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## THE WHITE HORSE OF THE PEPPERS.

A LEGEND OF THE BOYNE.

"A horse! a horse! my kingdom for a horse!"

It was the night of the 2nd of July, in the year 1690, that a small remnant of a discomfited army was forming its position, in no very good order, on the slope of a wild hill on the borders of the county of Dublin. In front of a small square tower, a sentinel was pacing up and down, darkly brooding over the disastrous fight of the preceding day, and his measured tread was sometimes broken by the fierce stamp of his foot upon the earth, as some bitter thought and muttered curse arose, when the feelings of the man overcame the habit of the soldier. The hum of the arrival of a small squadron of horse came from the vale below, borne up the hill on the faint breeze that sometimes freshens a summer's night, but the laugh, or the song, that so often enliven a military post, mingled not with the sound.—The very trumpet seemed to have lost the inspiring tingle of its tone, and its blast sounded heavily on the ear of the sentinel.

"There come more of our retreating comrades," thought he, as he stalked before the low portal it was his duty to guard—"Retreating—curse the word!—shall we never do any thing but fall back and back before this Dutchman and his followers? And yesterday, too, with so fine an opportunity of cutting the rascals to pieces—and all thrown away, and so much hard fighting to go for nothing. Oh, if Sarsfield had led us! we'd have another tale to tell." And here he struck the heavy heel of his war boot into the ground, and hurried up and down. But he was roused from his angry musing by the sound of a horse's tramp that indicated a rapid approach to the tower, and he soon perceived, through the gloom, a horseman approaching at a gallop. The sentinel challenged the cavalier, who returned the countersign, and was then permitted to ride up to the door of the tower. He was mounted on a superb charger, whose silky coat of milk white was much travel-stained, and the heaviness of whose breathing told of recent hard riding. The horseman alighted: his dress was of a mixed character, implying that war was not his profession, though the troubled nature of the times had engaged him in it. His head had no defensive covering, he wore the slouched hat of a civilian common to the time, but his body was defended by the cuirass of a trooper, and a heavy sword, suspended by a broad cross belt, was at his side—these alone bespoke the soldier, for the large and massively mounted pistols that protruded from the holsters at his saddle-bow, were no more than any gentleman, at the time, might have been provided with.

"Will you hold the rein of my horse," said he to the sentry, "while I remain in the castle?"

"I am a sentinel, Sir," answered the soldier, "and cannot."

"I will not remain more than a few minutes."

"I dare not, Sir, while I'm on duty—but I suppose you will find some one in the castle that will take charge of your horse."

The stranger now knocked at the door of the tower, and after some questions and answers in token of amity had passed between him and those inside, it was opened.

"Let some one take charge of my horse," said he, "I do not want him to be stabled, as I shall not remain here long, but I have ridden him hard, and he is warm, so let him be walked up and down until I am ready to get into the saddle again." He then entered the tower, and was ushered into a small and rude apartment, where a man of between fifty and sixty years of age, seated on a broken chair, though habited in a rich robe de chambre, was engaged in conversation with a general officer, a man of fewer years, whose finger was indicating certain points upon a map, which, with many other papers, lay on a rude table before them. Extreme dejection was the prevailing expression that overspread the countenance of the elder, while there mingled with the sadness that marked the noble features of the other, a tinge of subdued anger, as certain suggestions he offered, when he laid his finger, from time to time, on the map, were received with coldness, if not with refusal.

"Here at least we can make a bold stand," said the general, and his eye flashed, and his brow knit as he spoke.

"I fear not, Sarsfield," said the king, for it was the unfortunate James the Second who spoke.

Sarsfield withdrew his hand suddenly from the map, and folding his arms, became silent.

"May it please you, my liege," said the horseman, whose entry had not been noticed by either Sarsfield or his sovereign. "I hope I have not intruded on your majesty."

"Who speaks?" said the king, as he shaded his eyes from the light that burned on the table, and looked into the gloom where the other was standing.

"Your enemies, my liege," said Sarsfield, with some bitterness, "would not be so slow to disco-

ver a tried friend of your majesty—'tis the White Horseman," and Sarsfield, as he spoke, gave a look full of welcome and joyous recognition towards him.

The horseman felt, with the pride of a gallant spirit, all that the general's look and manner conveyed, and he bowed his head, respectfully, to the leader, whose boldness and judgment he so often had admired.

"Ha! my faithful White Horseman," said the king.

"Your majesty's poor and faithful subject, Gerald Pepper," was the answer.

"You have won the name of the White Horseman," said Sarsfield, "and you deserve to wear it."

The horseman bowed.

"The general is right," said the king. "I shall never remember you under any other name. You and your white horse have done good service."

"Would that they could have done more, my liege," was the laconic and modest reply.

"Would that every one," laying some stress on the word, "had been as true to the cause yesterday!" said Sarsfield.

"And what has brought you here?" said the king, anxious perhaps to escape from the thought that his general's last words had suggested.

"I came, my liege, to ask permission to bid your majesty farewell, and beg the privilege to kiss your royal hand."

"Farewell?" echoed the king, startled at the word—"Are you, too, going?—every one deserts me!" There was intense anguish in the tone of his voice, for, as he spoke, his eye fell upon a ring he wore, which encircled the portrait of his favorite daughter, Anne, and the remembrance that she, his only child, had excited the same remark from the lips of her father—that bitter remembrance came across his soul and smote him to the heart. He was suddenly silent—his brow contracted—he closed his eyes in anguish, and one bitter tear sprang from under either lid at the thought. He passed his hand across his face, and wiped away the womanish evidence of his weakness.

"Do not say I desert you, my liege," said Gerald Pepper. "I leave you, 'tis true, for the present, but I do not leave you until I can see no way in which I can be longer useful. While in my own immediate district, there were many ways in which my poor services might be made available; my knowledge of the country, of its people and its resources, its passes, and its weak points, were of service. But here, or farther southward, where your majesty is going, I can no longer do any thing which might win the distinction that your majesty and General Sarsfield are pleased to honor me with."

"You have still a stout heart, a clear head, a bold arm, and a noble horse," said Sarsfield.

"I have also a weak woman and helpless children, general," said Gerald Pepper.

The appeal was irresistible—Sarsfield was silent.

"But though I cannot longer aid with my arm—my wishes and my prayers shall follow your majesty—and whenever I may be thought an agent to be made useful, my king has but to command the willing services of his subject."

"Faithfully promised," said the king.

"The promise shall be as faithfully kept," said his follower; "but before I leave, may I beg the favor of a moment's private conversation with your majesty?"

"Speak any thing you have to communicate before Sarsfield," said the king.

Gerald Pepper hesitated for a moment; he was struggling between his sovereign's command and his own delicacy of feeling; but overcoming the latter, in deference to the former, he said:—

"Your majesty's difficulties with respect to money supplies."

"I know, I know," said the king, somewhat impatiently, "I owe you five hundred pieces."

"Oh! my liege," said the devoted subject, dropping on his knee before him, "deem me not so unworthy as to seek to remind your majesty of the trifle you did me honor to allow me to lay at your disposal; I only regret I had not the means of contributing more. It is not that; but I have brought here another hundred pieces; it is all I can raise at present, and if your majesty will further honor me by the acceptance of so poor a pittance, when the immediate necessities of your army may render every trifle a matter of importance, I shall leave you with a more contented spirit, conscious that I have done all within my power for my king." And, as he spoke, he laid on a table a purse containing the gold.

"I cannot deny that we are sorely straitened," said the king, "but I do not like it."

"Pray, do not refuse it, my liege," said Gerald, still kneeling—"do not refuse the last poor service your subject may ever have it in his power to do in your cause."

"Well," said the king, "I accept it—but I would not do so if I were not sure of having,

one day, the means of rewarding your loyalty and generosity." And thus allowing himself to be the dupe of his own fallacious hopes, he took from poor Gerald Pepper the last hundred guineas he had in his possession, with that happy facility that kings have always exhibited in accepting sacrifices from enthusiastic and self-devoted followers.

"My mission here is ended now," said Gerald. "May I be permitted to kiss my sovereign's hand?"

"Would that all my subjects were as faithful," said James, as he held out his hand to Gerald Pepper, who kissed it respectfully, and then arose.

"What do you purpose doing when you leave me?" said the king.

"To return to my home as soon as I may, my liege."

"If it be my fate to be driven from my kingdom by my unnatural son-in-law, I hope he may be merciful to my people, and that none may suffer from their adherence to the cause of their rightful sovereign."

"I wish, my liege," said Gerald, "that he may have half the consideration for his Irish subjects that your majesty had for your English ones," and he shook his head doubtfully as he spoke, and his countenance suddenly fell.

A hard-drawn sigh escaped from Sarsfield, and then, biting his lip, and with knitted brow, he exchanged a look of bitter meaning with Gerald Pepper.

"Adieu, then," said the king, "since you will go. See our good friend to his saddle, Sarsfield. Once more, good night; King James will not forget the White Horseman." So saying, he waved his hand in adieu. Gerald Pepper bowed low to his sovereign, and Sarsfield followed him from the chamber. They were both silent till they arrived at the portal of the tower, and when the door was opened, Sarsfield crossed the threshold with the visitor, and stepped into the fresh air, which he inhaled audibly three or four times, as if it were a relief to him.

"Good night, General Sarsfield," said Gerald.

"Good night, my gallant friend," said Sarsfield, in a voice that expressed much vexation of spirit.

"Don't be too much cast down, General," said Gerald, "better days may come, and fairer fields be fought."

"Never, never!" said Sarsfield. "Never was a fairer field than that of yesterday, never was a surer game if it had been rightly played. But there is a fate, my friend, hangs over our cause, and I fear that destiny throws against us."

"Speak not thus, general—think not thus."

"Would that I could think otherwise—but I fear I speak prophetically."

"Do you then give up the cause?" said Gerald in surprise.

"No," said Sarsfield, firmly, almost fiercely. "Never—I may die in the cause, but I will never desert it, as long as I have a troop to follow me—but I must not loiter here. Farewell!—Where is your horse?"

"I left him in the care of one of the attendants."

"I hope you are well mounted?"

"Yes; here comes my charger."

"What!" said Sarsfield, "the white horse?"

"Yes; surely," said Gerald; "you never saw me back any other."

"But after the tremendous fatigue of yesterday," said Sarsfield in surprise, "is it possible he is still fresh?"

"Fresh enough to serve my turn for to-night," said Gerald, as he mounted into the saddle. The white horse gave a loud neigh of seeming satisfaction as his master resumed his seat.

"Noble brute!" said Sarsfield, as he patted the horse on the neck, which was arched into the proud bend of a bold steed who knows a bold rider is on his back.

"And now farewell, general," said Gerald, extending his hand.

"Farewell, my friend. Fate is unkind to deny the charm of a victorious cause to so gallant a spirit."

"There is more gallantry in remaining unshaken under defeat; and you, general, are a bright example of the fact."

"Good night, good night," said Sarsfield, anxious to escape from hearing his own praise, and wringing the hand that was presented to him with much warmth; he turned towards the portal of the tower, but before he entered, Gerald again addressed him.

"Pray tell me, general, is your regiment here; before I go, I would wish to take leave of the officers of that gallant corps, in whose ranks I have had the honor to draw a sword."

"They are not yet arrived. They are on the road, perhaps, by this time; but I ordered they should be the last to leave Dublin, for as, yes-

terday, they suffered the disgrace of being led the first out of the battle,† I took care they should have the honor of being the last in the rear to-night, to cover our retreat."

"Then remember me to them," said Gerald. "They can never forget the White Horseman," said Sarsfield; "and they shall hear you left the kind word of remembrance for them.—Once more, good night."

"Good night, general; God's blessing be upon you!"

"Amen!" said Sarsfield; "and with you."

They then wrung each other's hand in silence. Sarsfield re-entered the tower, and Gerald Pepper giving the rein to his steed, the white horse left the spot as rapidly as he had approached it.

[Pepper having remained some time in Dublin to find out what was going forward, on discovering that his property is forfeited, sets off for home, in order to save as many moveables as possible. On the way he meets his foster brother, Rory Oge, who being informed of what was about to occur, takes means to delay the progress of the trooper to whom the property had been granted—the many manoeuvres to accomplish this are drawn out to such a length as to prevent our giving more than an outline. The story, we should have observed, is divided into three chapters—the Legend of the White Horse, if legend it can be called, is nearly complete in the first and last, the intermediate chapter being almost altogether occupied with "The Little Weaver of Dulceek Gate," another legend, introduced by way of episode, to entertain the trooper. In the third chapter Mr. Lover continues:—]

Let the divisions I have made in my chapters serve, in the mind of the reader, as an imaginary boundary between the past day and the ensuing morning. Let him, in his own fancy, also settle how the soldier watched, slept, dreamt, or waked through this interval. Rory did not make his appearance, however; he had left the public on the preceding evening, having made every necessary arrangement for carrying on the affair he had taken in hand; so that the Englishman, on enquiry, found that Rory had departed, "being obliged to leave the place on his own business, but sure his honor could have any accommodation in life that he wanted, in the regard of a guide, or the like o' that."

"Now, for this, Rory had provided also, having arranged with the keepers of the public, to whom he confided every thing connected with the affair, that in case the trooper should ask for a guide, they should recommend him a certain young imp, the son of the most mischievous, knowing, and daring young vagabonds in the parish.

To such guidance, therefore, did the Englishman commit himself on this, the third day of his search after the lands of the Peppers, which still remained a *Terra Incognita* to him; and the boy, being previously tutored upon the duties he was to perform in his new capacity, was not one likely to enlighten him upon the subject. The system of the preceding day was acted upon, except the casting of the horse's shoe; but by-roads and crooked lanes were put in requisition, and every avenue, but the one really leading to his object, the trooper was made to traverse.

The boy affected simplicity or ignorance, as best suited his purposes, to escape any inconvenient interrogatory or investigation on the part of the stranger, and at last, the young guide turned up a small rugged lane, down whose gentle slope some water was slowly trickling amongst stones and mud. On arriving at its extremity, he proceeded to throw down some sods, and pull away some brambles, that seemed to be placed there as an artificial barrier to an extensive field that lay beyond the lane.

"What are you doing there?" said the soldier.

"Makin' a convenience for your honor to get through the gap," said the boy.

"There is no road there," said the other.

"Oh, no, please your honor," said the young rascal, looking up in his face with an affection of simplicity that might have deceived Machiavel himself. "It's not a road, Sir, but a short cut."

"Cut it as short then as you can, my boy," said the soldier (the only good thing he ever said in his life), "for your short cuts in this country are the longest I ever knew—I'd rather go a round."

"So we must go round by the bottom o' this field, Sir, and then, over the hill beyond there, we come out on the road."

"Then there is a road beyond the hill."

"A fine road, Sir," said the boy, who having cleared a passage for the horseman, proceeded before him at a smart run, and led him down the slope of the hill to a small valley, intersected by a sluggish stream that lay at its foot. When the boy arrived at this valley, he ran briskly

across it, though the water splashed up about his feet at every bound he gave, and dashing on through the stream, he arrived at the other side by the time the trooper had reached the nearer one. Here the latter was obliged to pull up, for his horse, at the first step, sank so deep, that the animal instinctively withdrew his foot from the treacherous morass.

The trooper called after his guide, who was proceeding up the opposite acclivity, and the boy turned round.

"I can't pass this, boy," said the soldier.

"The boy faced the hill again, without any reply, and recommenced his ascent at a rapid pace.

"Come back, you young scoundrel, or I'll shoot you," said the soldier, drawing his pistol from his holster. The boy still continued his flight, and the trooper fired, but ineffectually, upon which the boy stopped, and after making a contemptuous action at the Englishman, rushed up acclivity and was soon beyond the reach of small arms, and shortly after out of sight, having passed the summit of the hill.

The Englishman's vexation was excessive, at finding himself thus left in such a helpless situation. For a long time he endeavored to find a spot in the marsh he might make his crossing good upon, but in vain—and after nearly an hour spent in this useless endeavor, he was forced to turn back and strive to unravel the maze of twisting and twining through which he had been led, for the purpose of getting on some high way, where a chance passenger might direct him in finding his road.

This he failed to accomplish, and darkness at length overtook him, in a wild country to which he was an utter stranger. He still continued, however, cautiously to progress along the road on which he was benighted, and at length the twinkling of a distant light raised some hope of succor in his heart.

Keeping this beacon in view, the benighted traveller made his way, as well as he might, until, by favor of the glimmer he so opportunely discovered, he at last found himself in front of the house whence the light proceeded. He knocked at the door, which, after two or three loud summonses, was opened to him, and then briefly stating the distressing circumstances in which he was placed, he requested shelter for the night.

The domestic who opened the door retired to deliver the stranger's message to the owner of the house, who immediately afterwards made his appearance, and, with a reserved courtesy, invited the stranger to enter.

"Allow me first to see my horse stabled," said the soldier.

"He shall be cared for," said the other.

"Excuse me, Sir," returned the blunt Englishman, "if I wish to see him in his stall. It has been a hard day for the poor brute, and I fear one of his hoofs is much injured; how far I am anxious to see."

"As you please, Sir," said the gentleman, who ordered a menial to conduct the stranger to the stable.

There, by the light of a lantern, the soldier examined the extent of injury his charger had sustained, and had good reason to fear that the next day would find him totally unserviceable.—After venting many a hearty curse on Irish roads and Irish guides, he was retiring from the stable, when his attention was attracted by a superb white horse, and much as he was engrossed by his present annoyance, the noble proportions of the animal were too striking to be overlooked; after admiring all his points, he said to the attendant, "what a beautiful creature this is!"

"Throth, you may say that," was the answer.

"What a charger he would make!"

"Sure enough."

"He must be very fleet."

"As the win."

"And leaps."

"Whoo!—over the moon, if you axed him."

"That horse must trot at least ten miles the hour."

"Tin!—fax it wouldn't be convayntion to him to trot unther fourteen," and with this assurance on the part of the groom, they left the stable.

On being led into the dwelling-house, the stranger found the table spread for supper, and the owner of the mansion, pointing to a chair, invited him to partake of the evening meal.

The reader need scarcely be told that the invitation came from Gerald Pepper, for, I suppose, the white horse in the stable has already explained whose house chance had directed the trooper to, though all his endeavors to find it had proved unavailing.

Gerald still maintained the bearing which characterized his first meeting with the Englishman on his threshold—it was that of reserved courtesy. Magdalene, his gentle wife, was seated near the table, with an infant child sleeping upon her lap; her sweet features were strikingly expressive of sadness; and as the stranger entered the apartment, her eye was raised in one timorous glance upon the man whose terrible mission she was too

† At the battle of the Boyne, when the Irish were driving the enemy with great slaughter before them, James was heard often to exclaim, "Oh spare my English subjects."

† Sarsfield's regiment, after having repeatedly repulsed the enemy, was obliged to leave the field in order to protect the person of the king, who chose to fly unnecessarily soon.