NO DEFENSE

By GILBERT PARKER

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"The Seats of the Mighty"
"The Right of Way"

STIRRING ROMANCE OF TWO CONTINENTS

My dear friend: I will not believe that your fate is an evil one, that the law will grind you between the millstones of guilt and dishonor; but if the law should call you guilty, I still will not believe. . . .

Yes, she and I are saying good-by to Ireland. That's why I think she might have let me see you before we went; but since it must not be, well, then, it must not. But we shall meet again. In my soul I know that on the hills somewhere far off, as on the first day we met, we shall meet each other once more. Where are we going? Oh, very far! We are going to my Uncle Bryan—Bryan Llyn, in Virginia. . . .

We shall know your fate only through the letters that will follow us, but I will not believe in your bad luck. Listen to me—why don't you come to America also? . . .

So keep this matter in your mind, as my mother and I will soon be gone. She would not let me come to you—I think I have never seen her so disturbed as when I asked her—and she forbade me to write to you; but I disobey her. Well, this is a sad business. I know my mother has suffered. I know her married life was unhappy, and that her husband—my father—died many a year ago, leaving a dark trail of regret behind him; but, you see, I never knew my father. That was all long ago, and it is a hundred times best forgotten.

Our ship sails for Virginia in three days, and I must go. I will keep looking back to the prison where lies, charged with an evil crime, of which he is not guilty, a young man for whom I shall carry the spirit of good friendship.

Do not believe all will not go well. The thing to do is to keep the courage of our hearts and the faith of our souls, and I hope I always shall. I believe in you, and, believing, I say good-by. I say farewell in the great hope that somehow, somewhere, we shall help each other on the way of life. God be with you! I am your friend,

SHEILA LLYN.

So wrote the beautiful Sheila to Dyck Calhoun in prison—the beautiful young Irish girl with her wonderful brown hair and her blue eyes that showed the loyal soul of her and her lovely mouth that had Cupid's bow. Read between the lines of it and see if it is not a letter to put courage and hope into a manly young fellow's heart—even if he is behind bars charged with murder. But though Dyck's heart thrilled over the letter, the words comforted him not at all, for there was more to the killing than Sheila knew. Innocent he was, but the future looked dark to Dyck.

And his foresight was good. He refuses for Sheila's sake to reveal what would have given him freedom. He is sent to prison for eight years. He is released after four years to find his father dead and his estate gone. A letter comes from Sheila; it invites him to Virginia and sends money. Sheila does not know why Dyck cannot go to her. Dyck enlists in the British army. There is mutiny in the fleet. Dyck is chosen by the mutineers to command the Ariadne. In the West Indies he helps win a victory over the French fleet, is thanked by the admiral—and is put under arrest as a mutineer. The swift march of events finds Dyck and Sheila in Jamaica, still separated by the mystery of the murder, with an added complication in the form of Lord Mallow, the governor, who is Dyck's old enemy and the girl's suitor.

In short, this is one of Sir Gilbert Parker's good romances. There are many British knights and baronets of Canadian birth, but his title is unique because given him for literary accomplishment. Sir Gilbert has written about thirty novels and is as popular in America as in Great Britain and Canada.

CHAPTER I.

—1—

The Two Meet.

"Well, good-by, Dyck. I'll meet you at the sessions, or before that at the assizes."

It was only the impulsive, cheery, warning exclamation of a wild young Irish spirit to his friend Dyck Calhoun, but it had behind it the humor and incongruity of Irish life.

The man, Dyck Calhoun, after whom were sent the daring words about the sessions and the assizes, was a year or two older than his friend, and, as Michael Clones, his servant and friend, said, "the worst and best scamp of them all"—just up to any harmless deviltry.

Influenced by no traditions or customs, under control of no stern records of society, Calhoun had caused some trouble in his time by the harmless deeds of a scapegrace, but morally—that is, in all relations of life affected by the Ten Commandments—he was above reproach. There never was in Ireland a cheerier, braver, handsomer fellow, nor one with such variety of mind and complexity of purpose.

He was the only child of a high-placed gentleman; he spent all the money that came his way, and occasionally loaded himself with debt, which his angry father paid. Yet there never was a gayer heart, a more generous spirit, nor an easier-tempered man; though, after all, he was only twenty-five when the words with which the tale opens were said to him.

He was a figure of note among those who spent their time in criticizing the government and damning the Irish parliament. He even became a friend of some young hare-brained rebels of the time; yet no one suspected him of anything except irresponsibility. His record was clean; Dublin Castle was not after him.

When his young friend made the remark about the session and assizes, Calhoun was making his way up the rocky hillside to take the homeward path to his father's place, Playmore. He raised his head, looking up into the sky at some larks singing above him in the heavens.

"God love you, little dears," he spoke aloud. "I wish I might die with your singing in my ears, but do you know what makes Ireland what it is? Look at it now. Years ago, just when the cotton mills and the linen mills were doing well, they came over with their English legislation, and made it hard going. When we begin to get something, over the English come and take the something away. What have we done, we Irish people, that we couldn't have a chance in our own country? Lord knows, we deserve a chance, for it's hard paying the duties these days. What with France in revolution and reaching out her hand to Ireland to coax her into rebellion; what with defeat in America and drink in Scotland; what with poverty, and the cow and children and father and mother living all in one room, with the chickens roosting in the rafters; what with pointing the potato at the fried fish and gulping it down as if it was fish itself; what with the smell and the dirt and the poverty of Dublin and Derry, Limerick and Cork—ah, well!" He threw his eyes up again. "Ah, well, my little love, sing on! You're a blessing among a lot of curses; but never mind, it's a fine world, and Ireland's the best part of it. Heaven knows it—and on this hill, how beautiful it is!"

He was now on the top of a hill where he could look out toward the bog and in toward the mellow, waving hills. He could drink in the yellowish green, with here and there in the distance a little house; and about two miles away smoke stealing up from the midst of the plantation where Playmore was—Playmore, his father's house—to be his own one day.

Dyck Calhoun had a soul of character, originality and wayward distinction. He had all the impulses and enthusiasms of a poet, all the thirst for excitement of the adventurer, all the latent patriotism of the true Celt; but his life was undisciplined, and he had not ordered his spirits into compartments of faith and hope. He had gifts. They were gifts only to be borne by those who had ambitions.

Now, as he looked out upon the scene where nature was showing herself at her best, some glimmer of a great future came to him. He did not know which way his feet were destined to travel in the business of life. It was too late to join the navy; but there was still time enough to be a soldier, or to learn to be a lawyer.

Suddenly, as he listened to the lark singing overhead, with his face lifted to the sky, he heard a human voice singing; and presently there ran up a little declivity to his left a girl—an Irish girl of about seventeen years of age.

Her hat was hanging on her arm by a green ribbon. Her head was covered with the most wonderful brown, waving hair. She had a broad, low forehead, Greek in its proportions and lines. The eyes were bluer even than his own, and were shaded by lashes of great length, which slightly modified the firm lines of the face, with its admirable chin, and mouth somewhat large with a cupid's bow.

In spite of its ardent and luscious look it was the mouth of one who knew her own mind and could sustain her own course. It was open when Dyck first saw it, because she was singing little bits of wild lyrics of the hills, little tragedies of Celtic life—just bursts of the Celtic soul, as it were, cheerful yet sad, buoyant and passionate, eager yet melancholy. She was singing in Irish, too. They were the words of songs taught her by her mother's maid.

She had been tramping over the hills for a couple of hours, virile, beautiful and alone. She wore a gown of dark gold, with little green ribbons here and there. The gown was short, and her ankles showed. In spite of the strong boots she wore they were alert, delicate and shapely, and all her beauty had the slender fullness of a quail.

When she saw Dyck she stopped suddenly, her mouth slightly open. She gave him a sidelong glance of wonder, interest and speculation. Then she threw her head slightly back, and all the curls gathered in a bunch and shook like bronze flowers. It was a head of grace and power, of charm and allurement—of danger.

Dyck was lost in admiration. He looked at her as one might look at a beautiful thing in a dream. He did not speak; he only smiled as he gazed into her eyes.

She was the first to speak.

"Well, who are you?" she asked with a slightly southern accent in her voice, delicate and entrancing.

Her head gave a little modest toss, her fine white teeth caught her lower lip with a little quirk of humor; for she could see that he was a gentleman, and that she was safe from anything that might trouble her.

He replied to her question with the words:

"My name? Why, it's Dyck Calhoun, that's all."

Her eyes brightened. "Isn't that enough?" she asked gently.

She knew of his family. She was only visiting in the district with her mother, but she had lately heard of old Miles Calhoun and his wayward boy, Dyck; and here was Dyck, with a humor in his eyes and a touch of melancholy at his lips. Somehow her heart went out to him.

Presently he said to her:

"And what's your name?"

"I'm only Sheila Llyn, the daughter of my mother, a widow, visiting at Loyland towers. Yes, I'm only Sheila!"

She laughed.

"Well, just be 'only Sheila,'" he answered admiringly, and he held out a hand to her. "I wouldn't have you be anything else, though it's none of my business."

For one swift instant she hesitated; then she laid her hand in his.

"There's no reason why we should not," she said. "Your father's respectable."

She looked at him again with a sidelong glance, and with a whimsical, reserved smile at her lips.

"Yes, he's respectable, I agree, but he's dull," answered Dyck. "For an Irishman, he's dull—and he's a tyrant, too. I suppose I deserve that, for I'm a handful."

"I think you are, and a big handful, too!"

"Which way are you going?" he asked presently.

"And you?"

"Oh, I'm bound for home." He pointed across the valley. "Do you see that smoke coming up from the plantation over there?"

"Yes, I know," she answered. "I know. That's Playmore, your father's place. Loyland towers is between here and there. Which way were you going there?"

"Round to the left," he said, puzzled, but agreeable.

"Then we must say good-by, because I go to the right. That's my nearest way."

"Well, if that's your nearest way, I'm going with you," he said, "because—well, because—because—"

"If you won't talk very much!" she rejoined with a little air of instinctive coquetry.

"I don't want to talk. I'd like to listen. Shall we start?"

Sheila's father's name was Erris Boyne, and he had been debauched, drunken, and faithless; so at a time of unendurable hurt his wife had freed herself. Then, under the egis of her maiden name, she had brought up her daughter without any knowledge of her father; had made her believe he was dead; had hidden her tragedy with a skillful hand.

Only now, when Sheila was released from a governess, had she moved out of the little wild area of the County Limerick where she lived; only now had she come to visit an uncle whose hospitality she had for so many years denied herself. Sheila was two years old when her father disappeared, and fifteen years had gone since then.

Down the long road the two young people traveled, gossiping much, both of them touched by something sad and mysterious, neither knowing why; both of them happy, too, for somehow they had come nearer together than years of ordinary life might have made possible. They broke into talk of their own countryside, of the war with France, of the growing rebellious spirit in Ireland, of riots in Dublin town, of trouble at Limerick, Cork and Sligo.

At the gate of the mansion where Sheila was visiting, Dyck put into her hands the wild flowers he had picked as they passed, and said:

"Well, it's been a great day. I've never had a greater. Let's meet again, and soon! I'm almost every day upon the hill with my gun, and it'd be worth a lot to see you soon—very soon."

"Oh, you'll be forgetting me by to-morrow," the girl said with a little wistfulness at her lips, for she had a feeling they would not meet on the morrow. Suddenly she picked from the bunch of wild flowers he had given her a little sprig of heather.

"Well, if we don't meet—wear that," she said, and, laughing over her shoulder, turned and ran into the grounds of Loyland towers.

CHAPTER II.

The Coming of a Messenger.

When Dyck entered the library at Playmore, the first words he heard were these:

"Howe has licked the French at Brest. He's smashed the French fleet and dealt a sharp blow to the revolution. Hurrah!"

The words were used by Miles Calhoun, Dyck's father, as a greeting to him on his return from the day's sport.

Now, if there was a man in Ireland who had a narrow view and kept his toes pointed to the front, it was Miles Calhoun. His people had lived in Connemara for hundreds of years, and he himself had only one passion in life, which was the Protestant passion of prejudice. He had ever been a follower of Burke—a passionate follower, one who believed the French Revolution was a crime against humanity, a danger to the future of civilization, a miserable orgy of unworthy millions.

He had resisted more vigorously than most men the progress of revolutionary sentiments in Ireland. He was aware that his son had far less rigid opinions than himself; that he even defended Wolfe Tone and Thomas Emmet against abuse and damnation. That was why he had delight in slapping his son in the face, whenever possible, with the hot pennant of victory for British power.

He was a man of irascible temperament and stern views, given to fits of exasperation. He was small of stature, with a round face, eyes that suddenly went red with feeling, and with none of the handsomeness of his son, who resembled his mother's side of the family.

The mother herself had been a beautiful and remarkable woman. Dyck was, in a sense, a reproduction of her

Down the Long Road the Two Young People Traveled.

in body and mind, for a more cheerful and impetuous person never made a household happier or more imperfect than she made hers.

As the elder Calhoun made his announcement about the battle of Brest and the English victory, a triumphant smile lighted his flushed face, and under his heavy gray brows his eyes danced with malicious joy.

"Howe's a wonder!" he said. "He'll make those savage, mad, red republicans hunt their holes. Eh, isn't that your view, Ivy?" he asked of a naval captain who had evidently brought the news.

Captain Ivy nodded.

"Yes, it's a heavy blow for the French bloodsuckers. If their ideas creep through Europe and get hold of England, God only knows what the end will be! In their view, to alter everything that exists is the only way to put things right."

At that moment the door opened, and a servant entered the room. In his hand he carried a letter which, with marked excitement, he brought to Miles Calhoun.

"Sure, he's waiting, sir," he said.

"And who's he?" asked his master, turning the letter over, as though to find out by looking at the seal.

"Oh, a man of consequence, if we're to judge by the way he's clothed."

"Fit company, then?" his master asked, as he began to open the heavily sealed letter.

"Well, I'm not saying that, for there's no company good enough for us," answered the higgledy-piggledy butler, with a quirk of the mouth; "but, as messengers go, I never seen one with more style and point."

"Well, bring him to me," said Miles Calhoun, and broke the seal of the letter in his hand. "Good God!" he added, after doing so, for he had just realized that the stamp of the seal was that of the attorney general of Ireland.

Then he opened the letter and read it. A flush swept over his face, making its red almost purple.

"Eternal damnation—eternal damnation!" he declared, holding the paper at arm's length, inspecting it. He then handed it to Dyck. "Read that, lad. Then pack your bag, for we start for Dublin by daylight or before."

Dyck read the brief document and whistled softly to himself.

"Well, well, you've got to obey orders like that, I suppose," Dyck said. "They want to question us as to the state of the country here."

"I think we can tell them something. I wonder if they know how wide your travel is, how many people you see; and if they know, how did they come to know? There's spies all over the place. How do I know but the man who's just left this room isn't a spy, isn't the enemy of all of us here?"

"I'd suspect Michael Clones," remarked Dyck, "just as soon as Mulvaney."

"Michael Clones," said his father, and he turned to Captain Ivy, "Michael Clones I'd trust as I'd trust his blessed majesty, George III. He's a rare scamp, is Michael Clones! He's no thicker than a cardboard, but he draws the pain out of your hurt like a mustard plaster. A man of better sense and greater roguery I've never met. You must see him, Captain Ivy. He's a man of men, is Michael Clones."

The door opened and the butler entered, followed by a tall, thin Don Quixote sort of figure.

"His excellency," said Mulvaney, with a look slightly malevolent, for the visitor had refused his name. Then he turned and left the room.

At Mulvaney's words, an ironical smile crossed the face of the newcomer. Then he advanced to Miles Calhoun. Before speaking, however, he glanced sharply at Captain Ivy, threw an inquisitive look at Dyck, and said:

"I seem to have hurt the feelings of your butler, sir, but that cannot be helped. I have come from the attorney general. My name is Leonard Mallow—I'm the eldest son of Lord Mallow. I've been doing business in Limerick, and I bring a message from the attorney general to ask you to attend his office at the earliest moment. I've seen strange things as I came. I've seen lights on the hills, and drunken rioters in the roads and behind hedges, and once a shot was fired at me; but here I am, safe and sound, carrying out my orders. What time will you start?" he added.

He took it for granted that the summons did not admit of rejection, and he was right. The document contained these words:

"Trouble is brewing; indeed, it is at hand. Come, please, at once to Dublin, and give the lord-lieutenant and the government a report upon your district. We do not hear altogether well of it, but we are aware that no one has the knowledge you possess. In the name of his majesty you are hereby asked to present yourself at once at these offices in Dublin, and be assured that the lord-lieutenant will give you warm welcome through me. Your own loyalty gives much satisfaction here, and if you can bring useful information much good may ensue. I am, sir,

"Your obedient servant,

"JOHN M'NOWELL."

"You have confidence in the people's loyalty here?" asked Mallow.

"As great as in my own," answered Dyck cheerily.

"Well, you ought to know what that is. At the same time, I've heard you're a friend of one or two dark spirits in the land."

"I hold no friendships that would do hurt to my country," answered Dyck sharply.

Mallow smiled satirically. "As we're starting at daylight, I suppose, I think I'll go to bed, if it may be you can put me up."

"Oh, Lord, yes! We can put you up, Mr. Mallow," remarked the old man. "You shall have as good a bed as you can find outside the viceregal lodge—a four-poster, very wide and very long. But, Mr. Mallow, you haven't announced that you've had dinner, and you'll not be going to bed in this house without your food. This is a day when we celebrate the anniversary of Irish power and life."

"What's that?" asked Mallow.

"That's the battle of the Boyne," answered his host with a little air of ostentation.

"Oh, you're one of the Peep-o'-Day Boys, then," remarked Mallow.

"I'm not saying that," answered the old man. "I'm not an Ulsterman, but I celebrate the coming of William to the Boyne. Things were done that day that'll be remembered when Ireland is whisked away into the kingdom of Heaven. So you'll not go to bed till you've had dinner, Mr. Mallow! Dinner at five, to bed at eight, up before daylight, and off to Dublin when the light breaks. That's the course!" He turned to Captain Ivy. "I'm sorry, captain, but there's naught else to do, and you were going tomorrow at noon anyhow, so it won't make much difference to you."

"It will make no difference whatever," replied the sailorman. "I have to go to Dublin, too, and from there to Queenstown to join my ship, and from Queenstown to the coast of France to do some fighting."

"Please God!" remarked Miles Calhoun.

"So be it!" declared Mallow.

"Amen!" said Dyck.

Once again Dyck looked the visitor straight in the eyes, and far back in

Once Again Dyck Looked the Visitor Straight in the Eyes.

the horizon of Mallow's life-sky there shone for an instant the light of an evil star.

"There's the call to dinner," remarked Miles Calhoun, as a bell began ringing in the tower outside. "Come with me, Mr. Mallow, and I'll show you your room."

"Sheila—Sheila!" said Dyck Calhoun to himself where he stood.

CHAPTER III.

The Duel.

The journey to Dublin was made by the Calhouns, their two guests, and Michael Clones, without incident of note. Arrived there, Miles Calhoun gave himself to examination by government officials and to assisting the designs of the Peep-o'-Day Boys; and indeed he was present at the formation of the first Orange lodge.

His narrow nature, his petty craft and malevolence, were useful in a time of anxiety for the state. Yet he had not enough ability to develop his position by the chances offered him. He had not a touch of genius; he had only bursts of Celtic passion, which he had not mind enough to control.

Indeed, as days, weeks and months went on, his position became less valuable to himself, and his financial affairs suffered from his own and his agent's bad management. In his particular district he was a power; in Dublin he soon showed the weaker side of his nature. He had a bad habit of making foes where he could easily have made friends. In his personal habits he was sober, but erratic.

Dyck had not his father's abstention from the luxuries of life. He drank, he gamed, he went where temptation was, and fell into it. He steadily diminished his powers of resistance to self-indulgence until one day, at a tavern, he met a man who made a great impression upon him.

This man was brilliant, ebullient, full of humor, character and life, knowing apparently all the lower world of Dublin, and moving with an assured step. It was Erris Boyne, the divorced husband of Mrs. Llyn and the father of Sheila Llyn; but this fact was not known to Dyck. There was also a chance of its not becoming known, because so many years had passed since Erris Boyne was divorced.

Dyck and Lord Mallow quarrel and settle it with swords.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Van Dyck Supreme.

Van Dyck has been rated the greatest portrait painter of all time, with the possible exception of Titian.