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TURLOGH O'BRIEN; OR, THE FORTUNES OF AN IRISH SOLDIER. CHAPTER XLIV.—THE STRAPPADO—GARVEY'S DEATH.

The reader must accompany us to a gentle bush-clad slope immediately outside the James' camp. Here stood the simple apparatus, by means of which was inflicted the terrible torture known by the name of the strappado—an impotation for which King Irish were indebted to the French troops who served among them.

The machine was, as we have said, a simple one, consisting of a single beam of some twenty feet in height, planted perpendicularly in the ground, with a strong horizontal arm, little more than a yard in length, extended, gibbet-like, from the top of it; and in a pulley, attached to the extremity of this, ran a rope, one end of which swung loosely to the ground, while the other was firmly knotted on a projecting plug fixed in the upright post which we have described, and also within little more than a foot of the ground. Beneath this mysterious instrument stood the military lictors, to whom is committed the execution of the sentence we have but just heard, and some dozen or so of spectators—all in high good humor; and in the centre, the miserable prisoner himself, now stripped in his shirt and breeches, and with his lank arms tied at the wrists firmly behind his back.

'For God's sake have mercy, sir—worthy, honest gentleman!'

'To be sure I will; I would not hurt a hair of your head for Ireland's grounds; we'll only just go through the form, that's all,' said the burly soldier, who was now knotting the loose extremity of the long rope we have mentioned, with many a doubled wrench, securely in the wretched man's wrists, bound fast as they were behind his back.

'Mercy, mercy—for God's sake, noble sir, repeated their helpless victim, in the mere stupefaction of vacant terror.

'To be sure, I will, aint I telling you,' pursued the executioner, in a tone of the most soothing endearment, and at the same time making a hideous grimace, followed by a grin and a wink at the bystanders; 'I'd sooner hurt myself than you, any day; we'll make it as pleasant as we can—and I hope you don't find that too tight,' he added, as he wrenched the last knot close with his whole force.

'Mercy, sir—mercy—mercy!' the wretched man continued to sob, as though he had lost the power of uttering any word but the one.

'Nonsense, man, it's nothing at all, I tell you; we'll only give you a lift, just to show you London—nothing more; I tell you it's nothing at all worth speaking about. What the devil are you afear'd of?' reiterated the soldier, in the same pleasant vein.

'Now, he's all right, boys,' he resumed, trying the firmness of the knot with a few careless chucks; 'he's quite safe, and no fear of slipping; for I would not have you get a fall for all I'm worth—do you mind; pull away, boys—lift him—up with him—there he goes.'

As he thus spoke, two of the other soldiers hauling the opposite extremity of the rope, raised the manacled wretch slowly from the ground, until he swung by his wrists, at a height of about six feet, his face depending toward the earth, and his knees nearly touching his chin—while the utmost exertion of every fibre was required to keep his arms close enough to his back, to prevent the strain upon them from becoming actually intolerable.

Having raised him to this height, the fixed extremity of the rope was so secured as to prevent the possibility of his descending nearer to the earth.

'Ah, gentlemen—for God's sake,' persisted the terrified Garvey, 'for God's sake, gentlemen, let me down now—do, good gentlemen; I can't bear it longer, my arms are breaking—mercy, mercy, good gentlemen, mercy!'

'Who's hurting you?' resumed the same facetious personage, 'tell me, my darling, and I'll teach him behaviour; can't ye let the gentlemen alone, and be not offending any one?' continued he, with grim-humor, addressing his grinning comrades; 'he only wants to get up a bit, and see what's going on.'

'True for you,' responded the sergeant, who stood by, with grave jocularity, 'he came here just to see whatever he could, just as I may say, to look round him that way; and, as he concluded, the sergeant, with easy familiarity, upon him gently round by the lock of hair which depended from his forehead, to the intense amusement of the spectators.

'Mercy, gentlemen, mercy—I can't bear it—my arms—oh, my God—my arms—mercy, mercy!' cried Garvey, with increasing agony, while the twitching of every flushed feature betrayed the intensity of the exertion which tasked his exhausted strength. 'Oh, mercy, gentlemen—mercy—mercy!'

'Up with him now, pull away, pull away, boys;

don't be keeping his honor waiting,' pursued the sergeant. 'There he goes, pull away, pull away—up with him—there he goes.'

As he spoke, two of the soldiers under his command, hauled the rope with their united strength until they had raised the miserable man to within a yard of the pulley, at the end of the projecting arm. The rope by which he swung was, as the reader will remember, secured firmly at the extremity, in a plug projecting from the upright shaft of the gibbet-like apparatus, and in such a way that the living load which depended at the other end could not fall nearer than some six feet or so, to the earth.

'Mercy, mercy! Oh, my God! let me rest for half a minute, cried Garvey. 'Mercy, gentlemen, mercy, mercy!'

'Never fear, we'll let you down soon enough,' said the sergeant, measuring, as nearly as he could with his halbert, the height at which the prisoner was now suspended. 'That will do;—now mind the word, when I say three; steady, boy; one—mind the word—two, steady, boys—three, and away he goes.'

At the word, the men let the rope go, and the living burthen which they had so lately raised, shot downwards from its elevated position to the point at which, as we have said, the rope was fixed; there his descent was arrested with a dislocating shock which wrenched his arms almost from the shoulder sockets. With a yell so appalling that it dashed with a momentary horror, even the faces of the executioners themselves, the miserable man testified the unendurable anguish of the dreadful torture; rolling his head and his eyes around it, in the delirium of his fierce agony, he shrieked forth blasphemies and prayers in wild and terrible incoherence.

'Pike him, and put him out of pain, for God's sake!' cried one of the spectators, with the energy of horror, and wincing under the frightful spectacle.

'Leave him alone,' said the sergeant, authoritatively; 'stand back, and mind your own business, or I'll teach you a lesson; stand back, I say.'

'Have you anything to say now, mister prisoner?' he demanded, sternly, of the mangled wretch, who slowly revolved—a spectacle half ludicrous, half terrific. Maddened and stunned with agony, however, he only jabbered, and yelled, and writhed.

'Oh, blessed Father! stop his mouth, any way,' cried another of the lookers-on, in irrefragable terror and loathing.

'I'm sorry I ken near it at all,' God bless us,' said a third, lingering on in the irresistible fascination of horror.

'Will you speak, yes or no?' demanded the sergeant again, and stop your bawling.'

'Do you hear the sergeant speaking to you?' demanded one of the executioners, indignantly; and at the same time administering a slight chuck to the rope, which, however, had no other effect than that of extorting a still more piercing yell from the miserable catifit.

'Come, boys, he's a real determined Turk of a chap,' said the sergeant, irrefully; 'he won't be said by you or me; so are ye ready.'

'Come along,' responded one.

'Now for it,' replied the other.

And once more, with their united strength, Garvey soared aloft, to the topmost range of the rope's play—some score feet high in the air—Again was the concerted signal given: 'one, two, three!' and again, with a whirl, and a rush, and a shock that almost snapped the rope, down came the racked prisoner, and the hideous torture was repeated; and now the agony of the wretch, the shrieks and writhings seemed to kindle a ferocious excitement among his executioners. The two soldiers who strained the rope, tugged faster and more furiously, and the very exertion demanded by the feat seemed to stimulate their growing fury. The sergeant stormed and swore his encouragement and applause. Again was the agonized wretch raised aloft as before, and again subjected to the same terrific shock; and, again, and yet again, was the torture repeated, amid shrieks that rank still wilder and more piercing every moment; while at each new descent the frightful process of dislocation perceptibly advanced. At last, after nine such unutterable pangs, nature relented the sufferer, and he received the tenth and last in the passive silence of insensibility.

Crudely had now done its worst; the tortured limbs were wrenched completely round in their sockets, and from the torn ligaments the bruised blood was welling through his tattered shirt, in purple streams. He was now lowered to the ground; and before the halter, whose gripe was to end the sentence with the life of the senseless and mutilated mass of humanity which lay before them, had been adjusted about his throat, one of the soldiers clubbed his musket, and with two blows mercifully shattered the unconscious head to pieces, and thus secured the mangled wretch against the possibility of further torment.

Thus, with all his unscrupulous pifancy and wakeful cunning did Garvey come eventually to swing upon a gibbet; and, by a strange coincidence enough, he attained that elevation upon a charge of one of the very few crimes of which he was in reality innocent.

Then leave we Garvey there, with stained neck and head awry, slowly swaying in the soft night breeze, never more to scheme or flatter, with heart now steeled for ever against the allurements of human ambition, and the terrors of human power, more serenely tranquil than the bravest of them all, amid the thunder and shouting and slaughter of the morrow's battle.

CHAPTER XLV.—THE FORTUNE OF THE FIELD. THE LAST RETURN TO DUBLIN—TIDINGS OF TURLOGH O'BRIEN.

The author of 'The Boyne Water' has, with a masterly hand, sketched the events of the momentous battle which gives its name to his work; we are not presumptuous enough to traverse the ground already explored by him; we shall have, besides, ere we close those chapters to witness another and a far more desperately contested fight than this.

Return we, therefore, now to the friends whom we have left in the good city of Dublin. Early on the morning following the events recorded in our last chapter, it was universally known among the citizens that expresses had arrived, announcing that the battle would be fought that day.—The guests at all the city gates were doubled. As his usual in cases of such excited and terrible suspense, every hour brought with it some new rumor—some fresh alarm.

Now it was announced that the French fleet was riding in Dublin bay; and again, that an express had arrived from Waterford, and that the French troops had effected a landing in England.

Then again came a report that the battle was going in favor of King James, and the English right wing already entirely routed. Then it was rumored that King William was killed; and next that he was only made prisoner.

Varied by such agitating and conflicting rumors, the tedious hours of the long summer's day wore on. But at length, about five o'clock in the evening, on jaded horses, dejected and travel-soiled, the first straggling couriers from the field of battle came riding into the town. These men, interrupted at every corner, clustered round by little mobs of listeners, at every tavern door where they halted, and pursued by the more pertinacious, even into the sanctuary of the tap-room, speedily spread the inauspicious tidings through the town. Others, scared and weary, came clattering in at six o'clock, with news still more disastrous, of utter defeat. And hence, as the night wore on, faster and faster every moment came crowding in wounded and dusty soldiers on tired steeds, and among them many of King James's body guards, without either swords or pistols, exhausted, savage and dejected. The appearance of these latter gave rise to abundant speculation respecting the fate of the King himself, while the confusion and disorder of the streets were every moment enhanced by the continual and desultory arrival of ammunition carts, waggons, cannon and military passing incessantly through all the avenues of the town. Such was the disordered condition of the city at about ten o'clock at night, when King James himself came in, accompanied by about two hundred horse, straggling, broken and dispirited. As thus soiled and sombre effigy of royalty rode onward toward the Castle, stared at in silent dismay and wonder by the gaping crowd, and all but jostled by the dust-covered troopers who rode in such disorder about him, how striking—almost touching—was the contrast which memory suggested, when, in all the splendid order of a stately pageant, amid the blessings and acclamations of enthusiastic thousands, he had, but one short year before, made his entrance into the self-same city of Dublin. Thus dejected, and virtually de-throned, the poor King rode into the royal fortress, which was, after that night, never more to own him as its master.

Until twelve o'clock that night, these broken groups of horse came straggling, in continual succession, into the town; and the inhabitants began to think that in good truth the whole Jacobite army had been utterly disorganized and broken, and were almost expecting the arrival of William's forces to complete their destruction; when, with the wild harmony of haut-boys and trumpets, and the roll of kettledrums, the vap of the Irish horse appeared, and, much to the surprise of all who had witnessed the previous scattered arrivals, the whole of this splendid force entered the town in perfect order. These were succeeded, early the morning, by the French, and a great portion of the Irish foot; and, after an interval of a few hours, the whole of the force marched out again, to receive and check the advance of William's army, and secure the city from attack.

All this, it is needless to say, kept the inhabitants of the town in a constant state of excitement and alarm. But who can describe the agony of suspense in which poor Grace awaited some tidings of her lover. Trusting in the confusion and darkness of the hour to escape remark, the old knight himself resolved, if possible, to procure some accurate information, which might relieve his child and himself from an uncertainty which was becoming all but insupportable. Without communicating his design to her, he was speedily in the midst of the scene of uproar and confusion which he had for so long witnessed from the window of his lodging. He had not to go far for the information which he coveted; for at the door of the Carrie he saw an officer dismount, wearing the uniform of Turlogh O'Brien's regiment. Pushing his way through a crowd of gloomy faces, and heedless of the loud and eager conversation that arose on every side of him, Sir Hugh Willoughby followed the object of his pursuit thro' the mob of frightened and inquisitive civilians and dusty soldiers, who filled the public room of the old inn; and with the courtesy which the usages of the time allowed, took his seat at the table where the officer had already established himself; and, after a brief introductory greeting, invited him to drink a pint of sack at his expense. Spite of the sullenness of fatigue and defeat, some considerations—among which, perchance, a lamentable scarcity of coin was not the least—induced a prompt, if not very gracious, acquiescence on the part of the stranger.

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'It has fared amiss with you, to-day,' said Sir Hugh, after a few preliminary remarks, 'unless report speak false. The soldier replied with a glance, half sullen, half-defiant; then throwing his hat, with a reckless air, upon the table, he said, with a careless bitterness—

'I have fared with us precisely as it ever must sir, with men commanded by one who has neither conduct nor courage. We have had to retreat before superior numbers, but our retreat was as orderly and as steady as a movement on parade. Had my Lord Tyrconnell, and our Colonel, and Sarsfield been duly seconded, by — we should have won the country this day. As it was, they have left more men upon the field than we; I pistoled two with my own hand myself. The battle was as well fought as ever was field I care not where. That French fellow, Lauzun, is enough to ruin fifty campaigns himself. The King too, marred and mismanaged everything; almost all our artillery was sent off the ground, for Dublin, here—as if expressly to dishearten our men; and then, when the fight began, the old — but no matter, he'll pay dearly for it all himself—it was a cursed day for Ireland when he first set his foot on her shores.'

Having thus delivered himself he quaffed off his wine, and filled another glass.

'And your colonel?' said Sir Hugh, his heart sinking with anxiety as he approached the question he almost dreaded to put—'your colonel—Turlogh O'Brien—a friend, I may say a very near and dear friend of mine; how has it fared with him?'

'As with a brave soldier,' answered the officer sternly, but sadly withal, as he glanced through the window at the table side, upward at the silvery summer clouds; 'he lies on the field where he fought so well; and no braver soldier sleeps in the light of that moon to-night.'

'Good God, sir, dead!' ejaculated Sir Hugh in extreme agitation. 'Is he—is he really certainly dead?'

'Faith sir, I fear me it is but too true. I saw it myself in the last gallant charge. A d-d Dutch fellow did it; shot him in the sword arm; and he was sabred down the next moment, and tumbled among the horses. If there is any life left in him still, he must have had as many as a cat. The Dutch rascal was one of the birds I begged—that's once comfort. Before the smoke was out of his pistol I shot him as dead as that board; and he slapped his hand on the table.'

'Yet it is possible—ay, clearly possible, after all, that he may still be living,' cried Sir Hugh, while a faint hope gleamed on his mind, though he scarcely dared himself to trust it; there was my own uncle in Cromwell's time—and ay, ay, it will may be—many a man has outlived a worse mauling than that. Sir, sir, we must not despair—we will not despair—we will drink to his health, sir, and his speedy recovery; fill, sir, fill—I pledge you the health of Colonel Turlogh O'Brien.'

The soldier filled carelessly, as one who goes through some useless form; and gloomily dashed the liquor off; and Sir Hugh, himself, resolved to tell the best tale he could to his poor child—hastily took leave of his new acquaintance, having placed upon the board a gold piece to defray the expense of their entertainment—a politeness which, even at a later period, one gentleman might wonder to another, without offending the nation's orthodoxy. Thus, with a final confidence and assurance in his look and accents, he would have taken leave with the dearest risings,

returned to his lodgings and to his daughter's presence.

It was at five o'clock in the morning after the memorable battle of the Boyne, that the Roman Catholic Lord Mayor, two or three of the judges, and some few of the principal citizens, who had espoused the cause of King James, stood in a motley group, awaiting the appearance of their royal master, in the presence chamber. The king's summons had called them from uneasy slumbers thus early to the castle; and in the cold grey of the morning's light, it were hard to imagine a drearier or less inviting spectacle than this group of loyalists presented. While they were waiting thus, James, a man of punctuality to the last, was paying and discharging his menial servants, previously to taking his final leave of the Irish capital. At last, however, the dispirited expectants in the presence-chamber were relieved—the door opened, and James followed by two or three gentlemen and officers, including Colonel Luttrell, who kept garrison as Governor of the city, entered the apartment.

The King was plainly dressed in a travelling suit, and a certain expression of bitterness overcast, with additional gloom, his usually sombre countenance, as with grave moroseness he returned the salute of the group who awaited him. There was that in the fallen condition of the king—in the very-magnitude of his misfortunes—which lent a kind of mournful dignity to his presence, and which, spite of the petulance that occasionally broke from him, impressed the few disappointed and well-nigh ruined followers of his cause, who stood before him, with feelings of melancholy respect.

'Gentlemen,' said the King, after a brief pause, 'it hath pleased the Almighty Disposer of events to give the victory to our enemies; you have, doubtless, heard already, all that it concerns you most nearly to know. Our army hath been defeated, and the enemy will be in possession of this city, at latest, before many days have passed. It hath been our fate—we speak it in no bitterness, for your case is one with ours—to be everywhere ill-served. In England, we had an army who could have fought for us, if they would; here it is contrariwise: we have an army who are loyal enough, but who will not stand by us; the issue is, in either case for us, one and the same. Matters, therefore, being so, we must needs shift for ourselves as best we may; above all, we do command you—we do implore of you, gentlemen, in your several stations—and principally you, Colonel Luttrell, as governor of this our city—to prevent all undue severities, all angry reprisals, all violences, which so may be disposed—while the city remains still in the hands of our friends—to inflict upon the suspected within its walls. We do earnestly entreat of you all to remember that this is our city, and that our subjects; protect it and them so long as it shall seem wise to occupy this town for us. This is our last command—our parting request.'

Here the king paused for a second or two, while he glanced round upon his dejected auditory, and a general murmur of acquiescence indicated the respectful attention with which he was listened to.

'Our personal safety,' pursued James in a changed voice, 'renders it useful that we stay no longer within our kingdom of Ireland. Your services and fidelity, gentlemen, we shall bear in affectionate remembrance. Make for yourselves such terms as prudence dictates; as for us, the sad fortune which has turned even our own children—'

The king's voice faltered and broke; and in spite of all his efforts, two or three heavy tears rolled slowly, one by one, down his face, and fell suddenly upon his rich lace collar. Mastering the weakness of his wounded heart, with a strong effort James, after a few moments, resumed—

'The sad fortune which has pursued us through all our troubles—dissolving those natural ties dearest to the human heart—and ranking among our enemies even those most cherished and beloved, hath left us but little to hope from the humanity of strangers. What clemency may we expect from them, seeing that our own kindred—our own children, have drawn the sword against us? We shall, therefore, quit this kingdom trusting to the loyalty of those we leave behind, to guard our interests as to them seems best; we take our departure—it may be to meet soon under happier fortunes again; it may be to meet no more—but, at all events, bearing with us a sweet and consolatory remembrance of your most loyal faith and constancy; and so gentlemen, we bid you farewell—all lovingly farewell—farewell.'

There was, in the conclusion of the King's brief speech, something pathetic, and even generous, which touched the hearts of his auditory with a momentary feeling akin to pity and admiration. Such as were foremost in the little crowd grouped around him as he departed, with loyal wishes and blessings, and several even knelt and kissed the feeble hand from which the sceptre