

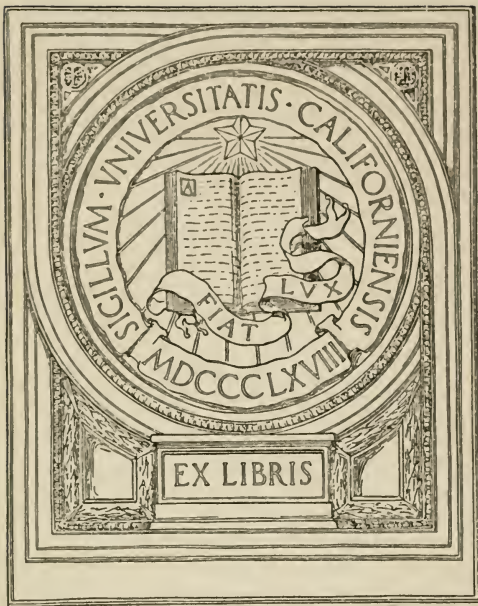
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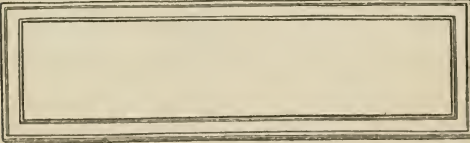


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WHEN THE DAWN IS  
COME. A TRAGEDY IN  
THREE ACTS. BY  
THOMAS MacDONAGH;  
BEING VOLUME X. OF  
THE ABBEY THEATRE  
SERIES



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McDonan

Highgate

1809

WHEN THE DAWN IS COME

Ireland

BOOKS OF VERSE

BY THOMAS MACDONAGH

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“THROUGH THE IVORY GATE”

(SEALY, BRYERS & WALKER)

“THE GOLDEN JOY”

(O'DONOGHUE & Co.)

WHEN THE DAWN IS COME  
A TRAGEDY IN THREE ACTS  
BY THOMAS MACDONAGH

THE  
CANTON

DUBLIN : MAUNSEL  
& COMPANY, LTD. 1908

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MAIN .

*To M.*

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## PERSONS

THURLOUGH MACKIERAN			}	<i>The Seven acting as Captains of the Irish Insurgent Army and Members of the Council of Ireland.</i>
HUGH MACOSCAR . . .	.	.		
RÉAMONN O'SULLIVAN . . .	.	.		
FATHER JOHN JOYCE . . .	.	.		
ALEXANDER WALKER . . .	.	.		
RORY MACMAHON . . .	.	.		
PATRICK RYAN . . .	.	.		
ITA MACOSCAR . . .	.	.	<i>Daughter of Hugh, and Member of the Council of Ireland.</i>	
SHEELA O'HARA . . .	.	.		<i>Member of the Council. A Ballad-singer, a Spy. A Spy,</i>
CONNOR O'GATRY . . .	.	.		
MACÉAMONN . . .	.	.		

### IRISH SOLDIERS AS GUARDS.

*Hugh MacOscar is an old man ; Thurlough MacKieran, Alexander Walker, and Ita MacOscar are under thirty years ; Sheela O'Hara and Réamonn O'Sullivan are somewhat older ; Father John Joyce, Rory MacMahon, Patrick Ryan, and the spies are of middle age.*

PERIOD : *Fifty years hence, in Ireland, in time of insurrection.*

SCENE : *The Council Chamber of the Irish Army.*

*The action passes in one evening.*

# WHEN THE DAWN IS COME

## ACT I.

*The Council of Ireland in Session: all the members of Council present except Thurlough and Alexander.*

*Hugh (standing to address Council).* This, then, of Thurlough's proposal is our command from the assembly. We five soldiers here, together with the two absent, Thurlough and Alexander Walker, are the Seven, chosen to act as Captains of the Army, to take supreme command in turn—a week to each by lot. It is time the lots were drawn, for we must visit our posts; we must reassure our men. Little time to do all, for the daily council is in an hour. Have you the names written, Ita?

*Ita (who has been writing).* Yes, they are ready. But now, what of our new Captain, Alexander? He is not here; the lot may fall on him for the first week.

*Hugh (looking round to consult the others).* What if we leave his name out? He will thus be seventh.

*Ita.* No, there is a more just plan. Here is his name, written like all the rest. Let it go to the box with all the rest. If it comes first, then let him have his choice of weeks, the second first. He will arrive to-day or to-morrow—soon. If his name be second he will take command next week. Do you not think this well?

*Hugh.* I do.

*Others.* And I. And I.

*Ita* (throwing the seven papers on the table). Well, then, see that the papers are alike in all.

*Réamonn* (taking and scrutinising them). No need; they are alike.

*Ita*. And we shall draw?

*Sheela*. You, Ita, you.

[*Sheela* takes the papers and puts them in a box; then presents the box to *Ita*, who turns away her face, draws out a paper and places it on the table.

*Rory* (taking the paper and reading). Thurlough MacKieran. I'm glad of it. We shall have a good model to follow in Thurlough.

*Father John*. A duty already for our General.

[*Ita* draws out another paper.

*Rory*. Alexander Walker.

*Father John*. All the young first. (To *Réamonn*.) What if they do rash things, Captain, before our turns come?

*Réamonn*. They have a Council still.

*Father John*. A reminder of responsibility for our General.

[*Ita* draws in order: *Father John Joyce*, *Hugh MacOscar*, *Patrick Ryan*, *Rory MacMahon*, *Réamonn O'Sullivan*. *Réamonn* writes the names as they are announced.

*Father John*. I would Thurlough were here. It may be well not to adjourn now before he knows this choice. He still has something new, something of new worth, to meet occasion. What if we summon him?

*Patrick*. No. You will have your Council here within the hour. I am Camp Master of the day; but Thurlough had a disposition to make in view of the coming of the North, and took my duties, as he can. I do not need him here; he will give me all guidance now when I go to him. You

others will be with him here to-night in Council. You do not need him now. This generalship will change nothing in him.

*Hugh.* Well, let us go, then, to our commands. You go to Thurlough, Captain Patrick. You will tell him the issue of the lot. Take him the list of all.

*[They rise to go, but Réamonn, with a gesture, retains them. All, except Réamonn and Patrick, resume their seats. Patrick, holding in his hand the list received from Réamonn, stands near the door. Next to him, Rory standing. Then Réamonn, with his back towards the door.]*

*Réamonn.* Before we part now I wish to take the occasion to speak on a personal matter, which concerns the General and me.

*Patrick.* No, Réamonn, no; that is over. We all work together now.

*Réamonn (turning to Patrick).* For that it is better that I speak. *(Turning to the others.)* I voted against the election of Thurlough MacKieran among the Seven. He said then that he believed me sincere in doing so, and I was. He has worked more than we others. He has thought of plans, and we have adopted them. Father John has called him the brain of our army, and he has thought for us all. But he is a poet always, and changes in moods, and is at times hard to understand. And he sees too many sides to every question: he thinks the very enemy's actions—all cruelties and tyrannies—can be defended in justice, from their point of view.

*Patrick (who has been for a moment looking out the door, listening, turns and speaks to Rory).* Thurlough is here.

*Réamonn.* He is a philosopher more than a simple fighter for a single cause.

*[Enter Thurlough, unseen by Réamonn.]*

*Réamonn (continuing uninterrupted).* In the old days, before we brought together armed forces, I heard him speak to gatherings of the people. In midst of his appeal for patriotism a voice, a look in the crowd, made him doubt and pause—he was not sure. That was my thought and my objection to the choice of him. Well, why should I speak thus now—he is our General now? Only because it is my trust, my more than trust, that these things will hinder nothing, if they do not help his signal merit. It is not my custom thus to explain with apology. I would not speak my reason to the Assembly. They would have Thurlough; scarce a voice with mine said no; and when they trust it is well they trust in full. It is well that I, too, trust in full. Were I not now to speak my trust to you, you would not know it in me. For this I speak. And I speak, too, because, even this away, I deem it necessary for me who have voted against him always to pledge obedience and the aid of my counsel to him and my willing fellowship.

[*When Thurlough enters by the open door, unseen by Réamonn, Patrick silently hands him the paper which he has received from Réamonn. Thurlough holds up his hand in warning to those who see him not to interrupt Réamonn. He turns to peruse the list, but almost immediately looks up in surprise, and listens to Réamonn, who is too much absorbed in his thoughts to notice the entrance of the other. On finishing, Réamonn is led by the silence of all the rest to look round. He sees Thurlough, and slowly bows his head to him.*

*Thurlough (coming forward, to Réamonn).* Captain, my absence hence, and then my presence

now, have served me graciously. By accident of entering now in midst of your good speech, by accident of not breaking in upon your good speech, I have surprised a kindness—all the more rich for its thought of secret trust. I crave your pardon for my silence now. For your words—though to me there was no need of them—I thank you, thank you from my heart. It would be vanity to say more. (*Looking at the paper in his hand, he pauses; then addressing the whole Council.*) Comrades of Council, I am then your General for this first week. I know my duties and my trust to you and to our army. I must not keep you longer. You, Captains, will go now to your duties in the Camp. (*To Ita and Sheela.*) You, Councillors, have your duties, too. I will stay here, busy with the plans I must submit to you in an hour. The Councillor Ita will have the issue of the lot announced in form. (*To Patrick.*) The Captain Art O'Connor will tell you all. (*All go out except Thurlough.*)

*Thurlough.* So, fate has been with me still. Am I too hasty in these quick counsels? But this morning I thought of my Greek plan to secure for myself command sometime—and I am General. "Busy with my plans," have I said? No need: my plans are perfect long—since yesterday the new ones. Yet they depend on the arrival of the North—and Alexander. I must win him, and with him two weeks' power. (*Looking at the list.*) And third the priest—three weeks. There's time to plan and carry out my plans. . . . What of that other plan—the spy? Thank heaven he did not trust me and come here. It was a dangerous thought, and made me think of the monk—a dangerous thought.

[*Enter Guard.*

*Guard.* General, there is a man without who begs and begs to see you.

*Thurlough (aside).* Could it be he? Here is the danger in person. (*Aloud.*) Do you not know him?

*Guard.* Yes, sir, 'tis Connor O'Gatry, the ballad-singer.

*Thurlough.* Oh, Connor? I have little time, but I will see him. Let him come in.

[*Exit Guard.*]

*Thurlough.* It is a dangerous thing for me to look upon this butterfly chance: I may be lured to chase it. . . . And then—it is a danger.

[*Enter Connor O'Gatry, whom Thurlough takes to the side of the room farthest from the door.*]

*Thurlough.* Well, you have come. What is it?

*Connor (giving him a letter).* You know where this comes from?

*Thurlough (looking at the letter unopened).* Have you brought many such—to the other Captains?

*Connor.* Letters from him to the Captains! I'd swing out of the nearest tree.

*Thurlough.* And you trust the General not to swing you?

*Connor.* General, is it? Oh, aye, for a week—I heard one of ye was to be. Ah, you're the cute gentleman; you lead them all by the nose. Now you'll be able to do the thing properly, and get more.

*Thurlough (who, with a slight gesture of disgust, has turned aside and opened the letter).* Do you know what is in this?

*Connor.* If I do not know the very words, sure I can guess what they may be. Suppose I said office and command after the treaty on condition of



making the misguided men accept good terms—would that be a good guess?

*Thurlough.* An excellent guess. And now, if I told you that I am going to read this to the Council, could you guess what we should send back to your Minister or his agent by way of answer?

*Connor.* O General, General, you won't do that! Didn't you give me your word of honour, and take mine, to keep all between us two—not to harm me? There wasn't a witness, but there wasn't need of one.

*Thurlough.* Well, there, do not clamour. You must go away now. Think no more of this, and begone. If after to-night you are caught within our lines you die.

*Connor (his countenance clearing).* And is there no answer?

*Thurlough (who has been smiling to himself, aside).* It is a great chance. (*Aloud.*) Yes, I will give you an answer. Tell him that sent you that I am now General, and demand more—chief place in office, and the terms I asked before—not these. If they accept let him sign it thus; then two days from now let me know their plans, and I will act accordingly, my reward to depend on success.

*Connor.* Will you write that down?

*Thurlough.* No. I have said before that you will have no proof to betray me, too. We have had traitors.

*Connor.* Then it is all over. I must have your letter and seal, or that letter back with your name and seal.

*Thurlough (after a pause).* You will not be taken?

*Connor.* I taken? Not I.

*Thurlough (slowly goes to the table and writes in the letter he has received).* There, I have no

seal. They know my writing well; many a letter of mine they have seized—(*aside*)—all meant for them to seize. (*Aloud.*) I have changed the terms and added my name. Be careful and be quick.

*Thurlough* (*accompanies Connor across the room, and speaks to him as he goes out.*) It was not worth the time I have given to you. (*Coming in.*) That rang false, I fear. Yet the guard knows me, and dare not suspect.

[*Enter Guard.*

*Guard.* The Councillor Ita MacOscar has been waiting, sir.

*Thurlough.* Oh, tell her to come in. Leave the door open wide. (*Eagerly to Ita as she enters.*) Ita! To congratulate ourselves on this rare chance?

*Ita.* Rather to warn you, *Thurlough*. That man, Réamonn, spoke true. For all our sakes be cautious, *Thurlough*. What? You are always so? Yes, but be ordinary, too. You are a strategist—force a battle this week and you will restore the confidence of all. I bring you good news, too. The army of the North is almost here.

*Thurlough.* The North? (*Pauses.*) Ita, I think your counsel comes too late. I am embarked on a great venture now. There is but little time to tell you all, and I shall be brief. You know there are traitors in the camp and spies. I knew it, and my brain ran, not as O'Sullivan's would, on gibbetings, but on a deep ruse, to turn them to our service unwittingly, to our honest use. What if a captain feigned to sell himself, and so learned all the plans and fears of the enemy, and so crushed them at last?

*Ita.* For God's sake, *Thurlough*, do not do this—do not play with fire—do not. Why can you not leave now those subtle ways, now you are General? Who can trust you in all? You love

to analyse your thoughts and thoughts of others—can you love aught else? You love to outwit the cunning—can you love aught else?

*Thurlough.* You are a woman still, an emotional woman. You remember how I asked for women on our Council, pleading your enthusiasm and martyr-spirit? One thing more than that I valued, the woman mind that will not clog with common mire that men call honesty. . . . And so they chose you two, you and that good woman—that woman too dutiful, who could withhold her heart and all, for duty—you two. . . . So, where was I in my tale?

*Ita.* Spies to be outwitted.

*Thurlough.* One came here to me. You must not know his name, Dame Councillor, or you are in the plot. Through him the agent of the English Minister offers me command and office—they will make me British Minister here if I win them peace. Oh, there are fools on earth! Office and command for my soul's life! At first I chose the cautious, sent him away—but only to the door; then yielded. If they are fool enough to think they can buy me, me of all men here, with all their offers—why they are fool enough to walk into my snare; and I will spread it wide. Two days hence they come in strong array—mere show to over-awe our Council, so that I win you all to take these terms. Two days hence I crush them.

*Ita.* Oh, take care—if you can still prevent mischance. That man spoke a true word of you to-day. You are sure of nothing—nothing. What if this spy were his spy—he has such?

*Thurlough.* No, not for me. His mind is too blunt to suspect me thus. . . . He thinks me sure of nothing. . . . And yet, I think his mind is subtler than he knows. . . . Strange how one thought can poison a whole mind! He

knows me sure of nothing in his creed, and cannot understand a sincere doubt.

*Ita.* Father John knows your mind on these things?

*Thurlough.* Ah, who knows that? For Réamonn O'Sullivan spoke truth once more in that. I have stopt short and asked myself in doubt—What of it all? Is it a passing show? What does it matter if I go in green, or blue, or purple? That's not the kingdom, though. So for your creeds. I cannot go inside, shut myself in, and see but this and this, and feel that I am sure. Let this not make you sad: I may grow old and harden to one thought, and harden to one creed—who knows?

*Ita.* Well, I will pray for success, for your success in this as in the rest. What if my prayers have helped you still? But, Thurlough, there is yet one way. Why not avow this ruse of yours to the Council now as to me? They have adopted ere this plans of yours that seemed as strange at first.

*Thurlough* (*pointing to one side of the table and standing at the other*). There is the Council, and here I, my hands crossed on my breast thus humbly, my head bowed. "Captains and Councilors of the Irish realm, your General would crave your judgment. I have been closeted with an English spy. I have let him return to the English lines—as he knows how, with what he knows. This spy would not dare approach another of you: me he accosts familiarly, thinks me a traitor. And I have played the part and stipulated rewards." And so, and so. Now you can see the eyes of O'Sullivan, old Patrick Ryan looking for thought to him, your father's blanching face, Father John's troubled gaze, the doubt of all, and the one question still in every brain—"He pledges trust to us

and trust to them—can we trust him?” They’ll think of Art O’Neill a month ago hanged by the enemy through a traitor’s guile. (*Thoughtfully.*) Would any here understand? Would Sheela? And then the voice of Réamonn—“You had your Council, why have we not known at first?” No, they cannot understand—till I can give them victory with my tale.

*Ita.* God grant that sequel!

*Thurlough.* I must go now. I burn to see the Captain Alexander. We shall return to Council here together. (*He takes a step towards the door, then turns back.*) Do you think the Council could understand me in it all? You are convinced of wisdom in my silence?

[*Exit.*

*Ita* (*stands for a few minutes silent and thoughtful; she sighs and turns to the open door*). That was a strange thing he told me yesterday of the monk’s warning. Savonarola in his day was such a one as Thurlough. . . . Oh, the death he died! . . . Strange thoughts for this practical time!

[*Enter Réamonn O’Sullivan.*

*Ita.* Captain, the army of the North is here.

*Réamonn.* I know it. Where is the General?

*Ita.* Did not the guard tell you? He went but now to visit the Captain Alexander.

*Réamonn.* I have what I deem better tidings than the coming of the North. Rome has at last declared.

*Ita.* Good tidings? What? The Pope will bless our cause?

*Réamonn.* No. Never so good as that; but will stand neutral. Now, the revolted priests escape the censure that we feared. And that is all. But it is much. We may expect the waverers now.

*Ita.* If the priests here had wavered you would not have won even this poor thing.

*Réamonn.* Nay, nay, it was our trust in this that armed them.

*Ita.* Well, the North is come in force, and this way, too, if Rome is now made straight.

*Réamonn.* All our ways are not yet straight. God save us still from traitors. If you are not prepared for stern judgments in Council now, resign to-night. We cannot look back now. (*Turning back from the door.*) I may be long absent. Do not delay Council for my return. I will be with you when I can.

[*He goes out.*]

*Ita.* All the sky darkens now that looked so fair.

(CURTAIN.)

## ACT II

LESS THAN AN HOUR AFTER

*Ita alone, then enter Father John and Hugh.*

*Father John.* Your eyes tell, Ita, your poor esteem of the good news; for such it seems to me, the day of breezes that might have been a storm.

*Ita.* Not for that was I thoughtful, Father. It is, indeed, good news, not being bad—good, too, for Thurlough's reason.

*Hugh (hastily).* Yes, yes, it is the same now. Bury the past and hope for what's to come.

*Ita.* That's clergy that held back till now.

*Hugh.* And laity, more culpable, not having that heavy fear.

*Ita.* Yes, I despise them.

*Father John.* Nay, Ita, surely something unusual troubles you. You are so calm, so good a head in Council—and now! Never despise your downcast countrymen, whose hearts are not as brave as yours.

*Hugh.* 'Tis but a little maiden after all!

*Ita.* No, Father, no. I feel upon my heart, not very brave, a weight like nothing but injustice, imminent. (*Aside.*) It needs no prophecy.

[*Enter Sheela. The action here is slow; they are busy with papers and the like.*

*Father John (after a pause).* It is the hour for Council. It is strange that the others delay.

*Ita.* The Captain Réamonn charged me not to await him.

*Sheela.* Patrick is this evening Camp Master, and cannot come.

[*Enter Rory.*]

*Rory.* As I came by the camp of the North the General was called out to receive another message from the enemy.

*Hugh.* I honour Thurlough, and I know his worth. I know his loyalty and steadfastness, and wisdom, too. It may be now akin to treason, just now, to speak of him but as of a king; yet, yet I wish the lot had fallen first on one more slow, more reverent—not of tact, for who more tactful?—but of a cold restraint to treat and treat again. Thurlough is sudden, and catches at things in the air.

*Ita.* Is it not he that sets things in the air?

*Hugh.* Ah, but it does no ill to know their terms, though they be such as we may never take. It would be well to know their terms. But Thurlough, after three words spoken, may send the envoy back.

*Rory.* And well done, too, if the conditions be as the last ones were.

*Sheela.* And you forget, Captains, that Thurlough will remember you, the Council. He has not failed in duty. Nor does he fail in dignity. He is General, and will not go himself—at first. Why, here he comes, with the new Captain.

[*Enter Thurlough and Alexander. Alexander greets the members of Council. Thurlough speaks for a moment aside with Hugh and Father John.*]

*Thurlough* (turning to the others). An envoy from the enemy delayed us. Let us begin the Council with his business.

[*All take their places at the table.*]

*Thurlough* (standing). This news from Rome,



received through the Captain Réamonn, hangs with this matter. And the news—I speak as one—is the best news. Rome will do nothing. I besought the Assembly to make no appeal, here to do Ireland's work in Irish land. And so we shall do now, the Church untouched.

*Hugh.* Let us leave the Church untouched.

*Thurlough.* We shall do so; but first, since this thing bears on all the rest, let us consider if our attitude be changed at all by this. If we had done my wish, made no appeal, we should not here have wearied these two months as we have wearied, waiting and knowing nothing. Some feared a curse, and feared the ruin of our cause here or of their Church here; some feared a blessing, thinking such would rob our state of its merit of self-trust, the spring of all our rising. Rome bids us trust ourselves, her deed so bids us, and the enemy knows that this is his defeat—the Roman news reached him ere it reached us—and so these terms. Still, to keep something, he will yield as much who march to all. In brief, the basis of treaty offered to us is this—full freedom in our land, with our own laws and governance, under the foreign crown, with a joint council of their state and ours.

*Hugh.* It is all we ask.

*Thurlough.* But there is more. We may not war on any; they guard our trade. We may not tax their goods. We subsidise their navy. (*Throwing papers on table.*) Here are the terms, almost the same as those our fathers won—your fathers, Alexander—nearly two hundred years ago, and lost by fraud.

*Hugh.* In God's name let us take them lest we get no others.

*Thurlough.* It is not well to claim the name of God for one side or the other. They offered terms

before we armed; if we had taken them in any name we had not now got these.

*Hugh.* Ah, this is not the same. Thurlough, no General now, but my dear friend, young, passionate, too good for this poor state, do not speak now against our peace. You are very young. I, who am old, remember the hard times when men dared not to look for this. I then was young and fought for this. It is enough. Not for empty words—nation within an empire, kingdom, republic—not for these may our poor men fight on. It is enough.

*Thurlough.* Father, the father of our army and this land, and my dear friend, you do remember well. But memory at best is a troubled thing. I, who have no remembrance of those old hard days, may call to mind something that once you knew. You were young once, and fought for this. In those days, too, were old men who had fought—for less. And in their young days still others old who had fought—why, for less still. So back to the days when the tide was full before; and old men and young men fought for all—as we shall fight—for all. The old men of your young fighting day said of you: He is young. He will be yet like us. If he had known the hard days of our youth he would take less. And you are old, and I am young. I may grow old—who knows?—and may see young men fighting for more than now I claim. But no, that cannot be. As the tide was full in the old days when the claim was full, so is my claim—for all. If they want peace, let them give all.

[*Alexander, Ita and Rory applaud as Thurlough ceases. Father John sits with his hand over his eyes. Sheela, with her hand supporting her head, looks thoughtfully in front of her. Hugh dejectedly expresses*

*dissent. Enter Réamonn O'Sullivan and MacEamonn, the latter surrounded by a small guard.*

*Réamonn.* Captains and Councillors, it is unseemly thus to break in with other work. But the trial of this spy is a pressing thing. His treason, he says, touches another plot. That may be imminent danger. For him no trial is needed; he confesses guilt.

*Thurlough (to Council).* Is it your will to hear this matter first? (*After a pause, in which some express assent.*) Then let us hear his tale. (*To Réamonn.*) Do you know it, Captain?

*Réamonn.* No, my place is the Council. I am no judge. I have pressed him no further than his first confession.

*MacEamonn.* If I could speak with the General alone——

*Thurlough.* No, my place, too, is the Council. The Council shall hear you.

*Ita.* General, do hear him alone.

[*Thurlough looks inquiringly at Ita.*

*Réamonn.* I warned the Councillor Ita to-day that we should have dread work to do with traitors. She is of the Council as we, this is her work.

*Thurlough.* Guards, see that the prisoner is unarmed, and retire. Remain in readiness.

*Réamonn.* He is unarmed.

[*Guards retire.*

*Thurlough.* Prisoner, we are all armed.

*MacEamonn.* I am guilty of treason in this: I tried to leave the Irish lines to communicate with the enemy, to bring one of the enemy that I know in a boat on the river to-night, there to meet a spy who is now in this camp.

*Thurlough.* His name?

*MacEamonn.* Connor O'Gatry, the ballad-singer.

*Hugh.* Connor O'Gatry! Connor O'Gatry! Well, well, the traitor! God save us, we are walking on mines.

*Thurlough (who has betrayed no emotion).* Can you prove what you say?

*Hugh (to Father John).* In God's name let us take the English terms and be done with it all.

*MacEamonn.* I can prove it. I have many proofs, ample proofs.

*Thurlough (calmly to Hugh).* It is not a question of terms now. (*Tenderly.*) Surely the brave old heart is not failing?

*Réamonn.* It is not meet to discuss these things now. If the brave old heart fails it is through fear for all our sakes, seeing new treacheries on every side. Let us deal with these. (*To MacEamonn.*) Come nearer.

[*MacEamonn, who has been standing at a distance, comes to the end of the table.*

*Ita (standing up).* I fear that I must leave: I cannot bear this.

*Thurlough (looking earnestly at her).* No, stay; we shall need all counsel.

*Réamonn.* Prisoner, retire to your former place. (*To Council, when prisoner is at a distance.*) If the Councillor Ita wishes to leave——

*Ita.* I will leave.

*Réamonn.* Wait. What if we send the prisoner out? (*All assent, and Réamonn summons Guards, who lead MacEamonn out; Réamonn returns to Ita.*) Yes, stay. I trust you will not shirk duty. Besides, there is a law of ours. (*He takes a book from the table and opens it, finding the page at once.*) Yes, here it is: "No Councillor shall leave Council in session without unanimous permission of Council." I veto your leaving.

*Ita.* That is the fruit of our constant suspicion. You dare not suspect me of plots?

*Réamonn.* I assign no motive to my veto: that is not in the letter.

*Ita (passionately).* These plots spring rank in the climate that we make of doubt, suspecting all and one another.

*Hugh.* Why, Ita, why? You who are ever calm!

*Ita.* In the old days, before my father's days, men in this land made secret plots and leagues; and traitors flourished and the true men died. I would have our councils free, and hate these bonds, wrought by the old suspicions.

*Réamonn.* In the old days, less old than those you cite, when first our land awakened, men made a rule one day in Council, broke it the next. Why does the Councillor Ita hate these strait bonds? It was a free vote that made them. Why did she not raise up her voice against them when they were in the making? (*Holding up his hand as Ita is about to answer.*) Here is another article of our law: "On suspicion of treason any member of Council may, on his proper authority, order the arrest of suspects, not more than three; but prisoners so made shall not be detained more than three hours, if within that time the accusation be not adjudged sufficient by three other members of Council." The Councillor Ita knows that if I suspected her, or any, I should straight order imprisonment. She came for a long Council here and shall not leave.

*Ita.* Captain, you do not distrust me; why, then, your veto?

*Réamonn (who has turned to the other members of the Council).* The men of my command have taken Connor O'Gatry.

[*Ita, who has been standing, sits down at these words. Réamonn glances rapidly towards*

her, then towards Thurlough, who all this time has been listening in apparent calm, at times writing and then looking critically at the words written. The others have been listening in uneasy wonder, Hugh much perturbed.

Réamonn (to Ita). You stay? I propose that we confront these traitors.

Thurlough (as putting a vote). Yes, that is best. No voice against?

[All remain silent. Réamonn goes to the door. Guards lead in MacEamonn. Réamonn returns to his place, and Guards retire.]

Sheela. Meanwhile, we may question this man?

Thurlough (who is now thoughtful, his head upon his hand). Yes, yes, it is well.

Sheela (to MacEamonn). Come nearer. When did this plotting of yours begin?

Réamonn (to MacEamonn). You can gain nothing by false answers.

MacEamonn (who speaks slowly, pausing before each answer). At the beginning.

Hugh. What? When we first took arms?

MacEamonn. Yes, as assistant to the other man, Connor O'Gatry.

Sheela. Have you been effective? Have you done much?

MacEamonn. A great deal. But now I know that some of the news we brought to them was false.

Sheela. Yet you brought it?

MacEamonn. I do not want to claim that I deserve anything for that.

Réamonn (grimly). No use: we know your work.

MacEamonn. We believed that what we told was true.

Sheela. I do not understand you.

MacEamonn. Someone was spoiling our work.

*Sheela.* You think we have spies in their camp, too?

*MacEamonn.* I know you have. I could not find them, though. But we were fooled here in this camp.

*Alexander (who has been listening in an unimpassioned way).* What if you fooled yourselves?

*MacEamonn.* No, there was someone that spoiled our work, someone of authority.

*Réamonn (who has been standing between the table and the door).* They have brought the other.

*Thurlough.* Let them bring him in. (*Guards bring in Connor O'Gatry, looking crestfallen. Thurlough looks steadily at him.*) Connor O'Gatry, your treason is discovered.

*Connor (keeping his eyes down).* I confess. I will say no more than that. You will condemn me to death; but give me a few hours.

*Réamonn.* If you are condemned, you leave this Council for the scaffold. It is our law. A priest will accompany you if you wish it, but in the sight of all, out of their hearing. (*To Council.*) The Council will pardon me if I speak with too much authority: I do but explain the law.

*Ita (dreamily).* Would you fear a rescue? Do you scent other traitors?

*Réamonn.* It is the law.

*Thurlough (rising slowly).* Council of Ireland, I can explain much that is dark in this. I pray you to hear me patiently to the end. It is a tale hard to tell, perhaps more hard to understand.

*Réamonn.* Pardon, ere you proceed. Do you propose to speak in the presence of these acknowledged traitors?

*Thurlough.* Yes, Captain, I must ask you to trust me now. You will give your judgment after.

*Réamonn.* Why mine more than others? I have a simple way of judgment.

*Thurlough.* And some of us a complex; therefore do I ask you.

*Réamonn.* I grant all willingly. Out of my heart I spoke an hour ago, and out of my thought too. But now you warn us that your tale is hard. Make it a tale, no more. Forbid yourself eloquence and woven phrases.

*Thurlough.* My story shall be naked as my soul that never thus stood bare until this hour for all to gaze on.

*Sheela.* That is a woven phrase, but a simple one.

*Thurlough (speaking very slowly).* Where shall I begin? Where did it first begin? (*Pauses.*) It will be enough to go back to the time of our taking arms; else I should hold you long with slow examinations of my thoughts, the springs of my actions here and in all; how I thought; how I watched myself and others to discover why they did thus and thus; how from the deed I ravelled back to the thought, often no conscious thought; or, if I found no thought, to the habit or the prejudice or the point of view. (*Pauses.*)

*Hugh.* General, this is no tale: you forget.

*Alexander.* I understand, and think it well that he tell on in his own way.

*Ita.* And I . . . (*Checks herself.*)

*Thurlough (with a brief motion of indignation).* Am I on my trial that I must plead to be heard?

*Réamonn.* See how we wander from the work! You pleaded first ere any spoke of you. Then my question—a simple question—if these stay here while you speak thus.

*Thurlough.* You are right, Captain, always right: forgive me. (*To Hugh.*) Captain, I forget nothing. (*To the whole Council.*) Well, thus I was. We came in arms and formed our



camp and Council, won a first battle, and grew stronger daily. But with us to the camp came traitors. These two confess to treason from the first. I marked it from the first. (*Réamonn writes.*) Yes, Captain, write my words. I knew it from the first: knew there was treason in the camp, and revealed it not to Captain or to Council. This man, MacEamonn, has said that he was foiled, his treason foiled and fooled. I foiled and fooled him. By letters, by conversations, by false plans, I fooled them, and through them the enemy, and we crushed the enemy weakened thus by me. It is a long tale, and the one tale still. I will come to the end, to this very day. Yesterday this spy, Connor O'Gatry, came to me with offers to go among the enemy as my spy.

*Sheela.* General, did you know him then to be a spy of theirs?

*Thurlough.* I knew him, and I told him so. If I had hanged him, he were one spy less—a difference of little count, thought I, for a deep fancy struck me. I told him I should spare him, as I might need him. I knew how his mind would work—from this and the rest, that I will tell if any wishes. He came to me again last night, and still I played him, told him to come again to me to-day. To-day I was made General. When the Council then adjourned, little more than an hour ago, my first feeling was joy that the traitor had not come to-day to tempt me. I told myself it was dangerous.

*Hugh.* Let us accept the terms. We do not know the ground on which we walk.

*Thurlough.* Yes. Start not, you will hear me out. Dangerous, because the explanation of my plan—this tale I tell you now—would surely be difficult, as no doubt it is. I have spoken of temptation. Yes, I have been tempted—not to turn

away ever so little from this thorny way we walk, not to vail one high ideal, but to betray the traitors by means like their own. That was temptation. (*Réamonn again makes notes.*) That was the danger. If I tried and failed, and lost anything to our cause thereby, I stood in sharpest peril. And accident is great in life, and mars our subtlest plans. While I mused thus, glad that I was saved from such temptation—the only that allured me—he came; and I was allured.

*Sheela.* Did he come alone?

*Thurlough.* Yes, and to me alone: it was between us two. He brought me offers of the things that traitors win—how I laughed at their folly that sent him! Office and command to me! Their folly allured me. If they are fool enough, I told myself, so to misread me, they will be fool enough to come to my snare. I feigned to bargain, asked for chief office, better terms, gave him my name signed by my hand, to fool them. Why, we may fool them still. Let us make two plans—one to give to them, leading them on to meet it with their plan, obvious to us then, another for ourselves, to follow. We shall give colour to the false plan, half follow it, then change, knowing their counter-plan, and crush them.

*Réamonn.* General, is the tale told? Now it is time to judge traitors before making any plans.

*Thurlough.* I do not know if all the tale is told. The tale in full is my whole life during the months that we are gathered here. But you understand me now: you know how I hoped to act, to baffle traitors. Yes, I think that the tale is told now.

*Réamonn.* Why have these been kept in presence? Nothing in your story gives us cause for that.

*Thurlough.* Ah, I had forgotten. (*To Hugh.*) Captain, I do forget—thus. (*Turning to Réamonn.*)

I pledged my word to that man Connor not to harm him, thus to ensure his trust. I think I have redeemed it thus by speaking in his presence: the evidence of the other had convicted him.

*Réamonn.* Do you need them further here?

*Connor.* Sure you will let me say a word in my defence?

*Thurlough.* Your trial will be after. Captain, if you wish them out before their trial I do not need them more.

*Réamonn* (*goes to the door and brings in the guard*). Let them go, then; we shall call them later.

[*Connor and MacEamonn are led out.*]

*Réamonn.* Council of Ireland, you have heard your General's story. I like it not. He pledged faith to a traitor, and redeemed it. He pledged his faith to us, and is foresworn. We all swore here to act in Council, to do nothing singly: he owns that he has acted singly—or worse—but of that anon. (*Consults his notes.*) He knew from the first that we had traitors in our midst—he, always of our Council—and let them be. He foiled them and he fooled them, he says now. They hanged our friends—they, the very traitors that he spared. He owns his vanity; says he is subtle—his story is a subtle one, indeed. If his story be true he is a foresworn man, an enemy to us, our state, our army. If it be false he is a traitor like the others, doubly fore-sworn. And it is false, and I will prove it so.

*Thurlough.* You dare not say so.

*Réamonn.* Aye, and will prove it. But, first, some trifling points—which help, however, to make clear the whole. He stipulates for office, bargains with them. Why tell us this more than the rest—if there be more untold?—think we. Yet who knows but the traitor Connor has strong proofs of this, and he, knowing it so, forestall them?

*Father John.* The traitor Connor heard the tale in silence.

*Réamonn.* What if he hoped still to be freed by our General? Why, there is honour among them. You have seen how the General has kept his pledge of honour to these base men.

*Father John.* What if it be now you who are carried on by eloquence? The General has spoken openly. And it can do him no good to let the wretches hear all this before they die.

*Réamonn.* Or before they tell their story? Why, 'tis a cue. You are very trusting. What if I prove that your General in speaking openly has lied to you, not in act only—all his acts are lies—yes, lies to the enemy, to the traitors with whom he exchanges pledges of honour, to the Council with whom he exchanges pledges of honour—not in acts only, but in actual word? Will you trust him then? But, once again, before I come to that, there is another word of his that shows how his mind runs: "If I tried and failed, and lost anything to our cause thereby, I stood in sharpest peril." What of our defeated army? His peril is his thought.

*Thurlough.* I can bear no more of this. When I spoke of my peril I pleaded for myself. I thought then for myself, as seldom I have done. My whole tale was a plea.

*Réamonn.* Yes, answer what I say. But, briefly, I have more.

*Thurlough.* What else? The bargaining for a price? Does it merit answer? That was my bait to them with which they would bait me. I played a part, and strove to play it well, feigning the traitor who sells all for reward—but reward enough.

*Réamonn.* I resume. In answer to the Councillor Sheela now, he averred the plot was kept between the two, Connor and him.

*Thurlough.* I said not "kept."

*Réamonn.* Ah, subtle mind! It was not kept, indeed. Connor had his agent; Thurlough had his as well. I think my mind is becoming subtle, too. If you think so, friends, put me away. The Councillor Ita asked to leave the Council. Then all came to my mind. Connor had been here with the General alone.

*Ita (scornfully).* You play the spy.

*Réamonn.* Not so; that needs no spying. The Councillor Ita wished to leave the Council—to warn Connor and to send him away. Let me speak on now; I am near the end. The Councillor Ita, then, is privy to the General's plots. Another one fore-sworn. Shall we go further?

*Hugh.* I am bewildered. Ita MacOscar, is this so?

[*Ita, who has been looking thoughtfully at Thurlough, remains haughtily silent.*

*Thurlough (slowly rising).* I must, then, plead for my life against these charges—which I foresaw, if fate failed me at all. I might appeal for respite and a hearing later, but will not; you will hear all now.

*Réamonn.* I exercise the power given to me by our law, quoted by me already here. Be this story of the Captain Thurlough's false or true, he is fore-sworn to Ireland. I charge him here with treason against our state, our army, and our Council. Let him stand here as prisoner.

*Thurlough.* It is unjust. Friends, you will hear me.

*Réamonn.* They dare not; I have this power. When the law was in the making you asked if the Seven and Council came within its scope: the Assembly voted yes.

*Ita.* Submit, Thurlough, even to this: it is but a form.

*Réamonn.* The Captain Thurlough shall give up his arms and stand here prisoner.

[*Thurlough slowly comes from his place. He lays his arms on the table, then goes and stands before it. His demeanour is haughty.*

*Réamonn.* I wish only to have the truth of all made clear. Which prisoner shall we hear first?

*Thurlough.* I only ask that you let the spies tell their tales.

[*None dissents, and Réamonn goes and brings in the other two prisoners guarded. The guards are then dismissed. Connor and MacEamonn stand aloof.*

*Father John* (who has been speaking to other members of Council). The Captain Alexander, General designate for next week, must be our President of Council now.

*Réamonn.* Yes, it is the law.

*Alexander* (taking the chair vacated by *Thurlough*). I like not this new task, but know my duty. Ere we proceed, I think it were well to ask if this cry of "the law" lead us aright or amiss. We are soldiers, aye, and Councillors, for the war, unsuited to the wordy ways of law. We must judge, alas! Let us judge truly, as our minds direct.

*Réamonn.* I am no lawyer either. I am not learned in that law which the Captain, now our General, loves not. But we have here the simple laws we made to suit this time of war, to mate shrewd traitors. I claim the law, then, this our simple law, and claim that we must follow this, our law. Else, surely, we shall part on ways simple and subtle. The Captain Hugh is simple and straight of mind. Let us grant that—though who is sure of aught? say the subtle. For the rest of us? (*Makes a gesture of inquiry.*) No, I postulate the law.

*Alexander.* The law, by Captain Réamonn

deemed so simple, shall be the foot, that must not claim the function of the eye. Is it the wish of Council to hear the plea of these two?

*Sheela.* Of the spy Connor, the other follows.

*Alexander.* Come forward, prisoners. It is the wish of the General Thurlough, who has placed himself under our judgment, that you tell your tale ere he speak further. The one named Connor O'Gatry will tell his.

*Connor.* General and Captains and Councillors of my country, I have heard your other General give you a long account of all his dealings; and I know you thought it a hard song to learn, if, by your honourable leave, I might call it that. So it is with a trembling that I come to tell mine. But I am a truthful man and a true man, and I must tell it. I said when first you called me before you that I confessed; and with that I asked reprieve. Captain Réamonn O'Sullivan thought it was to win time for escape, but it was not. Your General told you a long story. Now, as I stand here in sight of death, it is all false.

[*Thurlough starts forward. Ita rises.*

*Réamonn* (as *Thurlough* is about to speak). He must tell on the story, false or true.

[*Thurlough falls back, and is silent. Ita sits down.*

*Connor* (who has been meekly awaiting permission to resume). General Thurlough MacKieran is a very clever man; and has been leading many on and on for a long, long time. He knows a good song when he hears one, and a good story, too. He heard my story yesterday, and he told it to you to-day, making it his own. It was not the General that had this way of serving his country, but the poor ballad-singer. I could not be a Captain or a General, but I could do this. I will not tire you with the same story all over again. When I came

and told him that I was not an English spy, as he thought, but a true son of Ireland, serving her in this way I had made out, he did not believe it, but spoke words to me that let me know who was the traitor, willing to be a traitor. He was willing to sell you and your army, and he had a scheme for doing it, so made that none might ever know. I heard the enemy were to offer terms, maybe they have offered them since I was taken. I am sure he would take no terms at first—not if they offered you all you asked, he would not let you take them; though he agreed with them to take worse terms by-and-by. He has settled on terms with them—terms you would not take now or would be blamed for taking. And with that he has terms all for himself. I was their spy, they thought, all the time. But I was waiting to have great news for you—the news that you had a traitor in your Captain and Councillor, in your General to-day.

*Alexander.* Why, then, plead guilty of the charge against you?

*Connor.* Ah, that was my best move; pity it missed. If I told you all this truth, with him before me there, having no written proof, though he had given me one, he could deny it. But give me time, and he, afraid of me, would come and free me—somehow, as he knows how. Then my triumph—your triumph—over a traitor. To come back here with proof, and charge him, as I charge him now. He is too crafty. Do not listen to him. He can bring other colours on the green trees before your sight. But if you keep my story fast in mind, he cannot make it change a single truth. I know you will believe me now, and let me serve my country still. I can tell you secrets of the enemy: I can tell you now what I was to tell you soon.

*Réamonn (interrupting).* Council of Ireland, this is the crime of these two, that they have played



the spy, and are not our spies. They have gone within the enemy's lines, and not from us. Did we know nothing else of their work this were enough. They, with all in this camp, owe duty to our Council here. They have not kept their duty; they are traitors to their allegiance. If this traitor is with that an imposter as he swears, still worse—he is not one to trust. The broken oath earns death. (*Turning to Connor.*) The broken oath earns death. Would you have more? You say you can tell us secrets of the enemy—tell the Council how Art O'Neill was betrayed to the enemy.

*Connor.* Not by me—I will tell you that. . . .

*Réamonn (taking a paper in his hand).* No need. Council, we cannot lose more time. This man betrayed our Captain Art O'Neill. I have all proofs—prepared by me for Council, not for my sole judgment. (*Holds the paper before Connor, who looks abashed.*) He cowers from that proof. (*To MacEamonn.*) Have you a word to say on this?

*MacEamonn.* You know all this, and know the truth. That is not my work; it is his. I have my own against me.

*Réamonn.* So much for these.

*Alexander (to Thurlough).* General, you may not deem it worthy to stand there battling proofs, but . . .

*Réamonn (to Alexander).* General, in all respect I claim that here are three prisoners charged by me equally of treason. The Captain Thurlough MacKieran will answer like the others.

*Alexander.* It is what I would have said in gentler wise. Thurlough MacKieran, will you answer this?

*Thurlough (slowly coming forward).* I am not eager now to speak, to tell the hard tale of my well-wrought plans to one who knows no art like this of mine. For to the Captain Réamonn must I plead.

*Ita.* Thurlough, you need but tell over again something of how you dealt with this base man.

*Thurlough.* . . . Tell it over again? To save my life? To lengthen on this part of life I know? (*Pauses.*) What if our lives are here but just begun—'tis your creed, Father; yours, my honest foe—here but begun, elsewhere accomplished—if what seems broken here be but part-hidden by the cloud of death. Half-built here and curst, perchance full-moulded in the eternal night? Life, but a fragment here, beyond shall be achieved.

*Réamonn (who has risen hesitatingly two or three times).* I would not be unjust or harsh, even to one whom I believe forfeit to death. But we have duties. (*To Thurlough.*) Will you say nothing in your own defence?

*Thurlough (ignoring him).* Or if a night eternal follow this twilight which is never day, were it not well to die when we are weary, to die when we must die? A monk of the preaching friars of Dominick came to me once with warning of all this, such a wrong trial as this, with one sure end. My outward form first claimed him—thus his tale—being in many traits the form of him who preached and taught strange goodness long ago, and made weak women strong to burn their gauds, and made stern, cold men soft to weep with him. . . . Men, passing, see not in light of their own day the truth of their own day. So is still revered the martyr-blood that once was traitor blood. And thus with him. There came a harsher race in Florence then, and took Savonarola and tortured him. And in the torture he confessed to them—anything they would have. They hanged him on a cross and burned him there. And, strange, they took two others to die with him—as you may take those two to die with me.

*Hugh.* Thurlough, speak not so. God knows the hearts are breaking in our breasts.

*Alexander.* Connor O'Gatry, will you not confess now, telling your story as Thurlough has told us of you?

*Connor (slowly).* I said that he could put his sight into your eyes.

*Alexander (after a pause).* Council, we have heard the two tales here—one careful tale of a man fond of life, one strange tale of a man fond of few of the things men love, fond of sharp death, with hope of other life or without hope. This man—the man who has made all our hope—this man I trust and the strange tale believe; that man I deem a liar and a traitor. With him the accomplice. Shall we give judgment thus?

[*Alexander pauses, standing. Some of the Council speak to each other briefly, in low tones, with evident mutual assent. Enter hurriedly Patrick Ryan.*

*Patrick.* I have left Art O'Connor in command to come myself. You must make your decisions at once, and take your commands. We are cut off from the river.

[*All start up in excitement.*

*Hugh.* What? Have they not awaited our answer?

*Patrick (looking around).* The General? (*To Thurlough*). Surely they knew that you refused them truce?

*Hugh.* We did not know. Have you done this, Thurlough?

*Thurlough (in a changed mood, speaking impatiently).* I have.

*Réamonn.* Without authority of Council? Without knowledge? This brims the cup.

*Ita.* He knew the terms would be thrown back in scorn. He had his force complete, and would

wait no more. He, with the North arrived, would have crushed them now. His plans forbade truce. Delay would have marred all.

*Patrick.* Delay will mar all now.

*Hugh.* Haste has marred all.

*Sheela (coldly).* Has Captain Thurlough not a word to say?

*Father John.* Thurlough, you have some answer for all this?

*Alexander.* I know the truth in this. Oh, make it plain.

*Ita.* Will you not plead—for me, for my sake now?

*Patrick.* We cannot wait. Follow me when you can.

[*Exit.*

*Hugh.* We should have known before.

*Ita (going to Thurlough).* You all know nothing of this great, good man. Thurlough, you spoke to them a while ago with the old power of the Irish bards that snatched the weapons from the fighting hands. Will you not plead?

*Thurlough (to Ita).* Ita, for you. Trust me now and remain. (*Speaking authoritatively to Council, who are deliberating in low tones*). Council, I rid you of this heavy task. You would go forth now, now, to your commands, yet would not hastily decide on this. I will go away, urge you no more. Accident is great in life, and mars the sequel of my whole life here, this fragment of my life. Let be hereafter for me what may be. Not one of you here now deems me a traitor, not one—Réamonn, not you; though you would say that I transgress our law, as you have read our law. I will no more urge this, no more dispute. I yield you all for Ireland. I yield and will depart—an exile—what you will. God bless our land, and grant her victory.

[*He goes out.*

*Réamonn.* It may be dangerous thus to let him go.

*Hugh.* No, it is best, it is best.

*Réamonn.* What if he go now to the enemy?

*Alexander.* Unworthy doubt. Let us to other work.

*Réamonn.* Well, take the risk, you that still trust in him. I move that he be placed under arrest. His going thus is against all our law. Let us vote thus while he is still in reach.

*Alexander.* Does any voice support the Captain Réamonn?

*Réamonn.* The Councillor Sheela?

*Sheela (slowly).* No, it is best, no.

*Alexander.* None? Then he is free to go—a poor reward. (*Pauses.*) For these spies? Do all vote death?

*Some voices.* Death, death.

*MacEamonn.* May I not speak—

*Father John.* Useless to speak now, save to your God.

[*Réamonn, standing near the door, summons guards, who enter. A guard speaks aside to Réamonn.*]

*Réamonn.* A messenger for Captain Rory.

[*Exit Rory.*]

*Alexander (to guards).* These are condemned to death. (*Hands to one of them a document he has written.*) Bring them with this to the Captain of the guard.

[*Guards lead out Connor and MacEamonn.*]

*Exit Réamonn.*

*Hugh.* Let us now hasten to our commands.

[*Enter Rory.*]

*Rory.* My force has been cut off, my brother slain, while I was dallying here.

*Hugh.* If we had taken the terms an hour ago that now we shall take gladly!

*Alexander.* We will not take them.

*Rory.* This is the fruit of Thurlough's subtle schemes, that left us unaware of nearest perils. My hero soldiers and my brother!

*Alexander.* This Council stands adjourned till morning, or till a new command. Each Captain to his place.

*Rory.* I have no place.

*Alexander.* Captain, this is of war. We looked for death who came to battle here. The dead who die for Ireland here die well. Thurlough's command is vacant, Thurlough's own force. With it in battle you will avenge our loss. Let us go now.

*[Suddenly, as they go towards the door, a great cheering is heard without, with shouts of "Thurlough! Thurlough!" All stand in wonder, looking out.]*

*Hugh.* Thurlough? My God, what happens now?

*Ita.* The army knows its Captain and its king!

(CURTAIN.)

### ACT III.

SOME HOURS LATER.

*Ita alone, then enter Sheela.*

*Ita.* The battle? We have won? Thurlough has won?

*Sheela (coldly).* The wounded are being tended.

*Ita.* I should have been there to tend them, you would say—to order care of them. It was my place. But had I gone I would have done all ill. My place was in the battle by his side, or here to hope and fear, to pray for him. What of the battle? Surely he has won? Will you and all now understand? Ireland has waited long, waited the man—the man of her far promise and her hope. He comes, and oh, you do not know him! Why have you brought no news of the battle now?

*Sheela.* What news that you do not know? The army acclaimed him, then, its General. Alexander obeyed his call. Then all obeyed and went. Thurlough fought rashly like one seeking death. Nothing withstood him. The fight by this is won.

*Ita.* Won? And the doubts are past, and the dark forebodings! Ireland is freed, and freed by Thurlough's hand—my king of life, the man of Ireland's hope! Will not this battle prove the end of all? Will they not now yield all?

*Sheela.* With Thurlough so in power again we cannot tell—no one can tell how he may spoil the trust of those who trust in him and the doubtful hope of those who cannot trust.

*Ita.* Nothing can win your trust—not victory and all you seek.

*Sheela (bitterly).* This very day I trusted still, trusted him all in all. It is strange thus to speak, thus to you now, to you at any time. But that strange chance of votes for life and death that almost came has filled my soul with this. Duty in you uncrowns to other care. Us duty harshly calls, calls to harsh words in a harsh time, calls to harsh deeds.

*Ita (shrinking).* You would have voted death? God, how I dread your heart! Yet this is new speech from you.

*Sheela (aside).* New speech, indeed. (*To Ita.*) It is strange thus to speak. I came for orders here, not for soft speech. Whoever now commands after the fight will send his orders here for me in the camp.

*Ita.* No one has come here since they went all by his command to battle.

*Sheela.* I shall not wait. This is your duty, to send orders hence if they come. Send them to me, to the Councillor me, if you will.

[*As Sheela goes towards the door, enter Rory.*]

*Rory.* It is all over; all a victory.

*Ita.* Thurlough victor!

*Rory.* It shall not save him. All are victors but I. Réamonn, whom no man doubts, has fought as well.

*Sheela.* Are there no orders from the general staff?

*Rory.* None through me. I have had no command, no place at all. The Captains will all come together here straight when the truce is called. That is an order that I will obey; it comes from Alexander.

*Ita (who has been looking through the door).* Some are coming now, and all the tumult is over in the field, all silent. If only they are safe! God



bear them safe, my father and Thurlough! (*She draws back trembling.*) It is my father.

[*Enter Hugh in great agitation, not noticing Ita.*

*Hugh.* Thurlough has fallen. (*He turns and sees Ita, who stands dazed.*) That is, wounded—a slight wound, perhaps. (*He goes towards Ita, who walks slowly, gropingly to the door.*)

*Ita.* I will go to him.

*Hugh.* Ita, my daughter, stay a while with me. All will come here; Thurlough will come here. (*He takes her hands.*)

*Ita.* Will he come? No, do not hold me. I will go to him. He may be dying. I will go to him.

[*Enter Thurlough, looking haggard and pale. Behind him Alexander.*

*Ita* (*with a cry, clasping his hand, and looking into his face.*) Thurlough, it is not true. You will live on. You will love life at last.

*Thurlough* (*with a strange laugh.*) Ita, I will love all things that you love. (*Tenderly.*) Ita, I am here. What have I said of life? See, I am here. It seems a slight thing. I have summoned surgeons here to tend me. This can wait a while. A wound to-day is glory more than life. Stand by me here and know my living strength. Captains, forgive me and my soft words. (*To Sheela.*) Had you no orders? I sent them to the camp. Nothing important. Stay.

[*Enter Réamonn.*

*Réamonn* (*anxiously, aside to Hugh.*) Thurlough? Then it is not grievous? What a victory!

*Thurlough.* I thank you all for your obedience now to me, the army's choice. It has won Ireland which else had remained unwon a further while, perhaps a weary while. I have granted them truce, and given all commands—a short truce till we give them terms. Now we shall hold Council on other

things. I shall ask approval of other measures and commands of mine. We must act quickly.

*Réamonn (to Hugh, as Thurlough passes to the President's place at the table).* His wound? They told me of a wound.

*Hugh (to Réamonn.)* And me; said he had fallen wounded. Thank God it is so slight—nothing at all!

*Rory (slowly at first, then excitedly).* Before we go to Council now. . . . This is strange. When last we held Council here this Captain stood in another place. Have we restored him? (*To Thurlough.*) Will you restore the men your traitorous schemes cheated of life and victory and all? How do you dare to come and stand here now? You won no victory now for Ireland's sake, no victory for us. You had nought to lose, not even life to lose. This rash fight was your desperate cast to win all back—the place you forfeited, the life, honour and all, that you had forfeited. You shall not win these back by cheating now the living. You brought defeat before this victory, and death of true men, by your treachery.

*Thurlough (calmly).* Rory, you wrong me—your great grief wrongs me. I cannot answer your harsh words now in any words. You will learn all soon; Patrick or another will tell you all—I cannot tell you. . . . I had nought to lose? Not life to lose? . . . Do others wish to urge these doubts?

*Réamonn.* We cannot understand all things we see. That is the first of faith. Some things command conviction. No man but you had fought this field to-day. No man but you had brought us victory. Be what you will—for Ireland—how you will—for Ireland. The man for Ireland has my trust.

*Hugh.* General, and mine. (*With a sad laugh.*) And make what terms you will.

Rory. This is strange. I will go away—to Patrick, in the field.

[Exit.

Alexander. None but our General could have ordered so this battle. None could have heartened so our wavering men. None would have dared so much to lead them. None could have won.

Thurlough. It was a noble fight by every hand. (*Lightly.*) What if my plan brought too much risk? Captains, I have no words for this.

Sheela. Nor I. These things very suddenly change. My judgment still is fixed where but two hours ago it rested, on a doubt, with others, on a doubt. (*Aside.*) Still the harsh words!

Alexander. The Councillor Sheela knows not Thurlough's battle. General, why trouble with this Council now? Act on, as now, in all command.

Sheela. It were well to go by law.

Réamonn. Supreme command in battle is the law, suspending other law.

Ita. Shall we not summon surgeons for your wound?

Thurlough. Father John went himself to summon them. (*He is supporting himself, leaning forward on the table.*) Will Rory return? His grief unmans him, heavy in his heart. I would have all together thus in trust. I think it is he that comes.

[Enter Rory.

Rory. My General, forgive. How could I wrong you?

Thurlough (*smiling*). My fate is kind, lavish of trusting friends, lavish of all. Captains, you may go. Farewell a little.

[Some move towards the door; others stay.  
They look uneasily towards him.

*Réamonn (to Sheela).* He speaks strangely.

. . . Is the wound slight?

[*Enter Father John.* *Sheela, on Réamonn's words, has started, gazing intently on Thurlough. She goes to Ita, and draws her aside, speaking pleasing words to her. Thurlough, with a slight effort, draws himself up on Father John's entrance.*

*Father John.* The General? Here? (*His tone arrests the others.*)

*Thurlough.* Captains, you may go. Farewell a little. (*He bows to them and sits down. He turns to Ita.*) Ita, forgive. Forgive and understand. I hoped for longer time. What have I said of life—of fragment life?

*Ita.* Thurlough, oh, Thurlough! Father, what is it?

*Father John.* Oh! come away. Oh! send to hasten them. It needs a perfect rest.

*Thurlough.* A perfect rest.

*Ita.* Thurlough, oh, Thurlough! Oh! he shall not die.

*Réamonn.* How we were blinded always!

*Hugh.* Thurlough, my son! Oh! raise him up.

*Sheela.* Ita, pride is your duty. This is meet; all worthy of his great life.

*Father John (who has been bending over Thurlough).* Hush! hush! Our voices are vain in the ear of the world. Pray for his soul. Peace at last to his soul!

(CURTAIN.)



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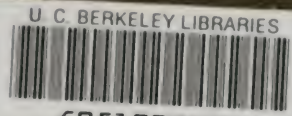
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