments, is an outpost stationed in the land by the perpetual edicts of Elizabeth and

James and Cromwell and William and charged to hold this land for our lord the King.

Why else does the Protestant gentry of Ireland send forth its young men into the British army and the army of the East India Company if not from an instinct bred in the bone, bred perhaps of childhoods of Sundays spent staring at battleflags? And yet one thing is certain: that if England advances upon a land with the sword, there follow soon after the arts and benefits of civilisation, an orderly existence, security of person and property, education, just laws, true religion, and a hopeful view of man's lot on earth. Only here have we failed, in the very first land we entered, for reasons which were in part our fault and in part the fault of the natives. But I think it pernicious to rummage over the past, sorting out wrongs and apportioning guilts.

Perhaps I can see the more clearly for being English born and English bred and therefore not enmeshed by the ancient prides and hostilities of this land. Pride: above all else pride. For in the final quarter of the century, as the world knows, the Protestants of Ireland declared themselves to be a separate nation, owing allegiance to the King of England only in his capacity of King of Ireland. Nay, more, they had come to think themselves a separate people, neither English nor Irish, yet vowing the most utter loyalty to the British Crown, from which their rights, privileges, possessions flowed. A prodigious and ludicrous creature it was, this "Nation of Ireland," from which the great mass of the Irish were excluded upon the open ground of religion and the covert ground of race. Its capital of Dublin was as fair a city as these islands can boast, a city of warm, wine-coloured bricks and cool grey stones, dominated over by the severe, lovely lines of a parliament house in which were seated the exclusively Protestant representatives of an exclusively Protestant electorate. And yet this vaunted independence was a mockery, for the governors and administrators of the island were still appointed from London, and the Parliament itself reeked with a corruption which many of the purchased members scarcely deigned to conceal. I yield to none in my admiration for Mr. Grattan and the other "patriots" who laboured to give Ireland true and honest governance, to reform Parliament, and above all, to strike the chains from their Papist fellow countrymen. And yet their efforts were as futile as their oratory was glittering and enflowered.

We knew little of such matters in Mayo, and we cared less. The interests of the landlords were well served in Parliament by Dennis Browne, Lord Sligo's brother and High Sheriff of the county, a clever and high-spirited man, bluff and hearty when the occasion demanded, but with a mind as subtle and as insinuating as mountain mist. If in these pages I shall have much to say that is harsh in its judgement of Mr. Browne, I do indeed believe that his love of Mayo is most sincere, although it was to assume a terrible shape. I do confess that my feeble understanding of these people falters entirely when it confronts such families as the Brownes. Papists until well into the eighteenth century, they retained their property by a variety of

ruses, and then, these being exhausted, they conformed to our Protestant Church of Ireland. They, and they perhaps alone, seem able to move at ease between our two worlds, great and powerful personages in our Protestant world, yet the native musicians and poets are made welcome by them, and songs and poems are composed in their honour. Or were until very recent years, for now the Brownes have a dark and sombre reputation, and for reasons that my narrative will make clear. If I could but understand the Brownes, I would understand much about the tangled roots of the past, its twisted loyalties and bloody memories. But I will never come to such understanding, The meanings of this land are shrouded from the eyes of strangers. Truth, like Viking treasure, lies buried in the bogs.

Boglands and rings of mountains sealed us off in Tyrrawley, and left us facing the grey ocean. But by 1797, we knew that elsewhere in Ireland events were drifting towards rebellion. The wicked and seditious Society of United Irishmen, a band of unscrupulous city radicals in Dublin and Belfast, were bent upon an insurrection, and had chosen as their instrument an unnatural alliance of the Papist peasants of the south and the Presbyterian peasants of the north. Their agent abroad, the deist and madman Wolfe Tone, had secured the assistance of regicide France: the year before a formidable invasion fleet had been beaten back from the Kerry coast only by what the peasants called "the Protestant winds." Then, in the spring of 1798, we heard, aghast, of the dreadful rebellions in Wexford and Antrim, a murderous and insensate peasantry ravishing the countryside before being put down with great brutality. There followed then a dreadful pause, for although the rebellious counties had become vast charnel houses, the networks of the hellish conspiracy survived in the midlands and in parts of Munster. A second flotilla of invasion, it was said, was being assembled on the French coast, and Wolfe Tone hovered, a stormy petrel, above its masts. It is in this moment of dreadful pause that my narrative will open.

But all of this came to us as tidings from a different land. Our local corps of yeomanry, an exclusively Protestant body under the command of Captain Samuel Cooper, drilled more frequently, but less to defend our shores than to remind the Papist peasantry that the present order of things was changeless. There was first one, then several, then numerous instances of cattle maiming, by those calling themselves "the Whiteboys of Killala," but Whiteboyism was one of our old, familiar evils. The distant United Irishmen preached insurrection in the name of a desired "Republic of Ireland," but the word *republic* has no existence in the Irish tongue, and far less had the meaning of the word any existence in the minds of our peasantry. To be sure, there were some among the peasants, schoolmasters and tavernkeepers and the like, who, upon hearing of the Wexford rising spoke in lofty terms of "the army of the Gael." And many among the Protestants, in particular those of the more narrow and ignorant sort, spoke in fear and fury of a servile insurrection. But all was far distant from Mayo.

I have once and again sought to imagine myself as present in one of the

taverns frequented by the peasantry, a low, vile cabin choking with smoke and rank with odours. Someone describes for those present the Wexford insurrection, not as the butchery which in fact it was, but as a glorious hosting of "the army of the Gael," with banners and bards, like a passage in Macpherson's Ossian poems. I seek to imagine in that setting the faces which I know only from roadside or field or stable, white skin, black hair, dark eyes. With what power would not the speaker's words burst upon such an assembly, for the native Irish, as has been remarked since the days of the Elizabethan Spenser, are easily overwhelmed by highflown rhetoric. But imagination fails me. They are an alien people.

Once, at the home of Mr. Treacy, I heard Owen Ruagh MacCarthy recite his poetry. He was visiting the servants, and Treacy, being informed of this, brought him to the dinner table, where he stood before us and spoke a poem for which he was requited most generously with silver coins and two tumblers of brandy. It was of a kind called an *aistling*, Mr. Treacy informed me, a poem of vision, in which the poet, wandering in a meadow, encounters a maiden who speaks to him in cloaked and guarded terms of her present sorrows and prophesies some event of great good fortune for the Gaelic people—perhaps the Young Pretender sailing to the coast with swordsmen and casks of wine and French coins. The poem that night differed from others of its kind only in that it was not the Stuart Pretender who was invoked, but some nameless, cloudy deliverance. It is apparently a difficult and a metrically complex form, for all its conventionality, and MacCarthy's celebrity among other native poets was said to rest upon his mastery of its techniques. It was delivered with much florid vehemence of voice and body, but I do not pretend to admire what I cannot understand.

Leaving Bridge-end House some hours later, and walking towards the boy who held my horse, I passed the open door of one of the outbuildings, and again hearing MacCarthy's voice, I looked within. A number of the servants were gathered there, and MacCarthy, very drunk, was standing with one foot upon a bench. A girl was standing beside him, and his free arm was curved around her waist, his hand fondling her bosom. I needed no cicerone to explain to me the meaning of the song which he was singing. As I rode off, the song ended, but the air was then filled with the sound of a violin, playing a most engaging air, very quick and lilting, as though for a dance.

Music and dance. What I have written must surely suggest a people cursed by Heaven, men sullenly in movement beneath a lowering sky. And yet most, were they to hear my words, would deny them utterly. For if the mind's eye perceives the grinding poverty, the ear of the mind hears music. No people on earth, I am persuaded, loves music so well, nor dance, nor oratory, though the music falls strangely upon my ears, and the eloquence is either in a language I cannot understand or else in an English stiff, bombastic, and ornate. More than once I have been at Mr. Treacy's when, at close of dinner, some travelling harper would be called in, blind as often

as not, his fingernails kept long and the mysteries of his art hidden in their horny ridges. The music would come to us with the sadness of a lost world, each note a messenger sent wandering among the Waterford goblets. Riding home late at night, past tavern or alehouse, I would hear harps and violins, thudding feet rising to frenzy. I have seen them dancing, at evening on fairdays, in meadows decreed by custom for such purposes, their bodies swift-moving, and their faces impassive but bright-eyed, intent. I have watched them in silence, reins held loosely in my hand, and have marvelled at the stillness of my own body, my shoulders rigid and heavy.

Darkness hides them from me, and my sympathy is un-Christian and chill. We fear the unknown. Most earnestly do I wish to enter their lives, yet everywhere my wish is mocked, by Captain Cooper's complacent swagger, by the memory of MacCarthy's foot upon a bench, by a cabin bursting with music, by the thronging foreign faces at markets and fairdays, by dancers in a meadow, by the sounds of an alien speech. Yes, and by the very look of the land itself, the forbidding hills, the monotony of brown moorland, the small lakes set like watchful eyes upon the bog. It seems to me a land furiously guarding its meagre secrets, gloating over its incomprehensibility. Whether it seems so to the people themselves, I cannot say. They are an ancient people, and possess an ancient knowledge which, because it falls short of wisdom, is frightening to a stranger.

And thus, in the narrative which I shall now commence, many of the actors come from a world which is recognisably my own, however altered by local conditions. Mr. Falkiner, my dear friend, might well be found in my native Derbyshire, arguing crops or politics with my brother. And Mr. Moore of Moore Hall would surely be more at home in London than in Mayo. Nor can England boast that it lacks such men as Captain Cooper, village Caesars and Hannibals, doughty captains of Sunday soldiers. But there my pen pauses, for one at least of Cooper's feet rests upon the bog. And when my thoughts move from him to the native Irish, to O'Dowd and to MacDonnell, to MacCarthy and above all to Ferdy O'Donnell, I feel them slipping towards the unknown, towards men whose actions and passions issue from that fearsome world of hillside and bog, choked with the petrified roots of the past. And beyond such men lies the multitudinous world of the peasantry, the dark sea which swept up upon us so suddenly that we were almost covered by its waves.

I shall nonetheless strive to present those events with such understanding of them as I have come to possess, and with an attempt at a strict impartiality. I fear in advance that I shall fail, for my knowledge of events is not matched by an understanding of their causes. But yet I hold it almost sinful not to seek after causes, the black roots of flowering passions. The rain has ceased to fall, and beneath a sky suddenly bright and almost cloudless, fields of a most intense green stretch northwards towards the bay.