

## **CHAPTER LXIV - THE INVINCIBLES**

THE proceedings of Lord Harry after he had sent off that cheque were most remarkable. If he had invited--actually courted--what followed--he could not have acted differently.

He left London and crossed over to Dublin.

Arrived there, he went to a small hotel entirely frequented by Irish Americans and their friends. It was suspected of being the principal place of resort of the Invincibles. It was known to be a house entirely given up to the Nationalists. He made no attempt to conceal his name. He entered the hotel, greeted the landlord cheerfully, saluted the head waiter, ordered his dinner, and took no notice of the sullen looks with which he was received or the scowls which followed him about the coffee-room, where half a dozen men were sitting and talking, for the most part in whispers.

He slept there that night.

The next day, still openly and as if there was nothing to fear, either from England or from Ireland, he walked to the station and took his ticket, paying no attention to what all the world might have seen and understood--that he was watched. When he had taken his ticket two men immediately afterwards took tickets to the same place. The place where he was going was that part of Kerry where the Invincibles had formerly assassinated Arthur Mountjoy.

The two men who followed him--who took their tickets for the same place--who got into the same carriage with him--were two members of that same fraternity. It is well known that he who joins that body and afterwards leaves it, or disobeys its order, or is supposed to betray its secrets, incurs the penalty of death.

On the unexpected arrival of Lord Harry at this hotel, there had been hurriedly called together a meeting of those members then in Dublin. It was resolved that the traitor must be removed. Lots were cast, and the lot fell upon one who remembered past acts of kindness done by Lord Harry to his own people. He would fain have been spared this business, but the rules of the society are imperative. He must obey.

It is the practice of the society when a murder has been resolved upon to appoint a second man, whose duty it is to accompany the murderer and to

see that he executes his task.

In the afternoon, about an hour before sunset, the train arrived at the station where Lord Harry was to get down. The station-master recognised him, and touched his hat. Then he saw the two other men got down after him, and he turned pale.

"I will leave my portmanteau," said Lord Harry, "in the cloak-room. It will be called for."

Afterwards the station-master remembered those words. Lord Harry did not say "I will call for it," but "It will be called for." Ominous words.

The weather was cold; a drizzling rain fell; the day was drawing in. Lord Harry left the station, and started with quick step along the road, which stretched across a dreary desolate piece of country.

The two men walked after him. One presently quickened his step, leaving the second man twenty yards behind.

The station-master looked after them till he could see them no longer. Then he shook his head and returned to his office.

Lord Harry walking along the road knew that the two men were following him. Presently he became aware that one of them was quickening his pace.

He walked on. Perhaps his cheeks paled and his lips were set close, because he knew that he was walking to his death.

The steps behind him approached faster--faster. Lord Harry never even turned his head. The man was close behind him. The man was beside him.

"Mickey O'Flynn it is," said Lord Harry.

"'Tis a ---- traitor, you are," said the man.

"Your friends the Invincibles told you that, Mickey. Why, do you think I don't know, man, what are you here for? Well?" he stopped. "I am unarmed. You have got a revolver in your hand--the hand behind your back. What are you stopping for?"

"I cannot," said the man.

"You must, Mickey O'Flynn--you must; or it's murdered you'll be yourself," said Lord Harry, coolly. "Why, man, 'tis but to lift your hand. And then you'll be a murderer for life. I am another--we shall both be murderers then. Why don't you fire, man."

"By ---- I cannot!" said Mickey. He held the revolver behind him, but he did not lift his arm. His eyes started: his mouth was open; the horror of the murderer was upon him before the murder was committed. Then he started. "Look!" he cried. "Look behind you, my lord!"

Lord Harry turned. The second man was upon him. He bent forward and peered in his face.

"Arthur Mountjoy's murderer!" he cried, and sprang at his throat.

One, two, three shots rang out in the evening air. Those who heard them in the roadside cabin, at the railway-station on the road, shuddered. They knew the meaning of those shots. One more murder to load the soul of Ireland.

But Lord Harry lay dead in the middle of the road.

The second man got up and felt at his throat.

"Faith!" he said, "I thought I was murdered outright. Come, Mick, let us drag him to the roadside."

They did so, and then with bent heads and slouched hats, they made their way across country to another station where they would not be recognised as the two who had followed Lord Harry down the road.

Two mounted men of the Constabulary rode along an hour later and found the body lying where it had been left.

They searched the pockets. They found a purse with a few sovereigns; the portrait of a lady---the murdered man's wife--a sealed envelope addressed to Hugh Mountjoy, Esq, care of his London hotel; and a card-case: nothing of any importance.

"It is Lord Harry Norland," said one. "The wild lord--he has met his end at last."

The letter to Iris was brief. It said:

"Farewell! I am going to meet the death of one who is called a Traitor to the Cause. I am the Traitor of a Cause far higher. May the end that is already plotted for me be accepted as an atonement! Forgive me, Iris! Think of me as kindly as you can. But I charge you--it is my latest word--mourn not for one who has done his best to poison your life and to ruin your soul."

In the other letter he said:

"I know the affection you have always entertained for Iris. She will tell you what she pleases about the past. If she tells you nothing about her late husband, think the worst and you will not be wrong. Remember that whatever she has done was done for me and at my instigation. She ought to have married you instead of me.

"I am in the presence of Death. The men who are going to kill me are under this very roof. They will kill me, perhaps to-night. Perhaps they will wait for a quieter and a safer place. But they will kill me.

"In the presence of Death, I rise superior to the pitiful jealousy with which I have always regarded you. I now despise it. I ask your pardon for it. Help Iris to forget the action of her life of which she has most reason to be ashamed. Show that you forgive me--when you have forgiven her--and when you have helped her in the warmth and strength of your love to drive me out of your thoughts for ever.

"H. N."