

NO DEFENSE

By GILBERT PARKER

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"THE SEATS OF THE MIGHTY"
"THE RIGHT OF WAY"

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CHAPTER III. The Duel.

The journey to Dublin was made by the Calhouns, their two guests, and Michael Jones, 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 gambled, 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. Lynn and the father of Sheila Lynn; 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.

One day Erris Boyne said to Dyck: "There's a supper tonight at the Breakneck club. Come along and have a skinful. You'll meet people worth knowing."

"The Breakneck club isn't a good name for a first-class institution," remarked Dyck, with a pause and a laugh; "but I'll come if you'll fetch me."

Erris Boyne, who was eighteen years older than Dyck, laughed, flicked a little pinch of snuff at his nose with his finger.

"Dear lad, of course I'll come and fetch you," he said. "There's many a man has done worse than lead a guy dripping like you into pleasant ways, firing along any loose change you have, for it may be a night of nights. It's the best place to come to ever an honest man had."

"Are they all the right sort?" asked Dyck, with a little touch of malice. "I mean, are they loyal and true?"

Erris Boyne laid a hand on Dyck's arm. "Come and find out. Do you think I'd lead you into bad company? Of course Emmet and Wolfe Tone won't be there, nor any of that lot; but there'll be some men of the right stamp." He watched Dyck carefully out of the corner of his eye. "It's funny," he added, "that in Ireland the word loyal means being true to the Union Jack, standing by King George and his crowd."

"Well, what would you have?" said Dyck. "For this is a day and age when being loyal to the king is more than sought else in all the Irish world. We're never two days alike, we Irish. There are the United Irishmen and the Defenders on one side, and the Peep-o'-Day Boys, or Orangemen, on the other—Catholic and Protestant, at each other's throats. Then there's a hand thrust in, and up goes the sword, and the rifles, pikes and bayonets; and those that were ready to nuzzle or kill each other fall into each other's arms."

Erris Boyne laughed. "Well, there'll be an end to that. The Irish parliament is slipping into disrepute. It wouldn't surprise me if the astute English bribe them into a union, to the ruin of Irish independence. Yet maybe, before that comes, the French will have a try for power here." He came a step nearer, his voice lowered a little. "Have you heard the latest news from France? They're coming with a good-sized fleet down to the south coast. Have you heard it?"

"Oh, there's plenty one hears one doesn't believe is gospel," answered Dyck, his eyes half closing. "I'm not believing all I hear, as if it was a prayer-meeting. Anything may happen here; Ireland's a woman—very uncertain."

Dyck flicked some dust from his waistcoat, and dropped his eyes, because he was thinking of two women he had known; one of them an angel now in company of her sister angels—his mother; the other a girl he had met on the hills of Connemara, a wonder-

fully pretty girl of seventeen. He should be known that the girl was Erris Boyne's daughter?—although there were times when some gesture of Boyne, some quick look, some lifting of the eyebrows, brought back the memory of Sheila Lynn, as it did now.

Since Dyck left his old home he had seen her twice; once at Loyalist towers, and once at her home in Limerick. The time he had spent with her had been very brief, but full of life, interest and character. Whether at Loyalist towers, or at her mother's house in Limerick, there was no touch of forwardness in her, or in anything she said or did. She was the most natural being, the freest from affectation, he had ever known.

As Erris Boyne talked to him, the memory of Sheila flooded his mind, and on the flood his senses swam like swans. He had not her careful composure. He was just as real, but he had the wilfulness of man. She influenced him as no woman had ever yet done; but he saw no happy ending to the dream. He was too poor to marry; he had no trade or profession; his father's affairs were in a bad way.

He did not know that Erris Boyne was set to capture him for the rebel cause. How could he know that Boyne was an agent of the most evil forces in Ireland—an agent of skill and address, prepossessing, with the face of a Celtic poet and the eye of an assassin?

Boyne's object was to bring about the downfall of Dyck Calhoun—that is, his downfall as a patriot. At the Breakneck club this had business began. It was here that Dyck again met that tall, ascetic messenger from the attorney general, who had brought the message to Miles Calhoun. It was with this man—Leonard Mallow, eldest son of Lord Mallow—that Dyck, with these others, played cards one afternoon.

The instinctive antipathy which had marked their first introduction was carried on to this later meeting. Dyck distrusted Mallow, and allowed his distrust exercise. It was unfortunate that Mallow won from him three-fourths of the money he had brought to the club, and won it with a smile not easy to forgive.

Dyck had at last secured a renseignement in a scheme of his cards when Mallow asked with a sneer:

"Did you learn that at your home in heaven?"

"Don't they teach it where you live in hell?" was Dyck's reply.

At this Mallow flicked Dyck across the face with his handkerchief.

"That's what they teach where I belong."

"Well, it's easy to learn, and we'll do the sum at any time or place you please." After a moment Dyck continued "I wouldn't make a fuss over it. Let's finish the game. There's no good prancing till the sport's ready; so I'll sit and learn more of what they teach in hell!"

Dyck had been drinking, or he would not have spoken so; and when he was drunk during was strong in him. He hated profoundly this man—so self-satisfied and satanic.

He kept a perfect coolness, however. Leonard Mallow should not see that he was upset. His wanton wordiness came to his rescue, and until the end of the game he played with sang-froid, daring and skill. He loved cards; he loved the strife of skill against skill, of trick against trick, of hand against hand. He had never fought a duel in his life, but he had no fear of doing so.

At length, having won back nearly all he had lost, he rose to his feet and looked round.

"Is there anyone here from whom I can ask a favor?"

Several stepped forward. Dyck nodded. One of them he knew. It was Sir Almeric Foyle.

"Thank you, Sir Almeric," he said. "Thank you. Shall it be swords or pistols?" he asked his enemy coolly.

"Swords, if you please," remarked Mallow grimly, for he had a gift with the sword.

Dyck nodded again.

"I'll be your man, as you will."

Never in all Ireland's years had she

a more beautiful day than that in which Dyck Calhoun and the Hon. Leonard Mallow met to settle their account in a secluded corner of Phoenix park. It was not the usual place for duels. The seconds had taken care to keep the locale from the knowledge of the public; especially as many who had come to know of the event at the Breakneck club were eager to be present.

The affair began an hour after sunrise. Neither Dyck nor Leonard Mallow slept at home the night before, but in separate taverns near Phoenix park. Mallow came almost jauntily to the



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obscure spot. Both men had sensitive natures, and both entered the grounds with a certain thrill of pleasure softening the acerbity of the moment.

Dyck moved and spoke like a man charged with some fluid which had abstracted him from life's monotonous routine. He had to consider the chance of never leaving the grounds alive; yet as he entered the place, where smooth grass between the trees made good footing for the work to be done, the thrill of the greenery, the sound of the birds, the flick of a lizard across the path, and the distant gay leap of a young deer, brought to his senses a gust of joyous feeling. He was not mortal; he was submerged. He was in the great, consuming atmosphere of the bigger world and the greater life. He even did not hate Mallow at the moment. The thing about to be done was to him a test of manhood. It was a call upon the courage of the soul, a challenge of life, strength and will.

As Mallow entered the grounds, the thought of Sheila Lynn crossed Dyck's mind, and the mental sight of her gladdened the eyes of his soul. For one brief instant he stood lost in the mind's look; then he stepped forward, saluted, shook hands with Mallow, and doffed his coat and waistcoat.

As he did so, he was conscious of a curious coldness, even of dampness, in the hand which had shaken that of Mallow. Mallow's hand had a clammy touch—clammy, but firm and sure. There was no tremor in the long, thin fingers nor at the lips—the thin, ascetic lips, as of a secret service man—but in his eyes was a dark fire of purpose. The morning had touched him, but not as it had thrown over Dyck its mantle of peace. Mallow also had enjoyed the smell and feeling of it all, but with this difference—it had filled him with such material joy that he could not bear the thought of leaving it. It gave him strength of will, which would add security to his arm and wrist.

Dyck had learned swordsmanship with as skilled a master as Ireland had known, and he had shown, in getting knowledge of the weapon, a natural instinct and a capacity worthy of the highest purpose. He had handled the sword since he was six, and his play was better than that of most men; but this was, in fact, his first real duel. Many times, of course, in the process of his training, he had fought as men fight in duels, but with this difference—that now he was permitted to disable or kill his foe.

Physically, there was not a vast deal to choose between the two men. Mallow was lank and tall, nervously self-contained, finely concentrated, and vigorous. Dyck was broad of shoulder, well set up, muscular, and with a steeper eye than that of his foe. Also, as the combat developed, it was clear that he had a hand as steady as his eye. What was more, his wrist had superb strength and flexibility; it was as enduring and vital as the forefoot and ankle of a tiger. As a pair they were certainly notable, and would give a good account of themselves.

The two men fighting had almost the air of gladiators. Their coats were off, and the white linen of their shirts looked gracious; while the upraised left hand of the fighters balancing the sword-thrust and the weight of the body had an almost singular beauty. Of the two, Dyck was the more graceful, the steeper, the quicker in his motions. His momentary vision of Sheila Lynn remained with him—not as a vision, rather as a warmth in his inmost being, something which made him intensely alert, cheerful, defiant, exactly skillful.

He had need of all his skill, for Mallow was set to win the fight. He felt instinctively what was working in Dyck's mind. He had fought a number of duels, and with a certain tricks of art he had given the end to the lives of several. He became conscious, however, that Dyck had a par-

ticular stroke in mind, which he himself was preventing by masterful methods. It might be one thing or another, but in view of Dyck's training it would perhaps be the Emisicorthy touch.

Again and again Dyck pressed his antagonist backward, seeking to muddle his defense and to clear an opening for his own deadly stroke; but the other man also was a master, and parried successfully.

Presently, with a quick move, Mallow took the offensive, and tried to unsettle Dyck's poise and disorganize his battle-plan. For an instant the tempestuous action, the brilliant, swift play of the sword, the quivering flexibility of the steel, gave Dyck that which almost disconcerted him. Yet he had a grip of himself, and was fortunate to preserve his defense intact; though once his enemy's steel caught his left shoulder, making it bleed. The seconds, however, decided that the thrust was not serious, and made no attempt to interrupt the combat.

Dyck's tactics changed. Once again he became aggressive, and he drove his foe to a point where the skill of both men was tried to the uttermost; it was clear the time had come for



The Time Had Come for Something Definite.

something definite. Suddenly Dyck threw himself back with an agile step, lunged slightly to one side, and then in a gallant foray got the steel point into the sword-arm of his enemy. That was the Emisicorthy stroke, which had been taught him by William Tandy, the expert swordsman, and had been made famous by Lord Wellington of Emisicorthy. It succeeded, and it gave Dyck the victory, for Mallow's sword dropped from his hand. He clasped the wounded arm with his left hand as the surgeon came forward.

"Well, you got it home," he said to Dyck; "and it's deftly done."

"I did my best," answered Dyck.

"Give me your hand, if you will."

With a wry look Mallow, now seated on the old stump of a tree, held out his left hand. It was covered with blood.

"I think we'll have to forego that courtesy, Calhoun," he said. "Look at the state of my hand! It's good blood," he added grimly. "It's d-d good blood, but—but it won't do, you see."

"I'm glad it was no worse," said Dyck, not touching the bloody hand. "It's a clean thrust, and you'll be better from it soon. These great men" he smiled toward the surgeons—"will soon put you right. I got my chance with the stroke, and took it, because I knew if I didn't you'd have me presently."

"You'll have a great reputation in Dublin town now, and you'll deserve it," Mallow added adroitly, the great paleness of his features, however, made ghastly by the hatred in his eyes.

Dyck did not see this look, but he felt a note of malice—a distant note—in Mallow's voice. He saw that what Mallow had said was fresh evidence of the man's arrogant character. It did not offend him, however, for he was victor, and could enter the Breakneck club or Dublin society with a tranquil eye.

Again Mallow's voice was heard. "I'd have seen you d-d to h-h-l, Calhoun, before I'd have apologized at the Breakneck club; but after a fight with one of the best swordsmen in Ireland I've learned a lot, and I'll apologize now—completely."

The surgeon had bound up the slight wound in Dyck's shoulder, had stopped the bleeding, and was now helping him on with his coat. The operation had not been without pain, but this demonstration from his foe was too much for him. It drove the look of pain from his face; it brought a smile to his lips. He came a step nearer.

"I'm as obliged to you as if you'd paid for my board and lodging, Mallow," he said; "and that's saying a good deal in these days. I'd never have a bigger fight. You're a greater swordsman than your reputation. I must have provoked you beyond reason," he went on gallantly. "I think we'd better forget the whole thing."

"I'm a loyalist," Mallow replied. "I'm a loyalist, and if you're one, too, what reason should there be for our not being friends?"

A black cloud flooded Calhoun's face.

"If—I'm a loyalist, you say! Have you any doubt of it? If you have—"

"You wish your sword had gone into my heart instead of my arm, eh?" interrupted Mallow. "How easily I

am misunderstood! I meant nothing by that 'if.'" He smiled, and the smile had a touch of wickedness. "I meant nothing by it—nothing at all. As we are both loyalists, we must be friends. Good-by, Calhoun!"

Dyck's face cleared very slowly. Mallow was maddening, but the look of the face was not that of a foe.

"Well, let us be friends," Dyck answered with a cordial smile. "Good-by," he added. "I'm d-d sorry we had to fight at all. Good-by!"

(To be continued.)

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