

J. H. INGRAHAM



CAPTAIN KYD

J. H. Ingraham

Captain Kyd

The Wizard of the Sea

Published by

MUSAICUM

Books

- Advanced Digital Solutions & High-Quality eBook
Formatting -

musaicumbooks@okpublishing.info

2021 OK Publishing

EAN 4064066381714

Table of Contents

[Volume 1](#)

[Volume 2](#)

VOLUME 1

Table of Contents

Table of Contents

PREFACE.

BOOK I.

CHAPTER I.

CHAPTER II.

CHAPTER III.

CHAPTER IV.

CHAPTER V.

CHAPTER VI.

CHAPTER VII.

PREFACE.

[Table of Contents](#)

The following dramatic romance consists of two acts, with an interval of five years between them. The time and action of the first part, the scene of which is placed in the south of Ireland, are comprised in something less than three days; that of the second, the scenes of which are laid in New-York Bay and on its adjacent shores, embraces a somewhat longer space of time, the two comprising the most prominent crises of the hero's life—one giving the colouring to the whole of his subsequent career, which in the other is brought to its close.

Natchez, Miss., Jan., 1839.

BOOK I.

THE CAUSE.

[Table of Contents](#)

"A lady should not scorn
One soul that loves her, howe'er lowly it be."

BARRY CORNWALL.

"'Twere idle to remember now,
Had I the heart, my thwarted schemes.
I bear beneath this alter'd brow
The ashes of a thousand dreams—
Some wrought of wild Ambition's fingers,
Some colour'd of Love's pencil well—

Ambition has but foil'd my grasp,
And Love has perish'd in my clasp."

Melanie.

CHAPTER I.

Table of Contents

"Oh, bold Robin Hood
Was a forester good
As ever drew bow in the merry green wood,
And what eye hath e'er seen
Such a sweet maiden queen
As Marian the pride of the forester's green."

On a rocky headland that stretches boldly out into the bosom of one of the lakelike bays that indent the southern shore of Ireland, stands a picturesque ruin, half hidden to the eye of the voyager amid a group of old trees. With its solitary square tower, and warlike battlements jagged and stern in their desolation, it still wears an air of imposing grandeur, that conveys some idea of its ancient baronial state. It is known by the name of "old Castle Cor;" and in its palmy days was the summer abode of the last Earl of Bellamont.

On a bright morning in the merry month of May, in the year sixteen hundred and ninety-four, its now silent halls rung with the joyous voices and noisy sports of a score of gallant youths and noble maidens, gathered there, from many a lordly roof both far and near, to celebrate a rural fête in honour of the sixteenth birthday of the only child of this ancient house, the beautiful Kate Bellamont, better known throughout the barony as "wild Kate of Castle Cor." In the pastimes of the day, archery, then much practised by ladies of gentle blood, was to hold a conspicuous place, and

a silver arrow was to be awarded to the victor by the hands of Lady Bellamont herself. As the hour of noon approached, the earl's chief forester, Cormac Dermot, his gray locks covered with a red cloth bonnet, in which was fastened an eagle's plume, and his goodly person arrayed in a holyday suit of green and gold, made his appearance on the lawn by the west side of the castle, and wound his horn, loud and long, as the signal that the "gentle sporte of archerie" was now about to begin.

The place chosen for the trial of skill was an ample lawn of the softest and greenest verdure, lying between the wall of the castle and the verge of the cliff. A few ancient oaks grew here and there upon it; and towards the south it was open to the land-locked bay and far-distant sea, which, wide as the vision extended, seemed to belt the horizon like a shining band of silver. At each extremity of the field, one hundred yards apart, was pitched upon the sward a gorgeous pavilion, one of blue, the other of orange-coloured silk: the hangings of the former were fringed with silver; and from the festooned curtains of the latter pended tassels of silk and gold. In these were laid tables spread with cloths of crimson damask, and covered with every luxury that could tempt the palate or gratify the eye. From the summit of one of the pavilions fluttered a crimson banneret, displaying the arms of Bellamont, its boar's-head crest pierced through with an arrow, emblematical of the occasion; and from the top of the other waved a white banner, in the centre of which, according to the rules of heraldry, a bow, quiver, target and other signs of archery were tastefully emblazoned.

Twenty-five yards in front of each pavilion, two targets were placed, fifty yards apart, so that, after sending all their arrows at one, the archers might walk up to it and gather them, and, taking their stand by it, shoot back to the other; thus alternately reversing the direction of their shots, and adding healthful exercise to their graceful pastime. The targets were both very beautiful, and gay with colours; being round wooden shields half an inch in thickness and three feet in diameter, with four circles painted on the faces: the outer white, with a green border; the next black; the next within it orange; and the inner circle red, encompassing a gold centre. They were elevated, at a slight angle, twenty inches from the ground, on a light frame resembling a painter's easel.

Midway between the targets, but safely placed several paces back from the erratic path of the arrows, was erected beneath an ancient linden-tree a sylvan throne, surmounted by a canopy of silk, elaborately worked with the needle to represent Diana, with her nymphs and hounds, pursuing a herd of deer with flights of arrows. This was the seat of the umpire of the sports—Katrine, the lovely Countess of Bellamont. Altogether, it was an imposing and gorgeous scene; and, with its stern castle rising boldly from the verdant lawn topped with battlements and towers; with its boundary on the north side, of green, dark old woods, and the calm, deep bay beneath, with a yacht sleeping on its bosom; with its extended prospect of the illimitable sea forever breathing with a mysterious life, the field of archery at Castle Cor, for the natural beauty of the spot and the

taste displayed in its adornment, has doubtless had no parallel in the annals of archery.

Scarcely had the echoes of old Cormac's horn died away in the forest, startling many a stately stag to flight, when the castle poured forth its gay throng of archers towards the lists. In their midst was the Countess of Bellamont, escorted by a bodyguard of young archeresses. She was then in the prime and beauty of ripe womanhood: at that delightful age when the wife and mother, all the charms of mind and person fully developed and refined by taste and elegant culture, fascinates by a thousand nameless graces, and captivates and enslaves even the youthful crowd that sigh at the feet of her lovely daughter of seventeen—the age that leaves one in doubt whether beautiful women arrive at the zenith of their beauty and power under five-and-thirty.

This was the age of Katrine of Bellamont; and though at eighteen (when she became a bride) the loveliest of all Irish maidens either of gentle or lowly birth, yet now, as the Countess of Bellamont, far-famed for her rare and stately beauty. She was arrayed in a simple white robe; and a laced jacket of royal-purple velvet closely fitted her magnificent bust. When she entered the field she was conducted by her juvenile escort to the throne, on which she seated herself, and with a playfully assumed queenly dignity that became her highborn air. A coronet of pearls graced her brow; and her symmetrical hand, that rivalled pearls in its soft transparency, gracefully held, like a sceptre, the miniature arrow which was to be the prize for excelling in archery. Her deep blue eyes, as she looked around, reflected, in a thousand smiling beams, the joy that danced on each

youthful face, and the sunny light of her own countenance communicated sunshine of the heart wherever it fell.

On each side of the throne stood a well-born youth habited as a page, and behind her were stationed two beautiful young girls attired as sylphides. On her right hand, a few feet in the rear, leaning on a yew bow six feet in length, stood Cormac Dermot, his stag's horn, richly inlaid and curiously carved with woodland devices, slung beneath his left shoulder, with the mouthpiece brought round in front ready for use. A little farther beyond, and nearer the castle-wall, was assembled a group of lower degree, consisting of under-foresters, retainers of the household, and neighbouring peasants; while on the opposite side of the lawn might be seen, relieved against the sky, the forms of two or three fishermen, whom curiosity had led to climb the dizzy precipice from the beach—far along the white line of which were visible their scattered huts, looking like black specks upon the sand.

All was now animation with the preparations for the lists. From bundles of bows thrown by Dermot on the ground before each pavilion, the youths began busily to select weapons for the fair archers, who were themselves earnestly engaged in choosing arrows from quivers that were hung on the front of the tent; fastening braces of thick fawn's leather on their left or bow arm just above the wrist to preserve it from injury by the rebound of the bow-string; and drawing on the right hand, from parcels handed them by pages, shooting-gloves, with three finger-stalls, fitted with a strap and button to fasten at the wrist, to protect their fingers in drawing the arrow. Besides these

appendages of archery, each archeress wore a belt buckled about the waist, to which pended a tassel of the softest floss of Brussels, to wipe away the soil that adhered to the arrows when drawn from the ground; and also an ivory box with a metal lid, containing a perfumed paste for anointing the finger-stalls of the shooting-gloves and the brace on the arm, that the bow-string might the more easily quit the fingers and pass over the guarded wrist. A small pouch, either of tortoise-shell or of silver, in shape and dimensions like a sportsman's cup or a dicebox, was suspended on the right side to receive two or three arrows; the more cumbersome quiver, while in target-shooting, being left on the ground near at hand, filled with shafts to replace those broken or lost.

The party of archeresses consisted of seven fair girls, the eldest scarce seventeen. They were fancifully attired, some in green, and others in orange or blue hunting-jackets, after the tasteful fashion of the period; a costume admirably calculated to display their sylphan shapes. They all wore hats of the colour of their spencers, looped up in front, and ornamented with waves of snowy plumes. Long white trains descended from their waists to the ground, but, in shooting, were gathered beneath the belt on the left side, and, thence falling down again to the feet in numerous folds, added to the grace and picturesqueness of their appearance. Each archeress was attended by a favoured youth as an esquire, habited in a green or gray hunting-frock, bordered with a wreath of embroidered oak-leaves, with an arrow worked in silver thread on each lappel. They wore broad flapping hats, turned boldly back from the forehead, and shaded in front

with a drooping black plume. Each carried a short hunting-spear, decked with ribands of the colour of his mistress' jacket, gifts from her own hand and tied thereon with her own fingers, in token that she acknowledged him as her "Esquire of the Bow." The duty of these youthful cavaliers was to select a bow suited to the strength of the archeress whose colours they wore; to fit it with an arrow of a weight proportioned to its power, having a nock exactly receiving the string; to assist, if the lady is unskilled, in stringing the bow; to draw the arrows from the butt, or collect the far-shot shafts and return them to the owner; and otherwise, as courtesy and gallantry prompted, to do their duty as "esquires of archerie."

Once more the sonorous horn of old Cormac was heard winding, now high, now low, in a long, wild strain, and then ending in three sharp blasts, like the stirring notes of a bugle sounding to the charge. Every archeress now had her brace buckled on her arm, and her shooting-glove buttoned about her wrist; every one had two good arrows in the pouch at her belt, and a third on the string; and each fair girl, attended by her esquire, hastened to the stand by the southernmost target at the sound of the forester's horn—save, in each instance, Kate Bellamont! Her brace would not buckle all she could do; her shooting-glove would not go on, and three, that she had pulled off, were lying rent at her feet; and not an arrow was to be seen in her tortoise-shell pouch, though half a dozen fair ones lay about her on the ground! It was very plain that something was going wrong with the maiden. Such a dilemma could not have happened without a cause. The braces of the rest buckled with ease;

their shooting-gloves fitted beautifully; and there had been time enough to fill twenty pouches. Why, then, was Kate Bellamont not ready? Her brace, both strap and buckle, was perfect; and the wrist it was destined to compass was not to be matched for its smallness of size! The gloves, plainly were just what they should be! Her companions had been fitted, and her hand was the smallest as well as the fairest of the party; besides, there were a dozen pairs on the ground that evidently were made for no other hand. The cause could not lie in the arrows, for they were, to the eye, without fault, and of every variety of shape and fashion known to archery; nor in her handsome esquire, who, save when requested by some eager girl to assist her, had been diligently serving her with arrow after arrow, until he had emptied two quivers, the contents of which now lay strewn around. The cause is not to be found in either of these. The truth is, Kate Bellamont was playing with her little foot against the ground when she should have been trying on her glove. No sooner was one pulled half way on than she suffered it to remain so, drumming the while in a fit of absence on the sward, while her eyes followed the motions of her handsome esquire. The next moment, recovering herself, she would tear it off impatiently, and, with a laugh, fling it to the ground. She would then take up another, and go through the same process, or play with her brace instead of buckling it; and when the young gentleman gave her an arrow, without scarcely touching it to the bow-string she threw it down, saying it was too heavy or too light, too long or too short, had too much feather or had not feather enough; so that, when the rest of the party were ready, Kate

Bellamont was just where she was at the outset. The result of all this, whether brought about designedly or not by a little female manœuvring, being a question to be solved by such as are skilled in the ways and means by which women work out their ends, was, that when the last notes of Cormac's horn died away in the forest, Kate Bellamont found herself and her esquire, the noble and youthful heir of the broad lands of the earldom of Lester, left quite alone. The brace was on her arm unbuckled, and she held a glove in her hand.

"Lord Robert, do clasp this troublesome brace for me. Strange you could not see what difficulty I have had to get ready! But I suppose you were so engaged fitting an arrow to pretty Gracy Fitzgerald's bow, that you had no eyes for any one else!"

This was said half in pique, half laughingly; and holding, with a pouting lip, her snowy arm towards her esquire as she spoke, he gallantly received it, and with the merest effort in the world clasped the rebellious brace. But he did not release her soft hand without giving it a slight pressure, and looking into her face with an eloquent gaze, which she consciously met with eyes half downcast, yet beaming through their long dark lashes with a gentle fire that young love only could have kindled.

"Now, Sir Esquire, fasten this glove."

The youth bent till the black plume of his bonnet rested on her arm, and, with some difficulty apparently, for he was a very long time about it, succeeded in buttoning the silken strap across the blue-veined wrist; nor did he lift his head from the fair hand, which lay nestled like a bird in his

beneath the thick covert of his drooping feather, ere he had touched it with his bold lip.

"Ha, Sir Forester, is this a part of your service as squire of archery?" she demanded, with the blood mounting to her cheek in maidenly surprise; though the pouting smile on her mouth, which she vainly tried to turn into a frown, and the dancing light in her telltale eyes, betokened anything besides resentment at the bold deed; "I see I must resign you to my sly little cousin Gracy, and take her well-behaved esquire; doubtless you better understand her humour than you seem to do mine."

By the time she had ended she had succeeded in calling up a small cloud on her brow, which struggled very hard to cast a shadow over the sunny light that played around her lovely mouth and was reflected back in a thousand rays from the deep wells of her black, Castilian eyes.

"Forgive me, sweet Lady Kate," said the esquire, dropping on one knee—disguising his attitude to the eyes of others by gathering carelessly one or two arrows from the ground—to her eyes alone a suppliant. The expression of his face amusingly wavered between playful mockery and seriousness, as if greatly fearing, yet doubting much, that his daring act had really given offence: a sort of neutral ground between mirth and grief, with the advantage of enabling him to fall readily into the one or the other, as he should find the needle of her humour pointed.

"See, then, you offend not again, sir," she said, laughing at the troubled expression of his serio-comic countenance. "Haste! choose me an arrow that tapers from the pile to the feather."

"One that tapers each way from the middle will suit you better for shooting in this light wind," said the young esquire, the puzzled play of his handsome features changed to sunshine by her voice. As he spoke he brought a quiver full of arrows and poured them out at her feet, and, kneeling on the thick verdure, selected an arrow of the kind he had named.

"No, no," she said, putting it aside; "they always curve from the line of sight; and, besides, fly unsteady."

"Not in a wind, Kate. The fulness in the middle counteracts the weight of the ends, and drives it more evenly."

"Do as you are bidden, Sir Esquire," she said. "Don't think now you are going to have your own way." A second arrow was placed in her hand by the youth.

"Why, Lord Robert, what *is* the matter with your wits! This is an arrow of the same kind; and, besides, it is without a cock-feather. I shall have to call yonder handsome fisher's lad, who is watching me so admiringly, to my assistance."

The esquire, without looking up, mechanically handed to her a third arrow, with the head broken and the feathers ruffled. Without being able to speak in her surprise, she looked quietly down and beheld the young man so intently contemplating one of her exquisite little feet, that twice she spoke to him ere he looked up to encounter her gaze of arch astonishment. It was very plain what had become of her esquire's wits. The youth blushed, and hastily rose to his feet; but the maiden could not disguise a little female vanity, though she shook her finger at him, and said mischievously,

"Do you propose becoming a cordwainer, and making me a pair of slippers, Lord Robert, that you are so busy taking the dimensions of my foot?"

"I would willingly become apprentice to the meanest cobbler, to be suffered to take the measure of that tiny foot, and fit it with a shoe," said the youth, with gallantry.

The maiden laughed, and, unwilling to betray the feeling his words had created, said, "Do be quick, Lord Robert; my bow is not yet strung with our foolish idling here, and I shall be too late for the lists."

As she spoke she grasped her bow firmly in the middle, and extending her hand, containing the string terminating with a loop, to the upper limb, she pulled smartly upward, pressing the limb downward at the same time with her left wrist, and skilfully and accurately carried the eye of the bow-string into the nock. Her bow, like those of her companions, was five feet in length, neatly made of dark wood highly polished, and rounded on the inner side to increase its power in shooting.

"Well and featly done! That's a tough yew, and a man's strength could not have better done what your little fingers, with skill to guide them, I have just seen do. You were an apt pupil, young mistress, and do honour to old Dermot's lessons."

Kate Bellamont turned and saw the old forester close at her side. "If I have any skill, good Cormac," she said, "I do owe it all to your kind teaching; and if I win the arrow this day, you shall have it as a birthday gift from me, to wear in your bonnet instead of your pipe."

The forester lifted his bonnet with a gratified air, mingled with respect, at this expression of kindness from his lovely young mistress, and said,

"I know you would give Cormac, sweet lady, even the fair white plume that graces your brow if you thought it would gratify the old man. God bless you, noble child; may you live to see many such bright birthdays as this!" The rough huntsman brushed a tear from his eyes as he spoke; for the experience of years had told him that clouds would obscure the bright sky of her young hopes, and that each returning birthday might be but a sad waymark to denote the slow passage of a life of sorrow and trial. "The countess has bid me come and see if you need my aid in fitting your shafts, that you delay."

"No, no, Cormac," said the maiden, blushing; but directly she cried, "Yes, you can help me. I am undecided whether to shoot an arrow that tapers from the head to the feathers, or from the feathers to the head, or from the middle both ways."

"What says Master Robert?" asked Dermot, smiling archly through one of his little gray eyes, the other, from the long habit of shutting it in shooting, having at last got to be so firmly closed up in a radiating network of fine wrinkles as to have been for the last ten years of his life invisible.

"Pshaw, Cormac!" she cried, stooping till her snowy plumes shaded her burning cheek; "I did not ask Lord Robert, but you."

"I have advised Lady Kate, forester, to shoot arrows that taper both to feather and pile," said the youth, haughtily.

"And she chooses—"

"Those that taper from the pile to the feather," said the maiden, quickly.

"If the distance were seventy yards instead of fifty," said the forester, measuring the ground with his eye, "it would be a good shaft for a steady hand; but, if you will let me decide, I would recommend you to take the taper from the feather, especially as the air is in motion."

"Your skill is at fault for once, old man," said the young noble, with a flushed brow; "the best bowmen in England—ay, Robin Hood himself, were he here this day—would teach you your craft better."

"You are in error, Master Robert," said the forester, with some warmth, in defence of his profession; "and he who taught you that a double taper is better in a wind than—"

"Hist, old graybeard! you know nothing of woodcraft; yonder fisher's lad will even tell you a shaft swelling in the middle will waver in its passage through the wind like a weathercock."

"Nay, Master Robert—"

"Speak again, old man, and I strike you!" said the young noble, imperiously, angry that his skill should be called in question; feeling positive that he alone was right, or else too proud to acknowledge his conviction.

"For shame, Lester," cried Kate Bellamont, with an indignant look; "I did not think you were of so overbearing and ungracious a temper! Besides," she added, proudly, "I sought Cormac's opinion! Strike an old man, and in a lady's presence! Out upon thy manhood, Robert. Ask Cormac's forgiveness, or never speak to me more."

"Pardon my hasty speech, Kate," he said, abashed by her look, and reproached by the cutting irony of her words, approaching her as he spoke with an air of deep mortification, "forgive—"

"To Cormac, sir, not me."

"For Cormac, in atonement, I will send from Castle More a fat buck, with this very arrow sticking in its heart; but," he added, with haughty fierceness, "I will ask no man's forgiveness. If I have offended, I am ready to stand by my words."

"Marry come up! we are like to have a letting of blood here," said the maiden, between jest and seriousness. "Will you be docile, Robert?"

"At your bidding, Kate, as a lamb."

"*Very* like a lamb. Forget it, Dermot. You have made his pride a little sore to tell him, before a lady, he knew not how to choose a shaft, and so unfit to be an esquire of archery."

"Young blood will up," said the forester. "I meant not to gainsay your skill, Master Robert, for it's known to every bowman that no young hand in the county can send a shaft farther or surer than young Lord Robert of Castle More."

"That will do, Cormac. Now, Robert, see that you henceforward take fire less readily; and you, good Dermot, refrain from wounding the esteem of these young lords. Verily, it behooves me to look to my own speech in such fiery company. Nay, Robert," she added, laughing, "I have done. Give me the shafts; and, as we are to have three shots apiece at the target, I will shoot one of each kind, and be the prize his whose arrow wins! Give me them, Robert!—nay, don't press my fingers so hard; I don't want them in my

hand, but in the pouch. Go, Cormac, I am ready. I see my lady mother is shaking her silver arrow at me already for loitering here when I should be at the post."

The next moment she had joined the archers, and the trial of skill forthwith commenced. The first arrow that was shot was from the bow of a fair-haired girl, in a blue hat and a silken bodice of the same colour; it flew wide of the mark, and quivered in the trunk of a tree sixty yards off.

"There was nerve in that, Lady Eustace," said old Cormac, who watched each shot with professional interest; "but you grasped the handle of your bow too tightly, and so made your aim unsteady. Hold your bow as lightly as you would a hunting-whip. 'Tis not strength, but skill, that sends the bolt into the eye of the butt."

The young archeress laughed at her failure, and resigned her place to another, who was distinguished by an orange-coloured spencer. This second shot was more successful; for, swiftly cleaving the air, the arrow stuck in the orange circle.

"Bravo! orange to orange!" was the cry that on all sides hailed this appropriate hit.

The third shaft was still better directed; and, hitting the red or inner circle, stuck there for a moment trembling like an aspen-leaf, and then fell to the ground.

"A brave bolt that! a brave bolt that," said the forester, "and drawn well to the head. But you should have brought the nock of your arrow down more towards your ear. The ear in shooting an arrow; the eye in firing a pistol or harquebuss. That shaft was a taper from the feather, Master Robert."

"Hush, Cormac," cried Kate Bellamont, quickly; "would you get your gray beard into a broil. Robert, bring me my quiver," she said, as she saw the young man's eye light up; "one of my arrows, the very one you gave me, has the cock-feather awry! Stay! you need not bring the quiver, but select a shaft for me yourself. I will keep it as my forlorn hope, and mark me if it do not carry off the prize." She sought his eyes and looked so bewitchingly after a manner maidens have of their own, that his brow coloured and his eyes beamed with a different emotion, while, with a fluttering heart, he went to do her bidding.

Oh, gentle and angelic woman! ever ready to calm the ruffled brow with words of peace! to bring good out of evil! to step between fierce man and his reinless passions! with an eye to sooth, a voice to disarm, a smile to win! Blessings on thee, woman! whether in thy happy and innocent girlhood, or fair and gentle maidenhood; whether maid or matron, young or old, lovely or homely! Blessings on thee, sweet leaven of humanity! yet partaking so much of the heavenly nature, that the sons of the gods, we are told, were lured from their celestial thrones to cast their crowns at thy feet!

A fourth arrow hit the black circle; and the fifth, sent from the bow of a tall, graceful girl, struck on the outer edge of the target and splintered it, while the bow itself snapped in two in her hand.

"What a mischievous shot, Fanny," cried Lady Bellamont, smiling; "if by-and-by you launch Cupid's shafts at your lovers' hearts in that way, you will make sad havoc."

"It was all, your ladyship, of placing the short limb of the bow uppermost. Hugh Conor must be getting old that he teacheth not his pupil better to handle the bow," said old Cormac, shaking his snowy locks as the next archeress, a sylph-like little being, about fifteen, with dangerous hazel eyes; rich chestnut-coloured hair, that flowed in curls all over her shoulders; a voice like some merry bird's, and a wild, joyous spirit lighting up like a sunbeam her whole countenance, took her place at the stand.

"Now, cousin Gracy, do be steady!" cried Kate Bellamont; "take heed! you will shoot my esquire through the heart if you handle your bow so carelessly."

"And then you would shoot me through the head in return, I dare say."

The laughing girl bounded to the stand as she spoke, carelessly drew her arrow to the head, and, ere she had well taken aim, away it flew, and passed through the centre of the emblazoned target waving on the summit of the pavilion, and continued its wild flight into the wood beyond.

"Bravo, cousin Gracy! you have won the silver arrow," cried Kate Bellamont. "Lord Robert, I wonder if that was the arrow you chose for Lady Grace. A taper both ways, or I'll forfeit my jennet!"

"Who makes the broil now, young mistress?" asked the old forester, with a glance of humour.

"You and I, worthy Cormac, are two very different people where a young gentleman is concerned," said the maiden, laughing.

The forester shook his head incredulously, and, turning to Grace Fitzgerald, said, "Faith, but it was a brave shot that,

my young lady! You have done what old Dermot could not have done at a target, playing in the wind like that. But, with the leave of my lady the queen, you must have a second shot at the real target. Take this arrow, that tapers from the feather to the pile; fit it to your bow-string exactly at the spot where it is wound round with silk; and, if you will follow my directions, I will teach you to strike the centre of the true butt, or never draw arrow to head again." Leave being granted by acclamation, the archeress merrily resumed her attitude and prepared to follow his instructions.

"Hold the bow easily in your hand. Throw your head back a little. That will do. Now keep your bow-arm straightened, and bend the wrist of your gloved hand inward. Now raise your bow, steadily drawing the arrow at the same time—not towards your eye, but towards your ear. Be steady! When it is three parts drawn, take your aim at the centre. Keep the head of the arrow a little to the right of the mark. Be cool, and, if you are sure of your aim, draw the arrow quickly and steadily to the head, and gently part your fingers and let it go!"

The shaft, loosened from the string, cut the air and buried itself in the very centre of the golden eye of the target. A shout from every part of the field acknowledged the success of the quick pupil, and bore testimony to the skill of the experienced old archer.

"It is Cormac's shot, not mine," said the archeress; "I am satisfied with piercing the glittering centre of yonder escutcheon."

"The queen shall decide," cried several of the party, turning towards the throne where sat the lovely countess,

amid her youthful attendants, participating with girlish interest in the scene, and prepared to decide all appeals to her royal umpirage.

"Gracy is right. Cormac's skill directed the shaft. She has no honest claim to the honour of the hit, save the credit of having stood quiet longer than she was ever known to before! The banner with its perforated target she is justly entitled to; and," added the countess, with a smile, "I here award it to her."

"And if I ever get a husband he shall carry it before him into battle," said the merry sylph. "Now, divine Kate, see that you don't wound my arrow. I would not have it injured for a silver one."

"It tapers from the middle in each direction, I have no doubt," said Kate, archly, glancing mischievously towards her esquire as she prepared to take her place at the stand.

"Your speech tapers in both directions, wild Kate," retorted the other, blushing. "I wonder what you and Lord Robert could have been doing, that you loitered so long about the pavilion! There, I declare, if you are not holding your bow with the short limb uppermost!"

Kate blushed in her turn, and reversed it.

"Why, cousin Kate Bellamont, you are going to shoot with the feather towards the target!" cried the tantalizing little maiden. "Really, I *do* begin to wonder what you and Lester *could* have been about, that the mention of it scatters your wits and makes you look so *very* foolish!"

Kate shook her head with a playful menace at her tormentor, placed her arrow with the right end to the bow-string, and took her stand by the target. The instant she

fixed her eyes on it her self-possession returned, and, elevating her bow, she threw herself with careless grace into the attitude of an accomplished archeress.

A more beautiful object than this young creature, standing in the strikingly spirited attitude she had assumed, can hardly be imagined. Though but sixteen, her form was divinely perfect. Every limb—foot, hand, and arm—was a rare model for the sculptor's chisel. The undulating outline of her shoulders was faultless; and her figure, perhaps, was the more beautiful that her bust and waist, and the wavy symmetry of her whole person, was just receiving that harmony of touch and roundness of finish which marks the era when the wild romping girl is merging into the blushing, conscious, loving, and loveable maiden of seventeen. Descended from an ancient Milesian family, she betrayed her origin in her complexion, which was a rich brunette, reflecting in warm, sunny tints the mantling blood, which came and went at every emotion. Her eyes were dark and sparkling as night with its stars, and as, with a slightly bent brow, she fixed them on the target, they had a cool and steady expression remarkable in one of her years and sex. She wore a dark ruby velvet jacket, laced over a stomacher rich with brilliants, and a velvet hat of the same dark ruby, surmounted by a plume of white ostrich feathers, in that day a rare and costly ornament, which gracefully drooped about her head in striking contrast with her raven locks that floated around her superb neck in the wildest freedom. Her lips, like most of the lips of Erin's fair maidens, were of a rich coral red, and, just parted as she took sight, rendered visible a pearly line of beautifully-arranged teeth. Her mouth, when

closed, was finely shaped, and sometimes wore an air of decision, that did not, however, in any way diminish its witchery. The glow of health, and the pride of birth and beauty, were upon her countenance, and every feminine grace and charm seemed to play around her.

As she stood with one foot a little advanced, her neck slightly curved to bring her eyes down to a level with the mark, her left side, but no part of the front of the body, accurately turned towards the target, the eyes of old Cormac Dermot glistened with pride. Slowly she elevated the bow, drawing the arrow simultaneously towards the ear with the first three gloved fingers of her right hand, till she had drawn it out three quarters of its length, when, pausing till she had filled her eye with the golden eye of the target, she drew it smartly to its head and let it loose from her fingers. For an instant she stood following its swift flight: the pupils of her dark eyes dilated and eager; her lips closely shut; her chest advanced; her right arm elevated and curved above her shoulders, the wrist bent, and the fingers of the hand turned gently downward; the left arm extended at full length, and grasping the relaxed bow; her neck curved; her spirited head thrown back, and her whole action animated and commanding; presenting altogether, perhaps, the most graceful attitude the female form is susceptible of assuming.

The arrow was sent with unerring aim, struck the golden eye within half an inch of Grace Fitzgerald's, and buried itself to its feather. The lawn rung with the plaudits of both archeresses and esquires; and even the retainers and fishermen, who were humble but curious spectators of the

sports, gave vent to their admiration in shouts of clamorous applause. Old Cormac swung his long yew bow above his head with delight, and looked as if, in the pride of the moment, he would have hugged his accomplished pupil to his heart.

"Do not be so elated, good Dermot," she said, laughing; "it was the arrow I chose—a taper from the pile."

"The more skill in the hand that drove it so truly," said the forester.

"I must do still better than this, else neither you nor Lord Robert, who, methinks, looks somewhat blank to find I have not missed to gratify him, will neither of you get the prize."

"It was not a fair trial, Kate," said the esquire, gayly; "the wind has lulled; and, as you drew your bow, there was not a breath of air."

"If, nevertheless, that had been a taper from the feather," said the forester, after surveying the target earnestly for a moment, as obstinately bent on adhering to his original opinion as even the spirited young noble himself, "it would have cleft the arrow of Lady Gracy through its length to the pile."

"We will see to that anon, worthy Cormac. I have two shots more. Here is the arrow you chose for me, which I will fit to my bow-string, and do my best to drive it through my cousin's."

"I dare say you will if you can, and would like, also, to destroy everything else Lord Robert gives me," said the roguish Grace, putting up her lip and tossing her head, with its cloud of rich hair, in admirably affected pique.