

THE WANDERING HAWK

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P. H. Bease

CHAPTER I

THE PASSING OF SLATTERY

‘Lads,’ said Sweeney, coming into the billiard room, ‘Slattery’s going!’

That dramatic entry, the prelude to such stirring things, is so fresh in my memory—Sweeney’s figure at the billiard room door, the very attitude in which he stood—that I can hardly believe it is fifty years ago. It looks like the other day.

‘Going where?’ asked Joyce, without raising his eyes from his cue. Joyce was in the middle of a grand break which his opponent Nelson was watching disgustedly. It was the semi-final of one of our numerous billiard tournaments. Like all our billiard tournaments, it had been organised by Joyce, and, like all our billiard tournaments, it would inevitably be won by Joyce. Joyce was our best billiard player at St. Fintan’s, and he was indefatigable in the organisation of billiard tournaments.

Each member of the Billiard Club had to subscribe sixpence to a tournament fund, and the combined sixpences used to make a handsome prize for Joyce. It was sometimes said that whenever Joyce was hard up he organised a billiard tournament. To do him justice, he never failed to give a ‘feed’ in his dormitory after a tournament. As I was in Joyce’s dormitory, I was subscribed to his tournament fund with alacrity, although I was probably the worst billiard player in the school.

‘Going where?’ asked Joyce, without looking up from his cue.

‘Going away. Clearing out. Vamoosing,’ explained Sweeney.

‘For good?’ asked everyone in chorus.

‘Aye,’ said Sweeney.

The announcement was so startling that Joyce, although the balls were in a delightful position for a sure run through with a pot off the red, missed his shot; and we were all so dumbfounded that no one thought of saying ‘hard lines,’ which is (or was in my time) the correct thing to say when anyone did a particularly silly thing at billiards.

‘Is he being chucked or what?’ asked Burke when we had all gaped sufficiently.

‘He’s passed some exam or other,’ said Sweeney. ‘He’s made an inspector of something. There’s a big screw attached to it. O’Doherty heard Old Snuffy congratulating him.’

O’Doherty was the School Captain that year. Old Snuffy was the President. If O’Doherty had heard Old Snuffy congratulating Slattery there must be some truth in the story ... So Slattery was going. Worse luck!

Slattery was the most popular master that has been at St. Fintan’s in anyone’s memory; at least the most popular lay-master, for I think that in our hearts most of us had a softer feeling for Old Snuffy, though none of us would have admitted so for worlds. But of all the other masters, priests or laymen, Slattery stood first in our regard; and deservedly so. He had big, genial, masterful ways with him; he was a genuine scholar, but his scholarship had something sunny and manly and understandable in it that made it attractive and wholesome; he was a prodigious worker and made us work, too—Slattery was no joke in class, I tell you—but he seemed to know what to expect from a fellow, and no one was ever driven or bullied by Slattery; he was a grand sportsman, the best full-back we ever had, a famous hundred-yards’ sprinter although not light (for Slattery was big and tall), a regular terror across country, a good weight-thrower, clear-headed and just as a referee, the only one in the College who could beat Joyce in billiards. I think his influence in St. Fintan’s was one of the finest things the College had to give us: he was so thoroughly a man, so hearty and joyous in his manhood, that it was good to be his friend, to be taught by him, to obey him in the football field. And he made us think that scholarship was a very noble thing—this man whose academic distinctions were so many that his name on our College Prospectus, with all the letters after it, looked, as young Clery said, ‘like a sum in algebra,’ and who yet was so strenuous, so alive, so gay, so much like one of ourselves and yet so much better—like ourselves as we would like to be!

And Slattery was going. What would St. Fintan's be like without Slattery?

When was he going? What exam. had he passed? What would his screw be? Why did he not tell us about it? When did he hear? What did Old Snuffy say to him? We crowded round Sweeney asking him these and a dozen other questions, and Sweeney (who really knew very little about the matter) gave us various and contradictory answers, all of which we afterwards found to be devoid of truth. But for the moment we accepted the more probable-looking of his inventions, and feasted our mind's eye on the vision of a tall and genial Slattery, expensively dressed, ordering about sleek minions in Dublin Government offices, and driving to banks to cash cheques for unheard-of amounts.

'I bet you he'll send us a thundering fine subscription to the Football Club,' said O'Sullivan, who was treasurer of that chronically bankrupt institution.

We were branching into a discussion as to the improvements in the way of new and brilliant jerseys, with shields on them, which Slattery's princely subscription to the Football Club would enable us to introduce, when the bell rang for Rosary.

'Dang it,' said Sweeney, who was enjoying his role as purveyor of incredible tales to an eager billiard room.

We trooped along the corridor into Chapel. The President himself was on the Rosary that evening. I remember how curiously we looked at him as he came up the Chapel, wondering whether, after the prayers, he would make any announcement in the Study Hall on the great Slattery crisis. During the Rosary we watched with a sort of fascination the little round bald spot on the back of his head: it was thrilling to think that beneath it lurked the goings and the comings, the triumphs and the destinies of Slattery. Slattery himself was not present. Was he packing his trunks, we wondered? The Dean was there, tall and rigid, kneeling bolt upright on his priedieu: as well look to a graven image for information as to him. O'Doherty was in his place—*he* might know something. Among his privileges as School Captain was that of spending the half-hour between supper and Rosary in the Masters'

Room, where, it was rumoured, he was even allowed to smoke cigars. When Rosary was over we would ask O'Doherty.

The President's sonorous voice was beginning the Litany. One's thoughts could not well wander while the President invoked in that full sweet voice of his the holy names. There was something wonderfully devotional—wonderfully confident and at the same time wonderfully humble—in the way in which he seemed to appeal for divine pity for all weak mortals, men and boys. He did not pray arrogantly and dictatorially, as I have heard many pray; nor yet perfunctorily, as most pray. For the moment Slattery and his destinies seemed unimportant.

Our name for the President was, as I have said, Old Snuffy. Not that he was very old or very snuffy; but all presidents and headmasters are old to their pupils, and our President did sometimes take snuff. The name, therefore, seemed sufficiently justified. He took snuff, I always thought, in a somewhat elaborate and ceremonial manner as if the act were part of a ritual; and his customary way of declaring an interview at an end was the production of his snuff-box from a pocket in his cassock. One would then back towards the door, and as one closed the door behind one, one would hear the President's sneeze. As I have already hinted, we liked Old Snuffy more than we would have cared to say. There was something very kindly and humorous in the little grey eyes that twinkled behind his spectacles, something very benignant, if authoritative, in the fine head crowned with its iron-grey hair beneath the velvet biretta. And Old Snuffy had seen men and cities: had studied in Paris, in Louvain, in Leipzig, in Rome: was a Doctor of Philosophy and a Doctor of Canon Law; had written some exceedingly bulky books (some of them in Latin) which he sometimes showed to us in his bookcase. Indeed we often felt a sort of glow as it were of reflected glory in remembering that we were pupils of so good and famous a man. In German periodicals with unpronounceable names he was referred to as 'the eminent eschatologist Loughran.' The 'Freeman's Journal' and the local paper in chronicling his occasional presence at meetings always spoke of him as 'the Very Rev. Canon Loughran, DPh., D.C.L., the distinguished President of St. Fintan's College.' To us he was simply Old Snuffy.

Very different from Old Snuffy was the Dean. I have described him as tall, but the word is not accurate. His figure conveyed the idea not so much of tallness, as of length. One found oneself measuring him not by feet but by yards. He was austere, ascetic. He seemed to suffer from melancholia, and certainly suffered from asthma. The only good pun ever made at St. Fintan's was made by young Clery when he said that the Dean, who was panting very hard that day, was like a definition of Euclid, because he was 'length without breath.' The Dean's name was Doody, the Rev. Dr. Doody, D. D. As a Dean he had only one fault: his passion for justice amounted to a disease. It was a torment of mind to him if one fellow had an extra blanket on his bed, if one table got an extra pot of jam, if one classroom were heated half a degree more than another, or if one lad had more visitors to see him in a term than the rest. He did everything by schedule. The first time you were sent to him for a particular delinquency he spoke to you about the weather; the second time he cautioned you; the third time he caned you; the fourth time he gave you a treble dose—nine on each hand; the fifth time he flogged you. No one was ever sent to him more than five times for the same sort of offence. We often wondered what he would do on a sixth appearance, but none of us was ever sufficiently adventurous to try.

The President, the Dean, and Slattery were the outstanding personalities at St. Fintan's. The other masters, clerical and lay, just filled their nooks. Nobody was very much interested in them, nor were they very much interested in anybody. They appeared at meals; they sat on stools in their classrooms; they played an odd game of billiards; they acted as referees or linesmen at football; for the rest, they waited patiently (or impatiently, for aught we knew) for curacies or for civil service appointments. When those desirable things materialised they vanished from our little world and were replaced by others of the same sort who similarly waited. But the President, the Dean, and Slattery were permanent institutions. They had been there, firmly-rooted traditions, when O'Doherty came to the school seven or eight years previously. It seemed probable that they had always been there. And now Slattery was going. Was it the end of the world?

The Rosary was over and we filed out of Chapel. There was a five minutes' interval between Rosary and Second Study. We gathered round O'Doherty. What had Old Snuffy said to Slattery? What had Slattery said to Old Snuffy? Was he really going? If so, where? Was his salary really to be a thousand a year? Would there be a new master to succeed Slattery?

O'Doherty was vague and unsatisfactory. Important people like School Captains always are. Sweeney had at least given to our speculations a certain largeness and magnificence which seemed appropriate to any speculations touching the future of Slattery. O'Doherty doubted that he was to have a thousand a year; but could not really say what he was to have. On one point only was he definite: Slattery had passed an examination of amazing difficulty, a wholly incredible examination. He had got marks such as no one had ever got before or ever would again; he had fairly floored the examiners, 'didn't leave them a leg to stand on,' said O'Doherty. Good old Slattery!

Suddenly MacGavock approached. He had gathered a quite new and different version of the great Slattery legend. Slattery, it appeared, had not got a mere inspectorship. He was not destined to drag out a dull, if dignified, official life in Dublin. He had, said MacGavock, been appointed President of a College in Bombay, in which his mission would be to expound Political Economy, English, and Christianity to little Parsees. This seemed quite probable; at any rate it was duly picturesque. We began to see Slattery, a transfigured and godlike figure, dawning on India and moving through the vast Orient with great strides, scattering beneficence. He would wear a turban; he would ride on howdahs; he would recline on divans; he would smoke hookahs; he would be fanned by dusky attendants; he would be called 'Sahib'; his little Parsees would gather solemnly around him with turbans on their little heads and loin-cloths round their little loins; he would teach them billiards and handball and football: he would, said O'Sullivan, send a jewelled hookah as a prize to the Club and bring over a team of little Parsees in their turbans and loin-cloths to play us. Upon that the Study bell rang.

Sweeney was not a little chagrined that MacGavock's story had been so much more gorgeous than his. He was accordingly filled with a righteous thirst for truth. We had scarcely settled down in Study when he tossed me over a note. MacDonnell was on Study that evening. Now, MacDonnell had two qualifications which in our opinions admirably suited him for presiding at Study: he was near-sighted, and he was deeply interested in conic sections. So absorbing did he find conic sections that when he worked at them, as he always did during Study, he was oblivious to all his surroundings. I have known a three-round boxing match to be fought out in the Study Hall, and the Marseillaise to be sung in a sort of subdued chorus, while MacDonnell was wrestling with conic sections. Occasionally he would chuckle to himself, and we used to take these chuckles (very remarkable phenomena they were) as signifying that he had proved to his satisfaction the conicity or the non-conicity of a section. Sections, we thought, must be queer things.

I opened Sweeney's note and read: 'Tell Clery to go to Old Snuffy and find out about Slattery. He can ask for a prayer-book.'

Whenever we wanted a particular favour from the President we used to send young Clery to him. He liked young Clery, as indeed we all did, for there was something very winning and gracious about all his ways. We had never known the President to refuse young Clery a request, and even the Dean had once consented to allow his table an extra pot of marmalade on the ground, gravely put forward by Clery, that it was his aunt's birthday. I scribbled a note and tossed it to young Clery, who sat in the next row of benches, a little behind me. It hit him right on the nose.

'Oh!' said young Clery, but with a loudness that made me jump. But the invaluable MacDonnell worked on undisturbed.

Clery opened the note and read it. Presently an answer came back in his almost illegible handwriting: 'I have already got five prayer-books from Old Snuffy. I will ask him for a Rosary beads.'

In a few minutes Clery rose demurely and asked permission to leave the room. He looked like a little saint, his hair, which was fair and in crisp little curls, making a sort of aureole round him. I always thought that his head was very shapely, and that it was very nobly

poised on the neck and shoulders. His face was almost like a girl's and had a way of flushing up when he was spoken to by a master. But he was not girlish in any other of his ways. He was our centre-forward in football. He was our best swimmer. He was by far the cleverest and most daring of us all in the gymnasium—there was hardly anything he could not do with his body. And he had the sunniest temper I have ever known, he had a quaint humour, and a very valiant heart.

MacDonnell nodded, and Clery left the Study Hall. We awaited his return impatiently. He was a full half-hour gone. At last he came. He sat down and solemnly took out of his pocket Rosary beads which he silently held up to me. Then he proceeded with great deliberation to write his despatch. In due time he tossed it over to me, dextrously catching me on the ear. I opened the paper and found that Cleary, who knew well that his writing was execrable, had printed out his message in large capitals so as to make a proper impression upon me; and this is the amazing thing I read: 'SLATTERY IS GONE. LEFT AT 8.15. HE IS BOUND FOR MOUNT MELLARY. HE IS GOING TO BE A TRAPPIST.'

Slattery a Trappist! After such a zestful life the silence of Melleray! I passed on the news to Sweeney, and it travelled mysteriously round the Study Hall. We were hushed and abashed. It was so unlike what we thought Slattery would do, so different from the thousand a year and the howdahs' and the jewelled hookahs and all the glory he seemed destined for. Poor old Slattery! ... The rest of the Study hour was as quiet as if the Dean or Slattery himself had been presiding. MacDonnell must have been surprised at the unwonted hush if anything that was not conic and a section could surprise him.

Though it may well have been (and I think some of us felt so) that Slattery had done a more wonderful thing than anything we had imagined for him, we were strangely despondent, silent, almost morose, for the rest of the night. There was little talking in the dormitory as we undressed; still less (contrary to custom) when MacDonnell had put out the lights and shambled back to his conic sections. We were thinking of days with Slattery. One by one we dropped asleep.

Suddenly we were startled by a young Clery's voice. I believe to this day that Clery had been asleep for some time and that the idea which he now launched upon the world had come to him in a dream.

'Lads,' said the voice of young Clery, 'we'll give the new master a hell of a time!'

They seemed golden words. This counsel, revealed as it were in a vision of the night, strangely illuminated us, exalted us. Our path was now clear and straight. Our duty was defined. Our policy was adopted. We would give the new master a hell of a time.

CHAPTER II

THE COMING OF KILGALLON

There was something of religious unction in the way in which we prepared torments for the new master during the next week. We luxuriated in the prospect of his misery, and felt virtuous in the contemplation of the depravity which merited such chastisement as we meant to heap upon him. Burke, whose parents intended him for the Church, but whose chief interest at that period appeared to centre in football, developed an unexpected knowledge of theology. He explained to us the difference between the intellectual and the physical pains of hell, and suggested that by a due combination we should be able to give the new master a really hot time of it. On the intellectual side, we could run counter to all his likes, prejudices, fads, and idiosyncrasies. It would be proper for us to abhor his chosen subjects, to cultivate a desire for knowledge in the realms in which he had not studied. On the first day of his appearance our ignorance was to be crass. Our manners were to be gawky. Our faces were to be inane to the verge of idiocy. We were to smile vacantly at him when he asked us questions. We were to laugh boisterously if a fellow sneezed or coughed, as if such phenomena were immensely entertaining to our feeble intellects. All the time, under this mask of imbecility, we were to study his character and his habits. At the right moment we would reveal ourselves as his masters, omnipotent, omniscient, relentless. We would ask him impossible questions and insist upon answers. We would bring him problems in Euclid which no one could solve; we would discover unheard-of Greek verbs and defy him to translate them. By slow stages we would drive him mad. Day by day we would bait him in the classroom until at last he would be carried away, kicking and yelling, in a strait waistcoat.

Concurrently with this, a subtle form of physical punishment was to strike at him in secret places. He would find sand in his bed. He would find butter in his boots. His hair-oil would transform itself into cart-grease. Johnny Magories would work their way between his shirt and his spine. Fat worms would squirm at the bottom of his water-croft.

O'Driscoll, who kept tame snails, placed the services of those intelligent molluscs at our disposal. Set free in the enemy's chest of drawers, they would work geometrical patterns in slime on his under-clothing. Animate and inanimate nature, the botanical and the zoological kingdoms, would join in the war against Slattery's successor.

Sweeney pointed out how necessary it was to know the character of one's adversary in order to lay good strategic plans. 'Always get inside your enemy's mind,' was, according to Sweeney, one of Napoleon's maxims. How to get inside the mind of the unknown foe who was, so to speak, advancing against us out of the dark,—from what land or clime we knew not, yet drawing steadily nearer, unseen, unheard, slow, predestined, marching with the tread of fate? Joyce propounded a theory which, he said, offered a solution. If we knew the new master's name we should have an index to his character,—not indeed, as Joyce admitted, an infallible index to every kink and fold of his personality, but a rough general guide which would enable us to draw up the main lines of our strategy. A man's name, Joyce explained, had an important bearing on his temperament. Poets had poetical names: witness Wordsworth, Shelley, Tennyson. Men with such names were never found as hod-carriers or pig-jobbers. Generals had military names: names that rolled like a drum and trumpet, as Wallenstein, Marlborough, Wellington; or else names that were short and sharp as commands, like Saxe, Soult, Ney. Statesmen had urbane names: Burleigh, Colbert, Talleyrand,—the name Talleyrand (properly pronounced, of course, Joyce stipulated) was like the man himself, discreet, insinuating, oily. Tradesmen had such names as John Smith and William Robinson. Criminals always bore characteristic names: see Dickens, *passim*. Take the names of the French Revolutionists: Danton, Marat, Robespierre—how terrible they are, how bloodthirsty! Could men with such names have helped being what they were? Again, consider Shakespeare. Could he have written his immortal headlines for copybooks had his name been Bloggs? Could Wellington have been clever enough to appropriate the credit of Blücher's victory at Waterloo had his name been Muggins? Would Benjamin Disraeli have become

Leader of the House of Commons and prospective Prime Minister of England had he been called Ikey Moses?

Impressed by all this (though we suspected that Joyce had carefully prepared it long before in order to work it off on us at some favourable opportunity), we began to discuss possible names. Should the name chance to be Ledwich, we might expect to see a great hulking brute with sullen brows and a jaw like a prize-fighter: Joyce had known a master named Ledwich who was just like that,—‘an awful bruiser,’ he said. Should his name be Smullen, he would be stupid, boorish, heavy as lead, no fun even in making fun of him: Joyce had known such a Smullen. Should the name, on the other hand, be Cheevers, Creevy, or anything with a double e in it, the fellow would be a crawling, sneaking, slimy creature—‘the Uriah Heep type, you know,’ said Joyce. Joyce’s acquaintance had included such an individual, who had, it seems, commenced by surreptitiously scraping the butter off other fellows’ bread (laying the blame on the cat), and ended by stealing £2,000 belong to an orphanage.

We began to be appalled by the visions opened up by these speculations. We saw ourselves being knocked about by a brutal Ledwich or being plotted against by a furtive Creevy or Cheevers. ‘The funds of the Club won’t be safe if a fellow like that comes,’ said O’Sullivan. Like people who tell ghost stories round a fire, we were thoroughly frightening ourselves. The thing was getting on our nerves. Unseen dangers seemed to lurk around us; grisly forms loomed up in our path or cowered in the darkness of the corridors.

‘Why not find out what his name really is?’ asked young Clery one day.

No one had thought of that. Old Snuffy would of course know by now. Away went Clery to the President’s room. In due time he returned with news. The name was Kilgallon.

Kilgallon! What were we to make of it? Obviously, it was not the name of a hulking brute of the Ledwich type; nor yet of a crawling worm of the genus Creevy. Young Clery said it had a manly, straightforward ring, but to most of us the name had no message. It seemed an additional grievance against the new master that we could

make nothing of his name. What did he mean by having a name like that? It was not playing the game.

Joyce, it is true, averred that the name Kilgallon was full of meaning. A person bearing that name would certainly be tall, with a prominent nose, and streaky brick-red hair; also, he would probably be a dipsomaniac. It annoyed us that Joyce should pretend to have known a man named Kilgallon. No one had ever heard of the name before. It was a name specially devised by the enemy to put our strategy at fault.

Joyce was always claiming to have known people with queer names. You could not imagine a name but Joyce had known someone who bore it, and in order to convince us he would relate some anecdote of the person which made the story still more improbable. Once young Clery invented the name Biffkins.

‘I knew a man of that name one time,’ said Joyce.

‘You did not,’ said young Clery.

‘I bet you my hat I did,’ said Joyce. ‘He committed suicide by wearing tight boots. He was disappointed in love and resolved to put himself to death by the slowest and most painful means. So he wore tight boots ever after. It took him fifty-one years.’

We often wondered at what remote period of his career Joyce had known all these eccentrics. He vaguely gave us to understand that they had been pupils or teachers in the ‘old school’—an unnamed educational institution in which Joyce had been a student before coming to St. Fintan’s. The ‘old school’ must have been a sort of Hydropathic Home, what with its great hulking Ledwiches, its slimy Creevys, its dipsomaniac Kilgallons, and its suicidal Biffkinses.

The days sped by in these profitable discussions, while the new master was drawing near to us out of the unknown: a fateful, portentous figure moving towards his destiny and laden also with strange destinies for us. In imagination we saw him treading lonely ways and plodding on with set teeth and with eyes fixed on his distant goal. At last, prosaically enough, he drove up the avenue of St. Fintan’s on an outside car.

It was about 10.30 at night, and we were all in bed.

‘Hist!’ said young Clery. ‘Wheels!’

There was a scramble from thirty beds. Very fortunately, our dormitory was in the front of the house exactly above the main door. Its four windows gave a wide view over the lawn and the avenue and the playing fields and the wood; out beyond flashed lights which we knew were beacons in the bay, It was a glorious view, day or night. But to-night we had eyes only for the car which was coming up the drive, which was rounding the curve of the lawn, which was stopping at the great door.

‘Here y’are, Sir,’ said the deep voice of the driver.

A figure sprang from the car and ran up the steps. It seemed a slight, light figure, the figure of a young man. It disappeared in the shadow of the door. There was a single peal of the bell. Then the new master stepped forward out of the shadow and seemed to be looking slowly round at the noble prospect of moonlight-bathed lawn and field and wood.

‘Suppose we drop one of the lockers on his head?’ suggested Nelson, as we crouched at the open windows, reconnoitring.

‘No,’ said young Clery, ‘that would put him out of action too soon.’

It would, in fact, have killed him.

We heard the door opening. Then the newcomer spoke to the driver, who had descended from the car and was commencing to shoulder a trunk.

‘Wait till I give you a hand,’ said the new master’s voice. It was a very clear voice, and even in that casual sentence it had, or seemed to have, a ring of a voice that could give a command on a battlefield. How familiar that ring was to be to us in the days that were to come!

The new master and the driver, carrying the trunk between them, disappeared into the door. The driver came out alone, mounted his seat, whipped up his horse with a ‘G’wan,’ and was gone. We crept back to bed. Somehow, the coming of Kilgallon had not been exactly like what we had expected. As I fell asleep, that voice, heard only once and in so casual a way, was still ringing in my ears.

‘It is the voice of a Captain,’ I kept saying to myself, as if I had heard the words in some story and they now came back to me.

There was a subdued excitement the next morning when we assembled in the Study Hall before separating to the classrooms. Our first class was Latin with O'Mara: a dull dog, duller than ever that day. The next was to be history with the new master. We sat expectant in the classroom. We were actually trembling with excitement.

'It's like waiting to have your tooth out,' said Quominus.

I should explain that the real name of the youth whom we called Quominus was Quin; but young Clery had once found on page 131 of his Latin Grammar that in certain cases Quominus could be used instead of Quin, and had proposed that we should avail of the liberty; which we naturally did.

The door opened and Old Snuffy came in with the new master. We rose and stood at attention. All eyes were fastened on the man we were to pit our mettle against. As we had guessed on the previous night, when he stood on the steps in the moonlight, he was young, quite young. He was not very tall, but neither was he short. His figure was slight and almost fragile-looking. His face was pale; the eyes looked very dark,—I thought them black at first, but in reality they were grey; his mouth seemed very firm; his brow was high and white; dark brown hair fell across forehead. I was wondering whether the face was handsome or not when he smiled at something Old Snuffy said; and the smile was so merry and boyish that I decided that the face *was* handsome, or at least that I liked it.

'Boys,' said Old Snuffy, 'this is Mr. Kilgallon. You may sit down. I will leave him to make your acquaintance himself.'

We sat down, Old Snuffy was gone, and we were face to face with the enemy.

We were reading Lockhart's Life of Napoleon. It was in the days before the Intermediate, and schools were free to determine their own courses. Slattery had recommended Lockhart.

The new master sat down on Slattery's stool.

'You might read a little,' he said to young Clery.

Clery, forgetting (as indeed we all did) that there was to have been an exhibition of crass ignorance and stupidity at the first class, commenced to read. He read well, and the new master seemed to listen

to him with pleasure. We felt secretly glad that we had made a favourable impression on him. A few more boys read, Kilgallon interjecting a remark of explanation now and then. The things he said were new and interesting. He had a way of making a whole situation clear by a phrase. A sentence or a word interjected by him seemed to light up a page. After a little while he told us to lay aside the books, and, clasping his knee with his hands, he began to talk of Bonaparte's Italian campaign. One would have thought Kilgallon had been there himself. He seemed to have the map of Italy in his mind as Bonaparte must have had it; he seemed to have all Bonaparte's difficulties present to him and to see all the ways out as Bonaparte must have seen them. And he used very simple words, and we understood the whole thing better than we had ever understood it before. And, though so simply put, it seemed more wonderful than it had ever seemed before.

That was our first class with Kilgallon.

As we were commenting afterwards on his way of making difficult military movements seem easy, I told the lads of that strange impression his voice had made on me when I first heard it, and of my falling asleep saying 'It is the voice of a Captain.' Ever after that we called him 'the Little Captain.'

Our next class with him was a French class. We were reading Racine's 'Esther,' a play in which a very tiresome chorus of Hebrew maidens keeps preventing things from getting along by coming in and making tedious and uninteresting comments on matters in general. We wished they would have the tact to keep out and let the play get on.

'Ith all French poetry as thoopid as thith?' asked Splothery. Splothery was fat, foolish, and goodnatured. His name was MacManus, but we called him Splothery on account of his Splothery way of talking. He spoke in sudden little bursts, and could not always articulate his sibilants.

'No,' said the Little Captain with a smile. 'Some of it is very lively.'

'It's odious stiff,' said Sweeney.

'Racine is artificial because his century was artificial. The old poets and the new poets are more natural and simple. Here is a little

French song about Napoleon.’ And Kilgallon repeated to us Béranger’s ‘Parlez nous de lui, grand mère.’

‘That’th good thuff,’ said Splothery, who understood fully ten per cent of it.

We agreed that evening that we had acted only with becoming restraint in not commencing hostilities the first day.

‘You must give a fellow a chance,’ said Burke. ‘Let him get his feet under him. To-morrow we can have a slap at him.’

But ‘to-morrow’ the Little Captain disarmed us by a vivid description of the Bridge of Arcole, and by repeating another of Béranger’s songs, ‘Le Retour dans la Patrie.’ And again we agreed that it was only fair to give him a chance to settle down before commencing to make his life a hell.

On the third day, at history class, we saw a new side of him; or rather he revealed to us a new side of ourselves. It came about very casually. Sweeney had asked him whether he thought Napoleon could have been as great a mathematician as he was a general. Kilgallon nodded.

‘You know that’s what Tone thought of him,’ he said.

‘Who was Tone, Sir?’ asked young Clery, who always had the courage of his ignorance.

Kilgallon gave a quick glance at him. I daresay that in that glance he satisfied that the question was asked in good faith.

‘Tone,’ he said, ‘was our Ambassador in Paris.’

‘The British Ambassador, Sir?’ said that ass, Quominus.

‘No,’ said Kilgallon gravely. ‘The British were at war with France and had no Ambassador in Paris in ’97. He was *our* Ambassador, the Irish Ambassador; or rather our military envoy, as Lewines was the Ambassador.’

I suppose we all wore that infinitely wise yet vague look which people wear when they pretend to know all about something they really know nothing at all about. The Little Captain went on quickly:

‘The United Irishmen had asked Tone to go to Paris to get French aid to free Ireland.’

‘Tell us about him, Sir,’ said young Clery in that direct way of his.

The Little Captain clasped his knee and began what seemed to us the most heroic tale we had ever heard. He spoke of Tone as a man might speak of a lad whom he had known at school. He seemed to know all the little things that make up a man’s personality as known to his very intimate friends, and the personality that lived for us as he spoke seemed to us the most gallant personality and the most loveable that we had ever known or read of. We laughed at the little things that Kilgallon told us about Tone,—how he and Russell cooked marvellous suppers in the cottage at Irishtown and how he frightened the highwaymen by putting his head out of the coach window and ‘swearing horribly.’ The story was not finished that day, but Kilgallon continued it for several days; and when it was finished he went on to tell us of Thomas Russell and of that august death of his before the jail-gate of Downpatrick.

We drew a long breath when the tale of Russell was finished; and then young Clery spoke the question that was in everyone’s mind:

‘Are there any men now that are trying to do what Tone and Russell tried to do?’

‘There are,’ said Kilgallon.

‘I know who they are!’ cried O’Driscoll suddenly. ‘The Fenians!’

I was conscious of a certain thrill as I heard the name. It was a name never named in that place. It was a name seldom named in our presence without reprobation. We had a vague idea that the Fenians were lawless and reckless men bent on the overthrow of the Church and the destruction of property; that they lurked in corners and assassinated people; that they met in taverns and swore impious oaths; that to become a Fenian was to join the legion of the lost. It required a mental readjustment to think of them as the men who were carrying on the work of the gallant Tone, of the chivalrous Russell. We looked inquiringly at the Little Captain. He did not speak, but his grave eyes seemed to assent to what O’Driscoll had said.

‘I saw O’Donovan Rossa once,’ continued O’Driscoll. ‘He came from near my place.’

‘Isn’t Stephens the head of them all, Sir?’ asked Sweeney.

‘It was Stephens that escaped from prison in Dublin, wasn’t it, Sir?’ asked Burke.

‘Will he come back and fight?’ said Nelson.

‘Perhapth he’th here all the time,’ said Splothery.

‘No, there’s another man in his place,’ said Burke.

‘My father says there’s a man better than Stephens going round amongst the people now,’ said O’Driscoll. ‘They call him the Wandering Hawk the same as they did Stephens,’

‘That’s Warren!’ exclaimed Quominus.

‘No one knows what his name is. Some call him this and some call him that. My father says he’s the hardest of them all to catch,’ said O’Driscoll.

‘There’s five hundred pounds reward offered for him, dead or alive,’ interjected Sweeney. ‘I saw it on a placard at the railway station when I was coming up this term. It said: “£500 reward offered for information leading to the arrest of John Dunleavy, alias Warren, commonly known as the Wandering Hawk, formerly a National Teacher, age 26;” and a lot more like that. There was a crowd of people reading it.’

‘What will they do with the Wandering Hawk if they catch him, Sir?’ asked young Clery.

‘I’m afraid they’ll hang him,’ said the Little Captain.

The scene opens on the boys of St. Fintan's School respecting a new master. They are determined to give him a bad time and all sorts of ideas as to how best annoy him are discussed, but when 'Old Snuffy' as the boys respectfully termed the Head Master introduces Kilgallon, something in the new master's personality interests the boys who forget to rebel.

They nickname him 'The Little Captain' and soon are listening with intense interest to the stories of Wolfe Tone and other Irish heroes which arose out of History Class. Gradually the talk comes down to the date of our story, and soon the boys were taking a breathless interest in 'The Wandering Hawk.' This was the name given to John Dunleary, alias Warren, a young National Schoolmaster who had proved himself a great Fenian organiser, on whose head was the price of £500.

CHAPTER III

IN WHICH YOUNG CLERY GETS HIS EARS BOXED

The man was gaining a strange ascendancy over us. He had said or done nothing extraordinary; he had on the whole been silent and reserved; to the Fenian conversation, a conversation which turned all our minds into new paths, paths which seemed wonderful and adventurous and perilous, he had contributed only a sentence or two; and yet from that time on he dominated us. I do not think he aimed at exercising more than the ordinary ascendancy of a teacher; certainly he put forward no special effort, made use of no particular arts. In thinking of him now, after I have known three generations of men, it seems clear to me that the quality in virtue of which he ruled us, as I believe he would have ruled any others he might have come in contact with, was just an elemental simplicity and truth. It was characteristic of our relations with him that none of us could tell him a lie; none of us in his presence could ever be anything but his true self. One could not act before him. Our few attempts to do so were abject failures. His quickness in divining that we were only pretending to know something about Tone was typical. He seemed to see into every heart; yea, to read the hearts of dead men and of living men as others read books.

Hypocrisy of any sort could not live in the presence of that great sincerity.

Our project of baiting the Little Captain and making his life a misery was being quietly dropped. It did not seem quite feasible; neither did it seem quite so heroic nor quite so mirth-promising as it had seemed when first conceived. How serious we had been in our intention none of us could quite say. In the beginning there had been at the bottom of the thing a feeling of genuine loyalty to the memory of Slattery. We had dallied with the idea partly out of fun, partly from a certain artistic pleasure which it gave us to weave elaborate schemes, partly because (the weather being too wet for much football) we had nothing better to do. In the end the idea had obtained possession of us, and up to the moment when the new master entered the classroom we had all felt it was in some way due to ourselves to make an effort to show him that he was not welcome.

But at that very moment the project really became impracticable, although we did not at first realise so. Up to the Fenian conversation we still meant to commence hostilities at the first favourable opening. After that we did not care to think of it. By common consent we avoided the subject, each one hoping that none of the others would be so tactless as to bring it up. We did not want to have to confess to one another that we had not the pluck to go on; or, which would have been equally difficult to acknowledge, that a finer feeling was restraining us.

But tact and Quominus were two things that were incompatible. The mission of Quominus in life seemed to be to say the wrong thing, to give shows away, to precipitate awkward crises.

‘What about getting on to Kilgallon?’ he said one evening in the billiard room while we were yawning over an exceedingly uninteresting game which MacGavock was playing against O’Driscoll; both of them execrable players.

‘Well, what about it?’ asked Sweeney in a non-committal way.

‘When are we going to start?’

‘Why don’t *you* start if you’re so keen on it?’ asked Burke.

‘I’m waiting for orders. I didn’t hatch the plot. I’m ready to fall in with the rest.’

‘Look here,’ said young Clery suddenly. ‘I vote we cry it off.’

We looked at him in surprise. Secretly we admired his courage. But he was putting it too bluntly. We should have preferred a strategical retreat to what looked like a mere surrender.

‘Why, the whole thing was your idea,’ exclaimed Joyce.

‘I know,’ said Clery calmly. ‘It is I that contribute all the ideas to our discussions.’

‘Well, why not go on with it?’

‘First, because it would be caddish; secondly, because the Little Captain would knock us all into cocked hats in two minutes.’

‘He wouldn’t,’ said Joyce. ‘He’s not a physical force man. He’s trying to keep us in good humour. He’s staving off the crisis from day to day by telling us stories.’

‘Like Schezer-What’s-Her-Name in the Arabian Nights,’ suggested MacGavock. MacGavock was much under the glamour of the East: witness his howdah and hookah inventions with regard to Slattery.

‘I bet you what you like,’ said Clery, ‘that the Little Captain will squash us in two minutes if we try anything on with him.’

‘I bet you my hat he won’t,’ said Joyce. Joyce was always betting people his hat. It was a large straw hat which he detested because an aunt of his, who used to send him half-a-crown a month for pocket money, had discontinued doing so as a protest against his having worn the hat at a funeral. No one ever took up Joyce’s bets, because no one wanted his hat.

‘We’ll either have to chuck this altogether,’ said Clery, ‘or bring things to a head at once. It’s mean and caddish to go on making friends with a man and to have a plot against him in the back of your head all the time. I tell you he’s fit to lick the whole of us. You say he’s not. Let’s try to-morrow.’

It was a relief to have a definite proposal. Everyone felt that the present situation must be ended. We would provoke a crisis and if the Little Captain showed himself our master (as most felt he would) so much the better.

‘What’ll we do?’ said I.

‘Something dignified and artistic,’ said young Clery.

‘Thick a bloomin’ big nail in hith thool where he’ll thit on it,’ said Splothery, whose ideas of the dignified and artistic were somewhat raw. Splothery was reclining on a form eating a large piece of Peggy’s Leg. It was popularly believed that Splothery’s fatness was due to his inordinate consumption of Peggy’s Leg. He expended vast sums on that sweetmeat, and the risks he ran in getting over the wall to procure supplies were the only exciting part of an otherwise humdrum and undistinguished career. We all liked it in moderation, but Splothery’s affection for Peggy’s Leg was, as young Clery put it, ‘positively indecent.’

‘Thick a bloomin’ big nail in hith thool where he’ll thit on it,’ said Splothery as he sucked complacently.

‘No,’ said young Clery with decision. ‘Too crude and bloody.’

We discussed various plans. At length it was agreed, on the suggestion of O’Driscoll, that we should all sing ‘John Brown’s Body’ in chorus when Kilgallon entered the classroom next day. ‘John Brown’s Body’ was our favourite anthem. Its chief recommendation was that it gave great scope to the lungs. Who John Brown was or why his soul should persist in perambulating we did not very well know, but it was always an immense satisfaction to be able to vociferate in unison (or in what we regarded as unison):

‘John Brown’s body is lying in his grave,
But his soul goes marching on!’

We would simply deafen Kilgallon with this next day in class, and by his action or inaction we would regulate our future attitude towards him.

Next day came. The Little Captain’s quick light step was heard outside the classroom door.

‘Now, lads!’ said O’Driscoll.

The door opened. Our mouths opened simultaneously. The learned in psychology must explain the fact that from twenty-nine of the thirty or so open mouths no sound issued. For my own part, I tried

to sing, but I only gaped. My mouth assumed ridiculous shapes, but it produced no articulate sound. One voice only was heard. Alone among the thirty, young Clery sang through the chorus of 'John Brown.'

I have never seen any face wear so astonished an expression as the Little Captain's wore as he came across the room,—except one, and that was young Clery's when he perceived that he was the only one in the class that was singing. In the midst of my own confusion I was irresistibly struck by the comicality of the two expressions. Clery's voice died away at the last few words:

'... soul goes marching o—,' he said; and stopped.

With a few swift steps the Little Captain was beside young Clery, and quicker than thought he had caught him a box on the ear. It was not a cruel blow, and yet it appalled us. Its promptness and decision were terrible. Everything was over before anything had well begun. And that was characteristic of the Little Captain. His mind, as we were afterwards to know, always acted like lightning; his decisions were instantaneous; his action, when he meant to act, was swift and final.

There was a tense silence. We all felt very mean. I glanced at young Clery. He was trying to open his book unconcernedly, but his lip was quivering, and there was a crimson mark on his delicate cheek. I felt sorrier for him than I would have liked to confess. The Little Captain took his seat and commenced the lesson. Except that his lips were pressed more tightly than usual, there was no change in his habitual demeanour. We felt we were in for a very awful time. But as the lesson proceeded, the tight lip relaxed and towards the end the Little Captain's manner was kinder and more friendly than ever, especially when he addressed young Clery. Just before the bell rang he laid down his book and surprised us by saying:

'Why did you arrange that demonstration this morning?'

No one had told him that we had arranged a demonstration; but Kilgallon, as I have said, was able to read people's minds. We all looked very sheepish; at least the others did, and I suppose I did, for I felt so sheepish that I could have baahed at myself in derision. We were silent, and he looked from one to another. Finally, it was young Clery

who spoke. The crimson mark had not quite yet died out of his cheek, but his eye had its old twinkle of fun in it.

‘When we heard a new master was coming,’ he said, ‘I proposed that we’d give him a hell—that is, a hot time of it.’ The pleasant amused look that we liked so well had passed over the Little Captain’s face. Young Clery went on: ‘It didn’t seem to work. So I proposed that we’d do something to-day to bring it to a head. We decided to sing “John Brown” ... “John Brown” burst it up.’ Young Clery ended somewhat lamely. He had blamed no one but himself. We all felt like cheering for him, but a cheer would have been out of place.

‘I am very grateful to “John Brown”,’ said the Little Captain. ‘He has gained me a friend.’

He stretched out his hand, which young Clery took. I felt then and often after that there was something akin between the souls of those two: the same sincerity, the same valour, the same gift of leadership was theirs, masked though they were in the boy under a fantastic and often freakish humour. Kilgallon turned towards us and said, but without any bitterness:

‘You haven’t shown up as well in this as Clery has. You ought to have joined in the chorus, you know.’

‘We meant to, Sir,’ said Sweeney awkwardly.

‘Be sure you do it next time,’ cautioned Kilgallon.

‘There won’t be any next time, Sir,’ said young Clery. ‘You hit too hard.’

And we all laughed aloud, the Little Captain laughing as loud as any of us. When MacDonnell entered the room to take the next class he stared out of his sleepy eyes. He could not understand the hilarity arising from any cause except the solving of a conic section.

The days that followed were the most spacious we ever spent at St. Fintan’s. To be in class with Kilgallon was a perpetual adventure. He revealed to us beauty and wonder where we had seen only difficult words or dry facts. ‘Esther’ itself became musical when he declaimed its lines in French ‘juth like a Frenthman’t’h,’ as Splothery said; and he positively thrilled us by his accounts of the rising of Spain in 1808 and of Prussia in 1813. That brought us naturally to the subject of Irish

risings, and from Kilgallon we first heard stories of '41, '98, 1803, and '48. And then our thoughts would come back to the Fenians, and we would ask the Little Captain when they were going to rise, and whether they would win, and would Stephens come back to lead them or would the new Wandering Hawk take the place of the Hawk that had flown. To which questions he would give no answer.

One day a curious thing happened. We were sitting in class at a history lesson when we were startled by the sound of a tin whistle played just outside the classroom door. The classroom was on the ground floor and opened on a covered verandah. Through the window we could see the musician. He was a poorly-dressed man with a tangle of short red beard and a weather-beaten face. He played very lugubriously a doleful Irish air.

‘That’s Bantry Bay,’ whispered O’Sullivan.

Presently the musician broke into a jig tune. He set all our hearts dancing, and if any other master than the Little Captain had been over us at the moment our toes too would have beaten time on the floor. The tune grew fast and furious, and we marvelled that a mere tin whistle could discourse such hilarious and welkin-maddening a music. It seemed as if the very soul of the musician were in a frolic. Suddenly, at the height of the fun, he struck the first notes of the most gallant marching tune I had ever heard, at once proud and solemn and lively. At the first sound of that noble music the Little Captain paused in what he had been saying; he listened for a few bars and then quietly resumed the lesson. In a few minutes he got up and went to the door. The music stopped. The Little Captain seemed to be giving the tin-whistler something. They exchanged a few words which we did not catch. It did not sound like English. What language was it?

‘It’s Irish they’re talking,’ whispered O’Driscoll.

The Little Captain came back.

‘What air was that last one, Sir?’ asked O’Sullivan.

“‘Billy Byrne of Ballymanus”,’ said the Little Captain.

The tin-whistler played ‘St. Patrick’s Day’ for a finale and then wandered away.

That afternoon Splothery brought a breathless tale into the handball court.

‘I’m juth after goin’ over the wall,’ he said, ‘for thum Peggy’th Leg. When I got out on the road I nearly walked into the Little Captain. He was talkin’ to thumbody in the thadow of the wall. I dodged round on th’ other thide of the road. When I came out of the thop I nearly walked into—’

‘The Little Captain again?’ we cried.

‘No,’ said Splothery, ‘the tin-whithtler. The man with the red beard that played “Billy Byrne of Ballymanuth.” I thaw the Little Captain goin’ away. He muth have been talkin’ to the tin-whithler. I wonder ith he a friend of hith?’

We all wondered too.

The boys of St. Fintan's College discuss the coming of a new master. They resolve to give him a lively time of it. When, however, 'Old Snuffy,' as the boys respectfully call the Rev. President, introduces Kilgallon, something in the new master's personality interests and attracts them. They call him 'The Little Captain' and are soon listening to his stories of Wolfe Tone and Thomas Russell, and taking a breathless interest in 'The Wandering Hawk,'—the name given to a noted Fenian organiser, one John Dunleavy, alias Warren, on whose head is the price of £500. A strolling tin whistler comes to the College and is seen in secret conference with the Little Captain.

CHAPTER IV IN WHICH PIRATES LAND IN INISHGLASOGUE

'I was thinking of going into the piracy business,' remarked young Clery thoughtfully, as three or four of us were sauntering round the football field about a week after the episode of the tin whistler.

'It is an honourable and a lucrative profession,' said Joyce as if he were reading from a book on 'How to Choose a Career.'

'You see next Thursday is a whole holiday,' explained Clery. 'It's St. Thingumbob's Day.'

St. Thingumbob was an obscure saint whom Old Snuffy had discovered, or at least written a book about. It seems that he had built an incredible number of churches in our diocese, none of which had survived, and Old Snuffy had said once that it would be a 'gracious thing' to honour his memory by a special whole holiday each year. We had all agreed that it would be very gracious. Naturally the saint was popular among us. St. Thingumbob was not his real name, but as his real name was difficult to pronounce he was known to several generations of schoolboys as St. Thingumbob, and is doubtless so known to the generation that now sits where we sat half-a-century ago.

Young Clery's explanation did not seem sufficient. We waited for him to continue, but he was apparently under the impression that he had fully enlightened us.

'What's the idea?' asked Sweeney at last.

‘The idea,’ said young Clery, ‘is of course to seize shipping in the bay and hoist the Jolly Roger.’

‘What shipping is there in Inverbeg Bay?’ asked Sweeney.

‘Well, ... there’s Patsy O’Toole’s boat.’

‘She’s odious leaky,’ said Sweeney.

‘All the better,’ replied young Clery. ‘We can careen her on Inishglasogue. Pirates always do a lot of careening on islands. We can nail a few planks on her and daub her a little with tar.’

‘Who’ll we take?’ asked Joyce.

‘I’m Captain,’ said Clery. ‘You’re Cabin Boy, Dwyer,’ (this to me). ‘Sweeney is Able-Bodied Seaman.’

‘I’m Cook,’ stipulated Joyce.

‘Another Able-Bodied Seaman and we have our crew. Who’ll it be?’

‘O’Doherty?’ I suggested.

‘No, he’d try to boss everything,’ said Clery.

‘O’Driscoll?’

‘Aye; he should be a good sailor. O’Driscoll of the Ships, you know.’ Kilgallon had been teaching us something about the Irish clans.

‘What about Splothery?’

‘Aye, we’ll take him to keep us in good humour if we’re wrecked,’ said Joyce.

‘We can use him as a life-buoy,’ said Clery. ‘He’s sure to float.’

And so it was arranged. Young Clery had little difficulty in obtaining the President’s permission for the six of us to go on what he described simply as ‘an excursion’ on St. Thingumbob’s Day. He and I set about organising supplies (as Cabin Boy, he told me, I was the Captain’s right-hand man, which meant that I was to do all the work while he was to do all the thinking); and by Thursday morning we had accumulated a store of everything which pirates could possibly require, to wit: two pounds of arrow-root biscuits (ship’s biscuit being the staple article of nautical diet), some ham sandwiches (these being the nearest thing to salt pork that our resources commanded); half-a-dozen bottles of ginger-beer; a black flag with skull and cross-bones; some tar; and a considerable quantity of Peggy’s Leg, included at the special insistence

of Splothy. Laden with these stores we set out for the shore immediately after breakfast on the morning of the whole holiday.

St. Fintan's, as everyone knows, stands between the hills and the sea. Inverbeg Bay lies beneath it, a land-locked and island-studded haven. The shore at one point comes within half-a-mile of Feagh Wood. One had only to cross the playfields into Feagh, cut through an angle of the wood, and then come out on the heathery rocks and so scramble down to the beach. At a little landing-place called the Slip Patsy O'Toole's boat was generally moored. We had occasionally chartered her from him and made voyages in the bay; on the present occasion we meant simply to borrow her without mentioning the matter to Patsy.

We found the boat in her accustomed place. Clery unmoored her, while Sweeney, O'Driscoll, and I baled out the water of which she contained an unnecessary supply. The stores were neatly packed on board, Sweeney and O'Driscoll took the oars, Clery the rudder, and Joyce ran up the Jolly Roger. Splothy and I guarded the stores.

It was one of those rare days which come towards the end of autumn when hills look very near, and woods are like a painted picture, and everything has the clearness and definiteness given by frost, but without the brightness or the cold. As we shot out across the bay we could see the very sheep on Clochaunrua,—one would have thought them white stones among the heather but that they were moving; the shapely cone of Cruach rose up behind Clochaunrua, glistening with quartz; in the bay the islands stood out very sharply, dark green with their holly,—we could even see the Glassing Rocks off Inishglasogue and the white wave that broke on them; on our own side of the bay, dotted at intervals in a long zig-zag circle, we counted eight whitewashed cottages each with its blue thread of smoke. Whiffs of turf-reek mingled pleasantly in the nostril with the brine of the sea.

Sweeney and O'Driscoll pulled steadily. I liked the rhythmical sound of the oars in the rowlocks, to which the lapping water made a faint accompaniment. The only other sound was the occasional scream of a tern or the occasional lowing of a cow or the bark of a dog on shore. I placed Sweeney's overcoat under me to keep myself dry, and lay back luxuriously. We made Splothy bale.

‘Ship ahoy!’ sang out Joyce from the bow.

Sure enough, Murty Doyle’s hooker had rounded Ringnagurragh and was bearing down on us. Murty was distinguished even among fishermen by his enormous copper-coloured face and its fringe of blue-grey whiskers. He looked exactly like the big harvest moon would look if she wore blue-grey whiskers and took an occasional glass of grog. Murty let go the mainsheet of his lug when he saw us and stared open-mouthed at the sight of the Jolly Roger. He had probably never seen the Jolly Roger on Inverbeg Bay before. As for Murty’s one-legged crew, he laughed profanely.

‘Ship ahoy!’ sang out Joyce again peremptorily. He was nettled by the laughter of the crew.

‘Ahoy yerselves!’ said Murty.

‘Heave to and stand by!’ cried Joyce.

‘What would I do the like of that for?’

‘Do you see that flag?’ asked Joyce.

‘Aye; a purty flag.’

‘We’re pirates.’

‘Do you tell me that? Me gallant fella’s!’ This was said in such evident admiration that we conceived a high opinion of Murty’s intelligence. It was apparent we could transact business with him in regular form.

‘What’s your name?’ asked Joyce.

‘The *Nora Creina*.’

‘Of what port?’

‘Of Inverbeg.’

‘What flag do you fly?’

‘The green flag; what else?’

‘What’s your cargo?’

‘A haul o’ the grandest herrin’s in Inverbeg Bay.’

‘Hand us over half-a-dozen. We pay for what we take from ships that fly the Irish flag.’

‘Hould yer hoults, so.’

We had come alongside the *Nora Creina* and were gripping on to her gunwale. The crew picked out six noble-looking fish (‘Throjans’ he

called them) from a shining heap that lay at the bottom of the boat and handed them to Joyce.

‘What’s the damage?’ asked Joyce.

‘Divil a pinny I’ll take from ye,’ said Murty.

‘You must,’ said Joyce. ‘A fair do. You’ll have to take something.’

‘I will not, thin. I’m wud ye for the word ye said for the green flag. Pull away, boys. Is it for Inishglasogue ye’re makin’?’

‘It is.’

‘Ye have a boat I wouldn’t like to vinture in myself. Don’t stay out too long wud the like of her.’

And Murty, swinging his lug and catching the breeze, went on his leisurely way. We sent a lusty cheer after him and pulled for Inishglasogue.

Now we were threading the islands. We saw a cormorant on Corrigaunlee and a seal on Inishtrawar. The gulls and guillemots screamed at us as we passed the Glassing Rocks. There was a swish in the bottom of the boat we did not like.

‘We’ll just make it,’ said Clery, ‘before the old tub sinks.’

Splothery had been baling for all he was worth, but the water was steadily rising. Joyce and I had relieved Sweeney and O’Driscoll at the oars and they now started in to help Splothery with the baling. Young Clery still steered serenely.

‘We’re shipping two gallons for every gallon we bale out,’ said Sweeney after a little time.

‘I’ve been watching,’ said young Clery. ‘At the rate the water’s rising she’s due to sink in four minutes.’

‘How long’ll it take us to get in?’

‘Three minutes. We’ve a minute to the good.’

‘Pull, ye divils!’ said O’Driscoll.

‘We’re pulling like old boots,’ said Joyce. ‘I bet you my hat we’ll make it in time.’

Those three minutes seemed very long. The boat was so heavy with water now that she moved with great difficulty. Joyce and I bent to the oars till our arms and backs ached; each stroke seemed to

purchase only an inch of progress. We sat nearly up to our knees in water. The three were baling frantically. Clery's eye was steadily fixed on the point of the rock he meant to make. No one spoke. We could hear the panting of our breaths above the grinding of the rowlocks and the swish of the water.

'The grub'll be destroyed,' grumbled Splothery, relieving the tension. 'All the Peggy'th Leg ith in a meth.'

Young Clery laughed.

'It'th no laughin' matter,' said Splothery. The boat was beginning to settle. It seemed useless to pull, but we pulled out of mere obstinacy.

'Look out now!' said Clery. He had thrown a rope and caught it on a pinnacle of rock.

'Jump!' he cried, as he hung on to the rope and drew the boat in.

We jumped one by one. Clery jumped last. As he left the boat she disappeared under the water.

'There goes our lunch,' said Clery, steadying himself against me.

'Peggy'th Leg an' all,' complained Splothery.

And we all laughed till the Glassing Rocks sent back the echo.

'That ginger-beer could be recovered if a fellow didn't mind about getting wet,' mused Joyce. 'The sandwiches and the biscuits'll be too damp.'

'They could be dried at a fire,' suggested Sweeney.

Clery was already stripping. In a few seconds he had thrown off his clothes and stood poised for a dive.

'Mind you don't bang your head against a rock,' said Sweeney.

'No fear,' said Clery. 'I had a dip here once. It's clear of rocks.'

Like a flash he dived. In a few moments he reappeared.

'I've located it,' he said; and down he went again.

We had packed the viands in a soap-box, and it was like seeing the face of an old friend when the box appeared on the surface propelled by Clery. He pushed it towards us, and as we hauled it up the rocks he came ashore himself, dripping and shaking himself like a dog.

'Go on and pitch the camp,' he said, 'while I'm dressing.'

We knew a little wooded hollow, all soft with moss, where we meant to camp. Shouldering the box of stores, Joyce led the way. The

point on which we had landed was a little rocky promontory stretching out from the mainland towards the Glassing Rocks. We had first to pick our steps among stones slippery with seaweed, and then among heather-clad rocks. A soft springy turf succeeded, very pleasant under the foot. There was a wood of holly and quicken and birch on the island, and our dell was one of its advanced posts. Looking back as we crossed the stretch of turf I noticed that young Clery had not yet rejoined us.

‘Let’s wait for Clery, lads,’ I said.

‘Go back and tell him to hurry on,’ said Joyce. ‘We’ll be making the fire.’

I ran back across the turf and scrambled up the heathy rocks and out on to the little promontory. Young Clery’s clothes were still where he had thrown them down, but young Clery was not there. Had he gone into the water again? Had he dived to bring up the oars, or Sweeney’s coat, or to see if there was any chance of raising the boat? If so, why had he not come up again? Could anything have happened to him?

I looked round anxiously, and a little frightened. He was not anywhere. I shouted to attract the lads’ attention, but got no reply: they had perhaps gone on too far to hear me. I shouted again louder than before, and began mechanically to pull off my coat and vest. To my astonishment, I was replied to not by the lads from the shore, but by a man’s voice from the sea; from somewhere down under the point of the rock, on the far side from where I was standing, but out of sight. Who could be there? And where was young Clery?

Suddenly a boat came round the point rowed by a man. And the man was the Little Captain! He was rowing with a fine freedom, hatless, his hair stirred by the wind. My relief at seeing him who, I felt instinctively, was the staunchest and most resourceful friend I could have in such an emergency overcame my surprise that he should be there at all. It seemed fitting and natural that the Little Captain should be where he was wanted. He waved his hand to me and sang out:

‘Anything wrong?’

‘Yes,’ I said. ‘I ... I don’t know where young Clery is.’

The clothes tossed on the rock together with my voice and manner would have been sufficient to reveal even to a man less swift in leaping at a situation than the Little Captain was the terrible thing that I feared.

‘Where did he go in?’ he asked, pausing in a stroke.

‘I don’t know. No one was here. I was away with the other fellows. We thought he was dressing.’

The Little Captain stood up straight in the boat and dived just as he was. Long minutes passed, or what seemed long minutes. The Little Captain came to the surface at last, much nearer to where I was standing than he had been when he had dived. He swam back to the boat with strong strokes. In a second he was on board, all dripping, and was pulling towards me.

‘Jump in,’ he said.

I sprang into the boat, content to obey him without understanding or even wondering. He backed water, turned the prow ever so little to starboard, and then pulled swiftly and strongly as if he meant to run the boat stem first against the shore.

‘Duck!’ he commanded. Mechanically I ducked my head, as did the Little Captain at the same instant. Instead of striking against shore the boat glided *under* the shore,—right under the point on which I had been standing.

‘It’s a cave,’ explained the Little Captain.

There was, in fact, a low arched opening in the rock, which had been concealed from our view while we had stood on shore, and we were gliding silently into what appeared to be an immense cave lit by a dim half-light. Peering ahead we saw the gleam of water as far as the eye could pierce.

The Little Captain called young Clery’s name, his voice ringing out strangely hollow in that vaulted place. But the answering shout I hoped for did not come.

The boys of St. Fintan's College discuss the coming of a new master. They resolve to give him a lively time of it. When, however, 'Old Snuffy,' as the boys respectfully call the Rev. President, introduces Kilgallon, something in the new master's personality interests and attracts them. They call him 'The Little Captain' and are soon listening to his stories of Wolfe Tone and Thomas Russell, and taking a breathless interest in 'The Wandering Hawk,'—the name given to a noted Fenian organiser, one John Dunleavy, alias Warren, on whose head is the price of £500. A strolling tin whistler comes to the College and is seen in secret conference with the Little Captain. Several of the boys make an expedition to the island of Inishglasogue. Their boat founders. Young Clery disappears. The Little Captain comes on the scene and he and Dwyer (who tells the story) enter a water cave in search of him.

CHAPTER V THE EAGLE'S NEST

The boat glided swiftly and smoothly through the semi-dark. The impression I had was that I was noiselessly treading the aisle of some great dim cathedral. What looked like carved pillars loomed up vaguely on each side, and I half expected to see at length a great altar with a lamp burning before it. Kilgallon was now merely paddling, from which I concluded that he had no longer depth for his former vigorous strokes; presently the boat grated gently on a little sandy beach which gleamed white through the dusk. The Little Captain sprang out and I followed him.

The sea came no further into the cave. It lapped there with a very quiet soothing sound. It was like a ghostly sea making a ghostly sound in some still underworld. At times there seemed a little gentle laugh and at times a little gentle sigh in its utterance. The stern of the boat swayed almost imperceptibly. Everything else was perfectly still.

Kilgallon stood motionless, but his gaze seemed to be piercing into the dimness ahead of us and his ear bent to catch the slightest whisper that might come floating through the silence.

‘We must push on,’ he said to me in a moment.

‘How do you know Clery has gone on, Sir?’ I asked.

‘He swam as far as here,’ said Kilgallon, ‘and waded ashore. Look at his footprints.’

There was in fact the distinct track of bare feet on the sand. The trail wound round and round as if Clery had first moved about reconnoitring: then it started off in a definite direction as if he had made up his mind to push on into the cave. We followed it easily enough, Kilgallon occasionally striking a match from a box I had given him. The cavern evidently ran for a considerable distance into the heart of the island. The vaulted roof was now nearer to us than it had been, and the walls on each side were drawing together. The cave was becoming a corridor. The sandy floor had been replaced by a slippery floor of rock on which the trail was no longer legible. Here and there, where there was a little moist earth, Kilgallon by stooping down and striking a match was able to make out the imprint, or part of the imprint, of a foot. Presently complete darkness closed us in. With only half-a-box of matches to light us (Kilgallon’s matches were wet and useless) it was impossible to follow the trail further. Yet we kept on, for there was no evidence that young Clery had gone back. Unless he had wandered into some side alley that we had missed he must be ahead of us.

‘He had a nerve to come in here by himself,’ I whispered to Kilgallon. In spite of the feeling of confidence which the Little Captain’s presence gave me I was myself a good deal daunted by the darkness and the stillness. I kept as close behind the Little Captain as I could. He felt his way very cautiously, evidently exploring for openings in the side. After a little while he stopped.

‘We have come to a dead wall,’ he said.

I crept to his side and put out my hands. There was a wall of rock in front of us. Looking up, we saw the faintest possible gleam of light coming from what appeared to be a narrow chink high up in its face. The Little Captain contemplated it for a few moments.

‘Are you good at climbing?’ he asked.

‘Fair,’ I said.

‘We’ve got to go up here.’

Without more ado he commenced the ascent of the cliff. I followed him as soon as he had gone a little way. It was not altogether as difficult as it had looked, for one could always find little projections on which to grip with hands and feet. The strain on the muscles was terrible, and there were moments when I felt that it would be an immense relief to let go my hold and jump or fall to the bottom. But the Little Captain went steadily on and up, giving me an occasional word of encouragement or warning. I set my teeth and toiled after him. Where he went, where young Clery had gone, I must follow. Once or twice, finding a more secure foothold than usual, we rested for a few seconds.

The light grew brighter, and what had appeared at first to be a narrow chink began to reveal itself as a large opening. Slowly Kilgallon drew near it, reached it, swung himself up into it. Then he leaned forward and stretched me a strong helping hand. Soon I crouched panting beside him.

We were in a little chamber opening at mid height off what resembled a great natural shaft connecting that strange underworld with the upper air. The chamber was comparatively bright, being lit by an opening very far up. I could see what looked like heather stirring on the lip of the opening, and the patch of sky that the opening framed. Kilgallon threw around him a quick glance. Suddenly he sprang forward. With a cry I bounded after him.

The body of young Clery, very white and very still, lay on the floor of the little chamber. Near it, also on the ground, fluttered something large and dark,—a great bird of some kind. As I sprang past that restless shape to kneel down beside young Clery I caught for a moment the fierce gleam of an eye. It seemed to me that some wild strong creature was gasping out its life there. And young Clery?

The Little Captain was already on his knees beside him, and was chafing his cold body. On the white of the bare arm I saw two cruel wounds, close together.

‘It’s only a faint,’ said the Little Captain. ‘Your coat.’

I pulled off my coat, which he wrapped around young Clery.

‘Your handkerchief.’

I gave it to him, and the Little Captain quickly bound the wounded arm.

‘Help me to warm him,’ he commanded as his fingers moved quickly yet gently with the bandage.

It did not take very much exertion on our part to bring back a faint glow into Clery’s cheek and warmth to his limbs. He opened his eyes with a little smile and said:

‘Where is the eagle?’

I glanced round at the fierce dying thing on the rocky shelf. It was struggling more feebly now.

‘I am sorry,’ said young Clery with pity in his voice. ‘But I couldn’t help it.’

‘What happened?’ asked Kilgallon, who was now wrapping my waistcoat round young Clery’s legs. His own clothes were wet, and Clery’s were still on the beach where he had dived.

‘I came up here. I was starting to climb to the top when the eagle swooped down on me. I must have been near his eyrie. I put up my arm to save my face and his talons went into it. I tried to catch him by the throat. He drew off and was coming at me again. I had just time to grab that big stone that was loose in the cliff and hurl it at him with all my strength. I don’t remember any more till I saw you kneeling beside me.’

‘You’re a good lad,’ said Kilgallon. That commendation from the Little Captain was equal to being hailed as a hero by any other man. While I felt young Clery had done an almost incredible thing I felt that the Little Captain had adequately spoken his praise.

‘It’s well the stone was there,’ said Clery simply.

We looked down at the dying eagle. The last flickers of his splendid life were coming and going. He lay almost still, in a pool of dark red blood; then, making a final effort to rise and uttering a little hoarse scream, he subsided and became rigid.

‘He’s dead,’ said Kilgallon.

‘Poor old chap,’ said young Clery, who was more moved than I had ever seen him.

‘I’m sorry I ever blundered in here. I should be kicked.’

‘What sort of eagle is he, Sir?’ I asked Kilgallon.

‘A sea eagle. You can tell him by his white tail and whitish head. He was a full-grown bird.’

‘I didn’t think there were any here.’

‘Yes, I’ve seen one before—on the Glassing Rocks. Perhaps it was this one or its mate. I’ve seen them on the Saltees too. They often build on islands. In Connemara they build even on the lake-islands. We’ll call this chamber the Eagle’s Nest in memory of him.’

I stooped to examine the dead eagle more closely. Young Clery shivered.

‘You must be cold, child,’ said Kilgallon gently. ‘How about getting back?’

They must both have been cold, for Kilgallon had been in wet clothes for over half-an-hour and young Clery had been without any clothes at all for nearly an hour. The question now was whether we should return the way we had come or carry out Clery’s original intention of ascending from the chamber to the opening high above it. The Little Captain decided quickly in favour of the latter.

‘We can swim in for the boat after,’ he said.

So we started up the face of the rock. It was a more difficult climb than, but not so long as, the one we had already made from the lower cave. The Little Captain went very cautiously, helping young Clery who was still shaky. It took us a long while, and I at least was several times on the point of giving up in despair; but at last we climbed painfully out, one by one, into the bright clear air.

We found ourselves near the highest point of the island, and quite a little distance from the sea. Kilgallon insisted on taking young Clery in his arms, and we went at a spanking pace down the somewhat rugged and precipitous face of the hill. With unerring instinct the Little Captain guided himself towards the point where our adventure had begun,—the little cave where Patsy Byrne’s boat had sunk, where Clery had dived, and where his clothes lay on the beach. As we hurried on I told him in snatches what had happened before his sudden appearance. I noticed curiously that Clery no more than I had seemed surprised to see the Little Captain and had never once asked him how he got there.

We sang out lustily as we reached the beach, and there came to us answering cries from the lads. They had naturally congregated at the cove as soon as young Clery's and my absence had begun to cause them apprehension. They opened their mouths in mute but eloquent surprise when they saw us appear, plus the Little Captain, from a totally unexpected direction.

'Clery's clothes,' ordered the Little Captain.

Sweeney came running to meet us with them. Clery was quickly dressed.

'Take him back to camp now and give him something to eat and drink,' said Kilgallon. 'I'll bring round the boat.' And away he went leaving us all talking at once.

At the camp, young Clery told his tale briefly. When he had dived to recover the eatables he had discovered the mouth of the cave. While we thought he was dressing he had gone into the water again bent on exploration. He had explored to such good purpose that he had discovered the Eagle's Nest and a hitherto unknown underground passage from the shore to the summit of Inishglasogue. His fight with the eagle he dismissed almost as laconically as in his narrative to Kilgallon and me in the cave. It did not occur to him to be proud of it: rather he was vexed and grieved at having caused the eagle's death.

'What could I do?' he said, by way of exculpation. 'He would have pecked my eyes out.'

The Little Captain returned sooner than we had expected him. To our amazement and delight he brought with him sandwiches, tea, sugar, milk and a kettle.

'Have you a good fire, lads?' he cried cheerily. 'I want to make tea.'

A few extra sticks and some judicious blowing by Sweeney and O'Driscoll, stretched in ridiculous positions on the ground, soon gave us a noble fire, and in a few minutes the Little Captain's kettle was singing merrily. He wet and brewed his tea with the art of a connoisseur. There was but one teacup between us—this too the Little Captain had brought—so that we had to take our tea one by one; but conversation and sandwiches (rich beefy sandwiches they were, very

creditable to the Little Captain's taste in such matters) filled up the gaps of waiting. The Little Captain expanded and cracked jokes and told us stories; genial stories which made us laugh, and exciting stories which thrilled us. He revealed himself to us in a new light that day: extraordinary capable, yet extraordinary human and boyish; we felt (and I believe it was the actual fact) that he was enjoying our society as much as we were enjoying his, that he was living in the gaiety of that hour as fully as we were.

We rowed home in time for supper, and no questions were asked either by the President or by the Dean.

'What explanation will we give about Patsy Byrne's boat?' asked Joyce just before we landed.

'I'll make that all right with him,' said the Little Captain.

And he was as good as his word. From that day until the day we left St. Fintan's Patsy Byrne never exhibited the slightest curiosity on the subject of his boat. One would have imagined that the disappearance of a boat from her moorings was so everyday an occurrence in Patsy Byrne's experience as to call for absolutely no comment. Afterwards we clubbed together and sent Patsy an order for two pounds anonymously through the post. To O'Sullivan's stupefaction, an anonymous donation of two pounds to the Football Club reached St. Fintan's two days later. We pirates knew, or thought we knew, that it had some obscure connection with Patsy Byrne and his boat. But we held our peace.

The boys of St. Fintan's College discuss the coming of a new master. They resolve to give him a lively time of it. When, however, 'Old Snuffy,' as the boys respectfully call the Rev. President, introduces Kilgallon, something in the new master's personality interests and attracts them. They call him 'The Little Captain' and are soon listening to his stories of Wolfe Tone and Thomas Russell, and taking a breathless interest in 'The Wandering Hawk,'—the name given to a noted Fenian organiser, one John Dunleavy, alias Warren, on whose head is the price of £500. A strolling tin whistler comes to the College and is seen in secret conference with the Little Captain. Several of the boys make an expedition to the island of Inishglasogue. Their boat founders. Young Clery disappears. The Little Captain comes on the scene and he and Dwyer (who tells the story) enter a water cave in search of him. The cave leads into the interior of Inishglasogue where in a cleft which they name the Eagle's Nest they find young Clery wounded after a victorious fight with a sea eagle.

CHAPTER VI IN WHICH THE HAWK TAKES FLIGHT

Young Clery went about with his left arm in a sling for a few days. The wounds had seemed very terrible when I first saw them, but the recuperative power of clean young flesh is wonderful. In a few weeks there remained only two crescent-shaped white marks between the wrist and the elbow to show where the eagle's talons had entered. I remember that the only bad beating in handball I ever gave Clery was when he played me (as Mesgedra fought Conall) one-armed. To the lads' inquiries as to how Clery had hurt himself we returned, by agreement, evasive answers. The Little Captain had said to us, as we rowed home, 'Boys, let's keep the secret of the Eagle's Nest to ourselves.' That suggestion was to us as a command. Wild horses would not have torn from any of us an admission that there was anything like a cave on Inishglasogue. Apart from the loyalty which we felt we owed to the merest suggestions of the Little Captain, even when we did not understand their import, we realised a certain sense of

adventure in having a secret and in sharing it with him. It was as if there were a little world of romance and hidden peril at our doors and known to us only. The Eagle's Nest became the symbol of a secret league.

The remainder of that term was distinguished by certain football matches in which St. Fintan's snatched hard-won and precious victories. O'Doherty captained us, and Sweeney, the calm and steady, was the mainstay of our backs. Young Clery, with arm in a sling, did daring and astonishing things in his place among the forwards. The opposing pack always put a great hulking full-back to mark young Clery, but you might as well put a man to mark a flash of lightning. It is one of my proudest memories that I had a place on that team,—the St. Fintan's team of 1866-7. You can read its exploits in the now yellowing pages of the *Fintonian* of that year: you will see my name there along with O'Doherty's and Sweeney's and O'Sullivan's and young Clery's, and if you have ever played football you will thrill at the narrative of how Sweeney saved the goal in our match with Clongowes and how young Clery shot the drop-goal that gave us the victory over Rockwell. Those were great days.

Kilgallon took a kindly interest in our games, but he did not play football himself. The only game he played was handball, and he was one of the best handball players I have ever seen. Indeed Kilgallon and young Clery were the most formidable combination in handball that had been known at St. Fintan's in our time: they could give O'Doherty and Sweeney five points and beat them. The Little Captain was often present by invitation at the meetings of the Football Committee and he used to help us to pick our teams. In fact, we often left the final decision as to the inclusion or non-inclusion of a man, or the placing of a player, to him, and he never made a mistake. He knew by instinct what each lad could do and what he couldn't do. It was owing to Kilgallon's unerring judgment that Sweeney was in the right place when we beat Clongowes: O'Doherty was for having him on the left, but Kilgallon said, 'Put Sweeney on the right and you'll win your match.' And we did; and we should have lost if we hadn't. That rightness and sureness of judgment was very remarkable in a man that did not play football himself. I sometimes explain it to myself by saying that a man with a

great vision and at the same time of great mental clarity and of swift decisions can be great in anything. Napoleon may never have played football, but he would have been the most wonderful captain of a football team that ever lived; and Kilgallon was like Napoleon.

So that term drew to an end, memorable for its triumphs in football and still more memorable for the coming of the Little Captain; and we went home to good cheer and domestic warmth and the short days and merry evenings of the Christmas vacation. My father took me up to Dublin to see the pantomime, and I asked him to go through Parliament Street that I might pass by the house where the Fenian newspaper had had its office. At home there was a good deal of anxiety on the subject of the Fenians: I heard people saying that they were preparing to rise, and asking if Stephens was still in America, and wondering where the Wandering Hawk was. And everyone agreed that though the Wandering Hawk was a very dreadful and a very mysterious personage he was very brave, and that if he was still in the country there would be a fight, big or little. But whether he was in the country or not no one could tell, for he had been very quiet of late.

Going back to school after the Christmas vacation is always harder than going back at any other time. But I went back with somewhat better cheer that year than ever before or after, for I felt a kind of subdued elation or excitement as if I were about to see, and take part in, adventurous and perilous things. And this feeling was secretly connected with the Little Captain and with young Clery. Always I linked those two together in my imagination and always I saw myself sharing dangers and toils with them. Young Clery had not arrived when I reached St. Fintan's. I sought out Sweeney, and we two talked quietly in a corner of the Study Hall fireplace—it was an immense fireplace, a regular alcove, and, if one were not crowded out too far by other fellows, was a genial and comfortable place to sit in. Sweeney had seen the Little Captain for a moment: he had arrived while Sweeney was carrying in his trunk. Splothery appeared; O'Driscoll, Burke, O'Sullivan, Nelson, Joyce, Quominus, MacGavock; 'our crowd' would be complete if Clery were come. Ah, that was his laugh. We greeted him in the nonchalant way that schoolboys affect towards one another,

but everyone felt glad of his sunny presence. The Little Captain looked in on us during the evening. He has been in the South, he said, and in the West, and in Dublin. We had often noticed that he knew every part of Ireland.

‘You must spend a lot on railway fares, Sir,’ said Quominus.

‘I do most of my travelling on foot,’ said the Little Captain smiling.

He was in truth an amazing walker. He often went away on the Saturday afternoons, returning to College in time for Monday morning’s classes. He made these week-end excursions with increased frequency from the opening of the new term, and we missed his company on our Sunday walks. Sunday walks were an institution at St. Fintan’s, and they had been most unpopular till the Little Captain came. When the Little Captain accompanied us, as he often did even when not on duty, he animated and transfigured the whole proceeding. What had been a solemn parade became a march in search of adventure. He often broke us up into little groups with instructions to re-assemble at a given place and time; and no one ever failed to keep the tryst, which would have been the danger if another master had been concerned. He had gained a very intimate knowledge of the district, and led us down to lonely little strands by the sea and up to unfrequented hollows in the hills. As dusk fell, and sometimes even after dark, we marched home together singing. The cottiers must often have been startled by the beat of ‘Marching through Georgia’ or the anthem-like strains of ‘John Brown’s Body’ or the defiant clarion-call of ‘The West’s Awake’ rolling down to them from the darkening hills.

One memorable walk we had on a Sunday evening in February. We went through ‘the Hole in the Wall’—a gap leading from one of our fields into Feagh Wood; crossed Feagh, came out on the road above Barna Forge, tramped to Desertconnla, where we bought biscuits in a publichouse and saw the proclamation about the Wandering Hawk—which the Little Captain read through carefully—outside the police barrack; then on to Killconnla Churchyard, where in the gathering dusk we tried to read the inscription on the tombs; in on the mountain then, skirting Grey Man’s Pool, and along Grey Man’s Path to the shoulder

of Cruach. From Cruach we watched the moon rising over Inver Bay: the islands stood out dark, and we saw the white line of surf at the feet of the Glassing Rocks. We came down a mountainside that seemed all silvered over: we could count the very blades of grass as we trod them under foot, so bright was the moon. On to the crisp road (there was a nip of frost in the air) and home we went, singing our songs. The Little Captain walked with Sweeney and me, and in the intervals of the singing he talked about the stars.

That night would have remained in our memories even if the tremendous event of the next day had not fixed it there. Afterwards we looked back upon it as the majestic ending of a chapter in our lives,—a chapter in which the ordinary and the droll and the romantic had variously intermingled; for it seemed then, and still seems in the retrospect, that our school life had been shot through with romance since the Little Captain came.

A new and breathless chapter opened the next day. We were sitting at French. Kilgallon was reading us one of Lamartine's poems when the classroom door opened. Old Snuffy came in. His face was pale, but there was a little red flush on each cheek-bone. His lip trembled as if with some agitation he was trying to suppress.

'Mr. Kilgallon,—' he began.

The Little Captain looked up from his book, and then rose. Immediately the door was pushed open, and a number of men filled the doorway. They were constabularymen with rifles. One came forward into the room. By his sword and uniform we guessed him to be the County Inspector. Behind him stood another whom we recognised as the District Inspector. Old Snuffy turned to them with a little burst of anger.

'Really, gentlemen,' he said, 'you are intruding. I did not intend you to follow me to the class-room.'

'We cannot take any risks, Canon,' replied the County Inspector. 'We are dealing with a very dangerous man.'

He advanced across the room closely followed by the District Inspector and two constabularymen. The Little Captain stood perfectly

quiet and collected where he had risen from his seat. He was the only calm man in the room.

‘You go by the name of Owen Kilgallon?’ said the County Inspector to the Little Captain.

‘I do.’

‘I have a warrant here for your arrest as a Fenian organiser.’

He produced a paper and motioned to the two constabularymen to come forward. In a twinkling of the eye handcuffs were slipped on the wrists of the Little Captain. He made no resistance.

‘I am sorry, Sir,’ he said to Old Snuffy: ‘I did not intend to bring this notoriety on the College.’

‘It is an honourable notoriety, Mr. Kilgallon,’ said Old Snuffy; and with that he turned and glared at the Inspector.

‘We’ll be getting along now,’ said that functionary, half brusquely, half apologetically, ‘I regret this intrusion, Canon’—to Old Snuffy. ‘If you please, Sir,’—to the Little Captain.

Kilgallon glanced at us with the old boyish smile. It was just his usual smile, with no constraint and no swagger in it. That was his only farewell. Then he quietly followed the Inspector, and the others closed around him. The group went out on the door and moved down the corridor.

Without any permission asked or given, we left our seats and followed at a little distance. None of us spoke. Our hearts were big, and yet we felt a strange exaltation. We did not believe that all was over yet.

Nor was all over. The little procession was walking down the corridor, a constabularyman on each side of Kilgallon, the County Inspector in front, the District Inspector behind. Suddenly, as they passed an open window on the left, the Little Captain, acting on one of those instantaneous decisions of his, hurtled aside the constable that walked on his left, and, before anyone could stop him, sprang clean through the window on to the gravel path beneath. I had a glimpse of him fleeing across the lawn. Two or three constables sprang after him; the rest, headed by the Inspectors, raced along the corridor to the front door. We followed, breathless.

Arrived at the front door, and crowding through on to the steps and gravel walk, we saw the Little Captain flying like the wind across the level sward of the lawn. Policemen panted after him. The lawn was bounded on its far side by a hedge; a gap and stile in the hedge led to the playfield. For this Kilgallon was making. It was evident that he would reach it before the police. Knowing the ground better, he had, we felt, a chance of escape. Through the playfield he could reach Feagh Wood and the hillsides. And who could catch him there?

Now he was at the gap. But suddenly from the far side of the stile rose a constabularyman. Was the Little Captain hemmed in? Our hearts literally stood still. Then we saw an amazing thing. Raising his two manacled hands above his head the Little Captain brought them down on the constable's skull. The constable simply dropped, and the Little Captain sped over the stile into the playfield.

'The Hole in the Wall, Sir,' sang out a voice beside me. I know it was young Clery's.

A halloo came ringing back. The Little Captain altered his course, showing that he understood and approved of young Clery's suggestion. The 'Hole in the Wall' was an exit contrived by us boys for our own purposes, and would almost certainly not be known to or guarded by the police.

Simultaneously we heard the County Inspector give the order to fire. A volley rang out from the police carbines. When the smoke cleared away we saw the figure of the Little Captain still speeding unwearied towards the Hole in the Wall.

'Is it legal to shoot, Inspector?' asked Old Snuffy, his face white, and his voice vibrating with wrath.

The County Inspector lost all patience. He turned right round on the President of St. Fintan's and shouted at him:

'Hell's blazes, Sir, do you know that that man is the Wandering Hawk?'

The boys of St. Fintan's College discuss the coming of a new master. They resolve to give him a lively time of it. When, however, 'Old Snuffy,' as the boys respectfully call the Rev. President, introduces Kilgallon, something in the new master's personality interests and attracts them. They call him 'The Little Captain' and are soon listening to his stories of Wolfe Tone and Thomas Russell, and taking a breathless interest in 'The Wandering Hawk,'—the name given to a noted Fenian organiser, one John Dunleavy, alias Warren, on whose head is the price of £500. A strolling tin whistler comes to the College and is seen in secret conference with the Little Captain. Several of the boys make an expedition to the island of Inishglasogue. Their boat founders. Young Clery disappears. The Little Captain comes on the scene and he and Dwyer (who tells the story) enter a water cave in search of him. The cave leads into the interior of Inishglasogue where in a cleft which they name the Eagle's Nest they find young Clery wounded after a victorious fight with a sea eagle. One day, as he sits in his classroom, a police force enters and arrests the Little Captain as a Fenian organiser. He effects a daring escape, and the County Inspector astonishes the President and students of St. Fintan's by announcing that the Little Captain is the Wandering Hawk.

CHAPTER VII

IN WHICH WE BURN THE *Patriot's Journal*

Most men remember two or three moments in their lives when a great wave of emotion has swept through them,—an emotion so exalted and so joyous as to have some of the poignancy of pain. Such a moment to me was the moment when I first saw Pius IX and heard the Roman crowd acclaim him as 'il Papa-Ré.' Such a moment was the moment when, homeward bound after being away from Ireland for twenty years, I tumbled up from a ship's cabin on hearing the cry 'Old Head of Kinsale in the offing.' But the emotions of those moments were faint and ordinary compared with the emotion of the moment in which I heard the Police Inspector shout 'Do you know that that man is the Wandering Hawk?' And every fellow there felt the same emotion; aye,

and Old Snuffy felt it. No one of this generation can quite understand what it was to us, for no one of this generation has come under the spell of that name as we and our fathers came under it. The doings of the Wandering Hawk—his flights from place to place, his hair-breadth escapes, his daring disguises, his always successful stratagems—had grown into a legend in every part of Ireland: they had been the open talk of all our firesides during the Christmas Vacation, they had for six months now been the whispered talk of playground and dormitory at St. Fintan's. And there was the Wandering Hawk himself, the Hawk taking flight, the Hawk away to the hills, the Hawk again triumphant, and the foes of the Hawk baffled; and the Hawk was our friend and teacher and leader, the Hawk was Kilgallon, the Hawk was the Little Captain!

As the portentous meaning of all this flashed through our minds, we vented the wonder and pride and emotion of the moment as schoolboys alone can adequately vent such feelings: in a cheer, yea, in a yell that went floating over the lawn and fields and woods bearing the message of our love and fealty and good hope to the man that was fleeing towards Feagh with a price upon his head. And it was long a tradition in St. Fintan's that *Old Snuffy joined in the cheer!*

That cheer did for the County Inspector. He sputtered something in which we detected only the words 'all damned Fenians.' We thought he was going to drop down in a fit. Young Clery relieved the tension by bursting into his merry laugh. We all laughed hysterically. The County Inspector and the District Inspector started across the lawn in the wake of the police. Far off we saw the Little Captain bounding through the Hole in the Wall into Feagh Wood. Let them catch him there if they can!

'We will resume work, boys,' said Old Snuffy, trying to speak and look as if a tremendous thing had not happened.

Tongues were now unloosed and we trooped back into the corridor all talking together. We were exhilarated as if by wine. Some of us were laying bets on the Little Captain. Others were describing to those who had not seen them the leap of the Little Captain through the window and the terrific blow of his manacled hands with which he had

downed the policeman that rose from behind the stile. The whole school had now turned out in addition to our class, and the news had spread like wildfire that the Little Captain was the Wandering Hawk, that he was away to Feagh Wood and to the hills, and that the Rising would be in a few days. Masters passed among us and urged us into the classrooms; Old Snuffy clapped his hands and said, 'Now, boys, back to work'; the Dean clanged his bell. Gradually we melted into our classrooms and made a pretence of resuming study. MacDonnell went through the farce of a lesson on quadratic equations; O'Mara mumbled out a chapter or two of Cicero, and carefully noted down all our names for inattention during Thucydides,—as if Thucydides mattered more than the Wandering Hawk, more than the Little Captain! At last the school day came to an end and we poured out into the playfield to finish our talk.

That night after Rosary Old Snuffy came into the Study Hall and said to MacDonnell, who was on duty, that he would detain us for a few minutes. He mounted the rostrum and we sat upright on our benches with arms folded on the desks in front of us. We knew that something about the Little Captain was coming.

'Boys,' began Old Snuffy, somewhat nervously, and as if fumbling about for the right words, 'I feel I ought to say something to you with regard to the event of this afternoon. First, some of you will be interested to hear that Mr. Kilgallon—I mean, Mr. Dunleavy—has, so far, not been taken by the—'

A wild burst of cheering interrupted him. He made no effort to stop it. We paused of our own accord, for we wanted to hear what else he had to say. The President went on:

'I cannot pretend that I am altogether in sympathy with the aims—or, at any rate, with the methods—of the brave, but, as I fear, misguided men with whom it appears that our late master has been prominently associated. But I will say this'—and Old Snuffy's voice trembled—'that there has been among us a very good and a very valiant man and that we are all a little bit better of having known him.'

Another cheer greeted these words, and Old Snuffy, thinking perhaps that he had said quite as much as was wise, walked down the

Study Hall holding his head very high, as was his manner when he was conscious of having done his duty. We gave a special cheer for Old Snuffy himself as he marched out, for, though some of us thought the ‘misguided men’ part unduly tame, we all felt that Old Snuffy had acted well in the matter, that his tribute to the Little Captain had been prompted by real generosity of feeling, and that, on the whole, the President of St. Fintan’s was ‘a good old skin.’

Next morning everyone was avid for a sight of a newspaper. Now newspapers were forbidden at St. Fintan’s, and the Dean had several times caned boys for having them unlawfully in their possession. Judge of our surprise and gratification when after breakfast the Dean handed the *Patriot’s Journal* carelessly to O’Doherty, and said that perhaps the boys would like to have a glance at Father John Burke’s charity sermon. We had not suspected the Dean either of such good-nature or of such subtlety.

In a prominent part of the *Patriot* we found a highly-coloured and inaccurate report of the attempted arrest and escape of ‘the notorious Fenian leader, Dunleavy *alias* Warren, commonly known as the “Wandering Hawk,” at a well-known Catholic College in the provinces,’ whose authorities were of course quite ignorant of the ‘dangerous character’ of the ‘wolf in sheep’s clothing’ that had ‘abused their hospitality and generosity’ by ‘masquerading as a teacher of languages.’ Dunleavy had, it seems, made a ‘murderous and totally unprovoked assault’ on a ‘brave constable who took part in the attempted arrest.’ The paper added that ‘the miscreant was still at large,’ but that County Inspector Jaggard was ‘hot on the scent and would soon have him by the heels.’

That evening we publicly burned the *Patriot’s Journal* in the classroom quadrangle.

For two days no rumour of the Wandering Hawk reached us. We were all nervous and anxious. Was he near or far off? Had he reached a place of safety or was he fleeing in deadly peril? Should we ever see him again? In the playroom and in the billiard room we retailed to one another in subdued voices anecdotes of his life among us,—sayings of his, little traits of character, little acts of comradeship. Only, we of the

pirate crew never spoke of the Eagle's Nest: that was between us and him.

On the fourth night after the flight of the Hawk, I was awakened in bed by some unaccustomed sound. I listened. It came again: a little tinkling as of sand or gravel against the window. My bed was next to the window, and separated from it only by a narrow passage in which was a locker for my clothes. I sat up and listened very intently. There it was again. I leaned over and touched young Clery who slept in the next bed—we had no cubicles at St. Fintan's. He woke in the quiet bright way that was characteristic of him,—just opened his eyes and looked at me inquiringly. Young Clery was famous for waking up all at once when he was called, instead of coming back to consciousness by slow and undignified stages like most fellows. I whispered to him:

‘There is someone throwing pebbles at the window.’

Young Clery slipped out of bed without a word. I did the same. He came round to the window where I already stood.

‘We'll open the window,’ he whispered, naturally taking the lead, which I yielded to him just as naturally. ‘Make no noise.’

Had we been professional housebreakers of long experience and established reputation we could not have opened the window more softly than we did. We raised it with infinite caution, just sufficiently to allow us to thrust out our heads and shoulders. Then we peered forth into a cloudy night with a drizzle of rain in it. On the gravel walk stood a figure which we recognised even in the uncertain light. It was the Little Captain.

‘Who is there?’ came up his voice.

‘Dwyer and Clery.’

‘Wait till I climb up to you.’

He commenced to ascend, holding on by the ivy which covered the front of the College. We waited silently and without excitement. When he came close he grasped each of our hands in turn, holding on by his own left hand. Then he spoke rapidly.

‘I want you to do something for me.’

We nodded.

‘You remember the tin whistler that came one day and played “Billy Byrne of Ballymanus”?’

‘Yes, Sir.’

‘I expect him to come again in two days from now. I want one or both of you to get a chance of speaking to him for a minute and to give him this message. Listen carefully so that you’ll remember the words: “The Hawk will be on Inishglasogue on Thursday night. Meet the boys in the Priest’s Cave on Cruagh at ten o’clock. Bring six of them in a boat to Inishglasogue. At twelve o’clock the Hawk will come out of the secret passage that leads to the Eagle’s Nest.” Can you repeat that now?’

Each of us repeated it.

‘That’s all. You see we’re making use of your cave, Phil,’ he added to young Clery with his humorous smile. ‘Good night, lads. Good luck.’

‘Good night, Sir. Good luck.’

He gripped each of our hands again in his own warm hand—he had the softest and most delicate hand I ever knew on a man—and commenced his descent. We watched it silently. Then we watched him steal away in the shadow first of the house and then of the hedge. Soon his figure faded into the greyness of the night. We closed the window softly and returned to bed.

Clery and I so fully realised the necessity of absolute secrecy in the task that had been entrusted to us that, by tacit understanding, we did not speak of it even to each other. We worked and played as usual. But, working or playing, during every instant of the next two days our ears were alert to catch the strains of ‘Billy Byrne of Ballymanus’ on a tin whistle.

The boys of St. Fintan's College discuss the coming of a new master. They resolve to give him a lively time of it. When, however, 'Old Snuffy,' as the boys respectfully call the Rev. President, introduces Kilgallon, something in the new master's personality interests and attracts them. They call him 'The Little Captain' and are soon listening to his stories of Wolfe Tone and Thomas Russell, and taking a breathless interest in 'The Wandering Hawk,'—the name given to a noted Fenian organiser, one John Dunleavy, alias Warren, on whose head is the price of £500. A strolling tin whistler comes to the College and is seen in secret conference with the Little Captain. Several of the boys make an expedition to the island of Inishglasogue. Their boat founders. Young Clery disappears. The Little Captain comes on the scene and he and Dwyer (who tells the story) enter a water cave in search of him. The cave leads into the interior of Inishglasogue where in a cleft which they name the Eagle's Nest they find young Clery wounded after a victorious fight with a sea eagle. One day, as he sits in his classroom, a police force enters and arrests the Little Captain as a Fenian organiser. He effects a daring escape, and the County Inspector astonishes the President and students of St. Fintan's by announcing that the Little Captain is the Wandering Hawk. A few nights later the Hawk comes secretly to the College and asks Clery and Dwyer to convey a message to the Tin Whistler.

CHAPTER VIII

THE TIN WHISTLER

On the third morning after that midnight visit the Little Captain's successor came to St. Fintan's. He was one Turner. The two remarkable things about him were the impressive height of his collars and an accent which was understood to be English. He had been at Stoneyhurst, as he told us more than once, and we took it that his collars and his accent were the sign manual of Stoneyhurst. He used to say to us 'you Irish chaps,' which failed to annoy us; especially after we had found out that his people kept a public house in the Coombe. For the rest, he was not

a bad sort. We conferred upon him the appropriate name of Collared Head, and we gave him only the amount of deference which such a product deserved.

At after-dinner play that afternoon Sweeney and I were fooling in the handball alley. I was too restless to settle down to a good game. Young Clery, on the other hand, was the leading spirit in a boisterous group on the football ground. They were shooting goals by way of practice, and one would have thought that Clery's only interest in life was shooting goals. He had such clever quick ways on the football field, and did such unexpected things, that it was always exciting to play with him; and it was the same in handball. I was watching him out of one corner of my eye while pretending to keep up a game with Sweeney. Anyone less good-humoured than Sweeney would have thrown the ball at me and left the alley. Sweeney contented himself with saying:

‘You’re playing rotten.’

‘I know I am,’ I said. ‘I’m off handball this while back.’

At that moment I heard ‘Billy Byrne of Ballymanus’ on a tin whistle.

‘I’ll chuck this game,’ I said.

‘You’re odious mean,’ said Sweeney. And he shouted across the field to MacGavock who came and took my place.

I sauntered away with my hands in my pocket. Sweeney and I were such good friends that I hated having a secret from him. I resolved that, with young Clery’s consent, he should be told everything as soon as we felt at liberty to breathe a word. We would give him a thrilling description of the midnight visit of the Little Captain.

Young Clery had already left the group that was around the goal-post and was strolling nonchalantly towards the gate of the field. I wondered how he had managed to hear ‘Billy Byrne’ above the racket that he and the others were making. We met at the gate.

‘Have a baaz round the lawn, John?’ he said carelessly, as I joined him. I am not sure of the spelling of the word baaz, nor of its origin, whether Indo-European or otherwise. It was our word for a more or less innocent ruse by which one might obtain a desirable object, such as getting off class; and, by extension, it meant a stroll through some

forbidden place, such as across the lawn or through the wood to the Hole in the Wall. To do a baaz was not necessarily dishonourable. It was only a temporary ignoring of one of the minor conventions imposed upon us, without consulting us, by the powers that were.

‘Have a baaz round the lawn, John?’ said young Clery carelessly.

‘Don’t mind,’ I said.

And we sauntered out of the gate and round the gravel path which encircled the lawn. The tin whistler was playing before the front door, a battered disreputable figure. His tangle of hair and beard was so red as to verge on crimson. His hat came down in a sort of debauched way over his right eye. His left eye had a patch on it. His clothes were shabby to the point of indecorum. His knees came through his trousers. His boots were down at heel and turned up at the toes. Altogether forlorn and outcast he seemed,—a ‘dead beater,’ as young Clery said. And yet he could discourse most excellent music on his tin whistle. He played ‘Billy Byrne’ defiantly and grandly to an audience consisting of Old Snuffy’s cat seated superciliously on the steps. All the lads were in the field; masters there were none to be seen.

Young Clery and I strolled up. When he finished he looked at us and pulled the brim of his debauched hat. Each of us produced a penny and placed it in his furtively outstretched hand.

‘Thank ye, young gintlemin,’ he said.

He looked straight into our eyes with his single uncovered eye. It was a keen eye with a flash in it. He seemed to be waiting for something more. Young Clery spoke at once.

‘We have a message for you from the Wandering Hawk.’

‘Yes, Sir.’ The tin whistler exhibited no surprise. He did not move from his position, but a certain indefinable alertness seemed to creep into his face and figure. He waited quietly for young Clery to go on.

‘The Hawk came the other night and woke up this fellow’—young Clery indicated me—‘and he woke up me. The Little Captain—that’s our name for the Hawk—told us you would be here in two days and that we were to give you this message.’ And young Clery repeated in the clear precise tone he had when he was in earnest about anything

the message of the Little Captain. 'Did I say it right, John?' he finished, turning to me.

I nodded.

'Yes,' I said.

The tin whistler had listened with the greatest attention.

'See have I got it right now,' said he.

He went through the message, dwelling carefully on the times and places.

'That's right,' said young Clery and I in a breath when he had finished.

'You're young to be in this, boys,' said the tin whistler. 'Take care of yourselves.'

Instinctively we held out our hands and he grasped each of them quickly. We felt akin with him in the same way, though of course in a very different degree, as we felt akin with the Wandering Hawk. Who he was we did not know and never subsequently learned. Enough for us that he was one of the devoted men who bore the hated and beloved name of Fenian.

'I'll give you's another tune now,' said the tin whistler, dropping back into the professional voice and manner of an itinerant music-maker. He played the 'Rakes of Mallow.' Young Clery and I sauntered back to the playfield. The tin whistler finished and shambled down the avenue.

Five minutes later we heard a pistol-shot; then another, and another. They seemed to be quite close,—not further off than the entrance gate. The noisy playfield was struck silent; each boy stopped in his place as if he had been suddenly turned to stone. Everything for a moment seemed as still and silent as a picture, except that our ears were still buzzing with the reports. Then, by a common impulse, we charged for a part of the hedge where it was thin and we could easily cross the wire fencing into the wood; through an angle of the wood we could reach the boundary wall at a point where it overlooked the road near the gate lodge. McRory, the gardener, met us in the wood. His face was white.

‘’Tis the tin whistler,’ he cried. ‘There’s a small army of polis round him. He’s fightin’ like a divil.’

Already half of us were astride on the wall. Right under us a desperate struggle was taking place. Over a dozen constabularymen were surging and swaying backward and forward on the road. In the middle of them was a figure which combated them with a magnificent and superhuman energy. It was the tin whistler. His coat was torn off. His hat was gone. There was a gash on his forehead. His face was pale with a sort of battle-light. His lips were parted and his teeth set. Two constabularymen lay very still on the ground. The fight was fought silently. There were no cries of encouragement, no moans of pain. One stubborn man was resisting twelve. It could end only in one way. Slowly they pinioned first one hand, then another. By sheer weight they bore him down to the ground. We heard the thud of his head as it struck the hard road. Even then he struggled. One knelt on each of his legs, two on his body. They took off their belts and bound him.

A curious thing happened. I thought for a moment that I caught his eye as he lay on the ground,—the patch that had been over one eye was gone, and he had two bright keen eyes.

A car appeared and they put him on it, bound. Three constabularymen mounted the car. Another car appeared, and they put the two wounded men on it; they were not dead, as we had at first thought. The rest of the police closed round the two cars and they moved off slowly.

McRory told us how it had all happened. As the tin whistler came out of the gate four constabularymen had sprung forward from behind the wall. Instantly the tin whistler had put his hand to his breast, drawn a revolver, and fired. One of the four fell. The tin whistler fired again and another fell. Then a shot from a second body of police struck the tin whistler on the forehead, and he staggered. A policeman, seizing the moment, dashed forward and wrested the revolver from him. Then the whole force closed in on him, and the terrific struggle to bring him to the ground commenced.

‘He must be one o’ the Wandherin’ Hawk’s min,’ concluded McRory.

Two of us knew he was. An instinct brought young Clery and me together as we walked back up the now darkening field.

‘Do you know,’ I whispered to Clery, ‘I thought I caught his eye as he lay on the ground.’

‘I thought I did, too,’ said Clery. ‘He recognised us. He was ... I think he was asking us to do something.’

We were both silent. The study bell began to ring.

‘John,’ said young Clery suddenly, as if he had made up his mind. ‘We must do it.’

‘You mean on Thursday night?’

‘Yes.’

‘Right,’ I said. And we went up to the bootroom with the other lads to change our boots for study.

We had both reached the same conclusion. I knew without asking any questions that young Clery had pieced the story together exactly as I had. The Wandering Hawk was to do something very important on Thursday night. To help him in this he wanted six men in a boat to be off Inishglasogue by midnight. The tin whistler—who was obviously a messenger by whom the Wandering Hawk communicated with his friends—was to bring these men to him. He was to select them from those whom he would find in the Priest’s Cave on Cruagh at ten o’clock. The tin whistler being gone, the Hawk’s message would not reach his friends when they met on Cruagh. The Hawk, indeed, might hear of the tin whistler’s arrest, and might be able to send another messenger. But could we be sure of this? He might be far away by now, and not come to the district at all until Thursday night. He might hear nothing of the tin whistler’s arrest, and go on with his plans expecting to be joined by the tin whistler and his men at midnight, on Inishglasogue. His whole scheme, whatever it was, might thus miscarry. Now on us had been laid the task of passing on the Hawk’s message to the tin whistler. We had done so, but the tin whistler was a prisoner. Did it not now devolve on us to see that the Hawk’s orders reached the men who would be gathered on Cruagh on Thursday night? To young Clery and to me it was clear that we ourselves, at whatever peril, must carry the message to the Priest’s Cave.

I felt this so definitely that I was able to put the matter away out of my head as a thing settled, and to work without any more than the ordinary distraction at study. Young Clery was entirely serene. He did his exercises with unusual care, ruling his margins with the utmost nicety and exactness; which to me, who knew him so well, was an indication that his mind was very busy with something else, for ordinarily his exercises were models of carelessness. When I rejoined him in the playroom after supper he had fully matured all the details of our plan. This was Tuesday. The night after tomorrow would be Thursday. We went to bed at 9; lights out at 9.15. As soon as lights were out and the fellows had settled down a little Clery and I were to dress ourselves again as quietly as we could, under the bedclothes. At 9.45 most of the fellows would be asleep. We would then rise, open the window, and climb down the ivy. Then away to Cruagh. It would take us a good half-hour at our topmost speed, and we should be a quarter of an hour late. We calculated that this quarter could be made up for subsequently.

Two difficulties presented themselves. The fellows might stay awake talking as they often did. The Dean, or O'Mara, or MacDonnell, or some other master might be on the prowl round the dormitories. The first must be risked: none of the fellows would give us away even if we had to get out of the window while they were all wide awake. To meet the second difficulty we needed an ally.

'We'll have to tell somebody,' said Clery.

'Sweeney,' said I.

'Right,' said Clery.

We told Sweeney that night. We told him everything.

'I wish I could go with you,' he said.

'It's enough for the two of us to be in it,' said Clery. 'If we're caught we'll be expelled. Besides, we've a job for you.'

'What do you want me to do?'

'To keep all masters out of the dorm,' said Clery.

'All right,' said Sweeney. 'I'll build a barricade if necessary.'

And so it was settled.

The boys of St. Fintan's College discuss the coming of a new master. They resolve to give him a lively time of it. When, however, 'Old Snuffy,' as the boys respectfully call the Rev. President, introduces Kilgallon, something in the new master's personality interests and attracts them. They call him 'The Little Captain' and are soon listening to his stories of Wolfe Tone and Thomas Russell, and taking a breathless interest in 'The Wandering Hawk,'—the name given to a noted Fenian organiser, one John Dunleavy, alias Warren, on whose head is the price of £500. A strolling tin whistler comes to the College and is seen in secret conference with the Little Captain. Several of the boys make an expedition to the island of Inishglasogue. Their boat founders. Young Clery disappears. The Little Captain comes on the scene and he and Dwyer (who tells the story) enter a water cave in search of him. The cave leads into the interior of Inishglasogue where in a cleft which they name the Eagle's Nest they find young Clery wounded after a victorious fight with a sea eagle. One day, as he sits in his classroom, a police force enters and arrests the Little Captain as a Fenian organiser. He effects a daring escape, and the County Inspector astonishes the President and students of St. Fintan's by announcing that the Little Captain is the Wandering Hawk. A few nights later the Hawk comes secretly to the College and asks Clery and Dwyer to convey a message to the Tin Whistler. They duly convey the message, but the tin whistler is captured by a force of police as he leaves the College. Clery and Dwyer decide that they must now themselves carry the message to the Hawk's friends who are to meet at night in the Priest's Cave on Conagh Mountain.

CHAPTER IX

IN WHICH WE TAKE THE FENIAN OATH

The stars in their courses fought for us. Witness the fact that the Dean, who would ordinarily have presided at second study on Thursday evening, was providentially afflicted with an abominable toothache and asked MacDonnell to take his place. With MacDonnell on duty one could make any racket one pleased in the Study Hall, short of playing

a brass band. That particular evening MacDonnell's contortions and chuckles gave us to understand that he had a particularly interesting set of Conic Sections to deal with. They seemed at once stubborn and tricky, full of resources and unexpected rallies, dying very hard. He wrestled with them with a sort of demoniac glee, most impressive for us to contemplate. During this Berserker struggle, MacDonnell was as oblivious of our presence, and of our comings and goings, as if we were on the planet Mars.

In these circumstances a sublime inspiration came to young Clery. He slipped out of his desk, crawled under cover from his place near the top of the Study Hall to the bottom, placed a stool under the clock, mounted the stool, and pushed on the hands of the clock a good half-hour. This done, he effected a skilful retreat. Everyone except MacDonnell had watched him with fascination. MacDonnell had been busy slaying a Conic Section. Clery's feat deserves to be recorded with that of the general of old who made time stop in order that he might win a battle. Clery had quite as effectively made time move on. MacDonnell was amazed beyond words when nine o'clock struck half-an-hour sooner than he had expected it. We all raced up to the dormitories, the Dean fortunately not being on the spot to detect the mysterious change that had taken place in the hours and seasons of things. We had gained a solid half-hour which might mean all the difference between the failure and the success of our dash to the Priest's Cave.

Clery, Sweeney, and I feigned an unusual somnolence, which materially helped in quietening things down in the dormitory. Sweeney and Clery were unofficial leaders of our dorm—Sweeney in virtue of his slight seniority and his frank good nature, Clery in virtue of the indefinable something in him which we all felt, yet could neither name nor explain—and the tone of the dorm on any particular night was always set by them. To-night they set, or seemed to set, the example of sleep, and MacDonnell was able to turn off the lights and get back to his Conic Sections in record time. As soon as he had closed the door behind him young Clery and I began to re-dress ourselves under the bedclothes. We were ready in five minutes. We waited five minutes

longer less MacDonnell should blunder back in again. All the lads were quiet; most of them asleep.

‘Keep nix now, Sweeney,’ said young Clery.

Sweeney slipped out of bed and moved noiselessly towards the door, where he posted himself sentry. Clery and I then slipped out and completed our costume by putting on our boots, and taking our caps from our pockets.

‘Whadyer doin’?’ asked Splothy sleepily.

‘Shut up, ass,’ said Sweeney.

The ass shut up. No one else stirred.

‘Raise the window now,’ said Clery.

Together we raised it inch by inch. It seemed to creak in a way it had never creaked before. It positively talked.

‘Hang this window,’ said Clery.

‘It is already hung,’ said I, attempting a feeble joke.

‘The joke hangs fire,’ said Clery, as he crawled through and began to disappear.

I was about to follow him when Sweeney said ‘nix!’

A hand had been placed on the outer nob of the door. Sweeney put his back against the door and held the knob on his side.

‘Scoot,’ he cried to me under his breath.

I scooted through the window, and closed it from the outside. As I climbed down after Clery I saw a band of light widening in the room; I paused, realising that, as the night was dark, I could not be seen from the inside. MacDonnell’s head appeared at the door; MacDonnell’s kindly owl-like eyes blinked in the light of the lamp he held. Sweeney had flattened himself between the leaf of the door and the wall. MacDonnell peered about, and detected nothing. He withdrew, and all was dark again. MacDonnell was invaluable. If it had been the Dean!

I continued my descent.

Young Clery waited for me below. We glided round the front of the house, gained the playfield, crept past the shadowy goal posts, past the swings, past the handball alley, gained the far hedge, and won on to the Hole in the Wall. Through the Hole in the Wall then and out into the blackness of Feagh Wood.

I had never realised what darkness was until I stood in Feagh that night. By day young Clery and I knew Feagh Wood as we knew the palms of our hands. But this was not Feagh Wood: this was simply blackness. We sat down for a few minutes to get used to the dark. We shut our eyes, and opened them again. It made no appreciable difference. We got up and stumbled on. We kept bumping against trees, and tripping over roots, and getting entangled in brambles.

‘This will take us an hour,’ said Clery. ‘I’m jolly glad I shoved on that clock.’

It took us the better part of an hour. Instinct or chance or Providence or something that was not deliberate and intelligent on our part, for it was too dark for us to follow any course known to us, guided us to the very point we wanted to make,—the point where the wood stretched up the hillside to Killconnla Churchyard, thus saving us the sweep of the road from Barna Forge to Killconnla. The road, indeed, would have proved shorter that black night, for progress would have been quicker; but we preferred the wood, for there was always the danger that, if missed from our dormitory, the Dean or Old Snuffy might give chase along the road. And the Dean, giving chase under the stimulus of a raging toothache, would have been no joke! In Feagh, on the other hand, on such a night we were at any rate free from the fear of pursuit.

We skirted Killconnla Churchyard, keeping arm-in-arm for mutual protection against any ghosts that might be on the prowl there. Then, in the Irish phrase, ‘we gave the mountain to ourselves.’ The mountain was dark, but had not quite the blackness of Feagh. Shapes that were familiar to us by day seemed strangely unfamiliar now,—huge and grotesque and menacing. Once Clery walked up to a thorn-bush and shouted ‘Who are you?’ thinking it was a man. Shortly after some living thing, whether a hare or a rabbit or a badger—for it seemed bigger than a hare or a rabbit—started up from under my feet and went pattering away somewhere. It caused my heart to beat in a ridiculous way.

The scramble round the lip of Grey Man’s Pool and along the ridge of Grey Man’s Path was still more nerve-racking. Nothing would

have induced me to do it but the consciousness that young Clery was with me and that we were on the Wandering Hawk's service. The place was dangerous in itself,—we knew that a man had fallen from Grey Man's Path and had been dashed to pieces in the glen beneath it; we knew that two men had been drowned in Grey Man's Pool, one of them having slipped on the edge of the chasm and dragged the other over in an effort to steady himself. We also knew that the Grey Man himself was believed to haunt that region, a shadowy spectre; that he was addicted to flitting across the Pool and to stalking along the Path, and that, in fact, it was his sudden appearances in those places respectively that had caused the deaths aforesaid. In truth a *rencontre* with him on Grey Man's Path would have been far from enjoyable. If one turned to flee, one would inevitably topple over, for the Path was only a yard wide, was slippery with fine gravel, and was nearly as steep and as twisted as a corkscrew. One could not step either to the right or to the left, for that would mean in either case to step down a precipice three hundred feet deep. 'If we meet him,' whispered young Clery, 'we'll have to *walk right through him*.'

We did not meet him. At least we did not see him, though we may have walked through him without knowing it, for a Grey Man must necessarily have been invisible in that darkness. We won through to the end of the Path, doing the last few yards on our hands and knees. It was a relief to find ourselves among the furze and bracken of the hillside again. That shingly slippery path was like a nightmare.

A light gleamed in front of us, then disappeared. Was it the Grey Man hunting us with a lantern? Possibly; but more probably it was the light from the Priest's Cave where the Wandering Hawk's men were gathered. Doubtless it had gleamed through some chink in the rocks or through some opening in the brambles. The instinct that had never failed us during the night told us that that light was a beacon to be followed, and we directed ourselves as best we could towards the point where it had shone. Once or twice, as our path swerved a little, it gleamed momentarily again. We were sure now that it was the light of the Priest's Cave. And it was. In ten minutes we found ourselves in

front of a screen of rocks and bracken and heather from behind which came the low murmur of voices.

We had now to make ourselves known. This was a matter of some delicacy. We felt uneasily that a false move might get us shot or piked. We knew indeed that no one who owned the leadership of the Wandering Hawk would be likely wantonly or rashly to injure two boys, but before they realised that we were boys, or what our mission was, an alarm might be raised and they might shoot, thinking they were being surrounded. To be shot would be disagreeable, but to be shot before delivering our message would be ridiculous. It was only when I stood before the entrance to the Priest's Cave that these difficulties presented themselves to me. Up to then I had imagined that we had only to get to the Priest's Cave and that our task was accomplished. As usual, it was Clery's clear brain that saw the way out of the situation.

'Unless these men are jolly fools,' he whispered, 'they will have a sentry. We'll attract his attention and surrender to him when he challenges us, and then we'll ask to be brought before the captain.'

This sounded very military and proper.

'If there's a sentry,' said I, 'he ought to have twigged us before now.'

'He may be having a smoke or something,' said Clery. 'Sentries often do.'

'How are you going to attract his attention?'

For answer Clery whistled loudly and clearly through the opening bars of 'Billy Byrne of Ballymanus.'

The challenge came before he got very far. It was unmilitary but perfectly intelligible.

'Who the hell is there?' said a deep voice.

'Friends of the Hawk,' responded Clery promptly.

'Show yourselves.'

We stepped forward, as the next best thing to showing ourselves. To show ourselves would have been impossible in that blackness.

'Where are ye?'

'Here.'

'How many of us?'

‘Two.’

‘Stand.’

A man came towards us and stopped in front of us.

‘We surrender,’ said Clery. ‘We want to see your captain. We have a message for him.’

‘Where are ye from?’

‘From the College. We’ve a message from the Wandering Hawk. It’s important. It can’t wait.’

‘Stand where ye are till I come back to ye.’

The man turned and was gone. We waited in silence. In about three minutes he returned with another man.

‘What is your message for me?’ said the newcomer.

Clery spoke the message in clear straightforward sentences. He told of the Wandering Hawk’s midnight visit, of the message we were to give the tin whistler, and of the tin whistler’s arrest. The men made no comment.

‘When the tin whistler was arrested we thought the best thing to do was to come on with the message ourselves,’ said Clery as he finished up.

‘Ye did well,’ said the man we understood to be the captain. ‘I wouldn’t doubt ye. If the Hawk was your masther, I’ll wager ye’re thrue.’

The other man appeared to raise some objection.

‘I’ll stake my life on the thruth o’ this,’ said the captain. Then, turning to us, he asked: ‘Do ye know who the Hawk is?’

‘We do.’

‘Do ye know what his work is?’

‘We do.’

‘Did ye ever take an oath from him?’

‘Never. We didn’t know who he was until the day the police came to arrest him. We only saw him once since,—that was when he gave us this message.’

‘Will ye take an oath from me?’ said the captain.

‘I will,’ said Clery without hesitation.

‘I will,’ said I in the same breath.

The captain and the other man took off their hats. Clery and I took off our caps. In the silence and dark of the night we took the Fenian oath. When we had repeated the words after the captain, he gripped each of us by the hand. The other man did the same. Long afterwards I learned that it was most unusual to administer the oath thus in the presence of witnesses; but the whole proceeding of that night was unusual.

‘Ye may come with me now,’ said the captain, putting on his hat again.

We followed him into the Priest’s Cave. About two dozen men were gathered there, seated on stones or on logs of wood or on the ground. On a rude table formed by a tree-trunk stood a candle. I recognised one or two of the faces, having seen them in Killconnla street, but the majority were strange to me. They seemed to be mountainy men, and were for the most part young, tall, and dark, with that suggestion of wildness which the mountainy men always have in the glint of their eyes and the carriage of their heads and the make of their clothes. But I liked their looks, and felt honoured in being their comrade. As we entered, inquiring glances were thrown on us.

‘These are friends, boys,’ said the captain (or centre, as we learned afterwards to call him). ‘They have brought a message from the Hawk.’

He sat down at the table and stated briefly the gist of the message we had brought. When he had finished he said: ‘We have only got an hour. I want five volunteers for Inishglasogue. I’ll make the sixth myself.’

More than half the men volunteered. The centre named five.

‘Who can steer a boat to the Eagle’s Nest?’ he asked.

The men looked at one another. The very name was unfamiliar to them, for it had been conferred by the Little Captain and ourselves.

‘Where is the Eagle’s Nest?’ asked the centre turning to us, where we sat on a log on which a man had made room for us.

‘It’s a cave on Inishglasogue,’ said Clery.

‘There’s no cave on Inishglasogue,’ said one of the men.

‘Yes, there is,’ said Clery. ‘I found it. The Little Cap—I mean the Wandering Hawk—knows it. He must have told the tin whistler about it.’

It had become evident to Clery and me that the Little Captain had been relying on the tin whistler to bring the men to the Eagle’s Nest. The existence of the cave had been unknown before Clery’s famous dive, and was still unknown except to the Little Captain and ourselves and, apparently, to the tin whistler. We were obviously the only two in the present company who could know where the Eagle’s Nest was. Clery and I glanced at each other.

‘We’ll steer you to the Eagle’s Nest,’ said Clery.

The centre hesitated a little.

‘’Tis dangerous work for gossoons,’ he said.

‘We’re in for it now,’ said Clery with that smile of his which disarmed opposition.

The centre glanced round the circle. No one had any suggestion to offer.

With sudden decision the centre said: ‘In God’s name, be it so.’

The five men promptly rose. The centre and young Clery and I rose at the same moment.

‘Let ye stay here till we come back, boys,’ said the centre to the rest of the men. ‘Keep a good look out. With the help of God we’ll have a gun for every man of ye to-night.’

And we followed him out of the Priest’s Cave and down the dark hillside.

(TO BE CONTINUED).