

"Aye!" cried March, "he has only taken a mistress instead of a wife; and trust me, when once he has got her into his arms, it will not be all the greybeards in Scotland that can wrest her thence again. I marvel to see how men can be so bold, and call the deception virtue!"

Sorymgeour had not waited for this reply of the insolent earl; and Buchan, answering him, "I care not," cried he; "whoever keeps my castle over my head, and my cellars full, is welcome to reign over John of Buchan. So onward, my gallant Cospatrick, to make our bow to royalty in masquerade!"

When these scoundrels approached, they found Wallace standing uncovered in the midst of his nobles. With overflowing gratitude, they all thronged around him; and Wallace found a nation waiting on his nod—the hearts of half a million of people offered to his hand. No crown sat on his brow; but the halo of true glory beamed from his countenance, and shone on the faces of those who followed. He was surrounded by the voluptuous Buchan came forward to mock him with his homage.

As the near relations of Lady Mar, he received them with courtesy; but one glance of his eye penetrated to the hollows of both; and then remounting his steed, the stirrups of which were held by Edwin and Ker, he touched the head of the former with his hand; "Follow me, my friend; I now go to pay my duty to your mother." "For you, my lords," said he, "I shall hope to meet you at noon in the citadel, where we shall consult together on future movements. Nothing with us can be considered as won, till all is gained."

The chieftains with bows acquiesced in his mandate, and fell back towards their troops; but the foremost ranks of those brave fellows, having heard much of what had passed, were so inflamed with admiration of their Regent, that they rushed forward, and, collecting in crowds around his horse and in his path, some pressed to kiss his hand, and others his garments, while the rest ran on his way, shouting and calling down blessings upon him, till he stopped at the gate of Snowden.

TO BE CONTINUED.

THE O'KELLY'S REVENGE.

The O'Kelly and the O'Flaherty had been great friends; but they were now mortal enemies. Friendship had existed between their families for generations; as boys they were constantly together, and when both had grown to man's estate they were the terror of the English in Connaught. The O'Kelly despised every inch of ground with the invaders, and if ever he was in danger of being overpowered by numbers the O'Flaherty came to the rescue. The O'Kelly was equally ready to come to the assistance of his friend, and while they were thus united the English gnashed their teeth in despair, for they could not obtain possession of a foot of ground in the territory of either. But that was all over now. They were friends no longer, and he immediately resigned throughout the territories. The O'Kelly took advantage of this happy state of affairs to get up a baricade, for, like all the other Irish chieftains, no matter how fierce and warlike, his martial spirit delighted in music and poetry, and his chief bard, O'Duggan, always held the place of honor in his household. To the tournament were invited the flower of the Connaught bards, and every chief who had distinguished himself in any way in repelling the invaders. The O'Flaherty, of course, received an early and a cordial invitation.

The great day came, and in the largest and most splendid apartment of Aughrim Castle, one of the seats of the O'Kelly, there was a brilliant assemblage of "chiefs and ladies bright," and venerable bards with picturesque robes and flowing beards and glittering harps. The soul-stirring strains which had power to cheer the spirit of Erin's sons in the darkest hour of their country's fortunes now filled the castle. Now the softer emotions were touched, now the martial fire was kindled and bright cheeks glowed, or dark eyes flashed as the minstrel swept the strings.

Each bard had an ode prepared in honor of his chief, in which were enumerated all the valiant and noble deeds which he or his ancestors had done.

Chief bard O'Duggan had composed one for his master, the O'Kelly. In it mention was made of every feat of prowess which had been performed by any of his ancestors from the dim centuries when they had come down from the north and conquered the Fibriogs of Connaught, to the latest battles in which the invader had been repelled. In glowing lines the prodigies of valor which had been done by the O'Kelly at Clontarf, where he had fought as a commander under the great King Brian, were told. It was a magnificent ode. O'Duggan had brought all his genius to its composition, and he had reason to be well pleased with the result.

Soon it would be his turn to recite. His eyes flashed with excitement, for he was summoning all his powers to aid him in fulfilling the great task.

The O'Flaherty's bard—a fair-haired young man of whom nobody seemed to know anything—now stood up to recite his ode. He had just lately been taken by the O'Flaherty into his service, because he was a great musician and knew well the history of the family, which was a great advantage. The O'Flaherty said, as he didn't know it himself. When he began to recite his peculiar pronunciation caused people to look at him in astonishment, and what was the O'Duggan's consternation to hear the very ode which he had himself composed for his master, without a shade of difference except that the hero of every feat was named O'Flaherty instead of O'Kelly. In great agitation he whispered the facts to his chief. The O'Kelly protested to the O'Flaherty, but the latter would not

be convinced, and took the side of his bard. Careful not to violate the sacred laws of hospitality the O'Flaherty and his retinue were allowed by their host to return home in peace, but from that hour the chieftains were enemies. After the tournament, and when it appeared that there was no hope of their being reconciled, the strange bard of the O'Flaherty disappeared, even his patron did not know whither.

No sooner had it come to the ears of the English that the two Connaught chieftains who had hitherto so strongly opposed them, were now foes, than they ventured once more across the Shannon and invaded O'Flaherty's territory. This movement was wholly unexpected by O'Flaherty. So long had the united strength of himself and the O'Kelly kept their common enemy at bay, that he allowed himself to believe that he was quite safe from aggression. This foolish dream was rapidly dispelled. The English were suddenly awaiting and creating opportunities to attack the native chiefs. Before the O'Flaherty had time to take adequate means for the defense of his territory he found himself besieged in one of his castles on an island in Lough Corrib, with a very small force, and a meager supply of provisions. At the moment his wife was in another of his castles on the mainland, but she could render her husband no assistance, as she had at her command only a small number of retainers barely sufficient for the defense of the castle.

She was in the literal meaning of the words a valiant woman, and the castle which she held for her lord was strongly situated, so the English were afraid to attack her without overwhelming numbers. They could not manage for the time being, so all their energies were devoted to the destruction of the island castle and the capture of her husband.

Again and again the O'Flaherty repulsed his enemies, but day after day the ranks of his small garrison grew thinner by wounds and death, and his small store of provisions was soon well-nigh exhausted. But the most painful valor could not enable him to hold out long. The number against him were overwhelming and unceasingly vigilant.

Oh, for the days of his friendship with the O'Kelly. How bitterly he now lamented that the Saxon have been before his castle walls, but he would have seen the horizon that friendly flag with the lions rampant! Now, alas! he could only see the grim banner of death, and death he resolved it should be rather than surrender. He had a mine made underneath the castle. There he ordered some barrels of gunpowder to be placed, and deputed one of his trusty followers to ignite them in the entrance of the English after he himself had fallen with

"His back to the field And his face to the foe."

Alas! for the quarrels of the Irish chiefs. It was their weakness in this respect, a weakness which England exhausted all the arts of diplomacy to create and foster that was the ruin of their native land. Had it not been for intestine strife, nothing could have triumphed over Irish valor, and Ireland would today be "first flower of the earth and first gem of the sea," a destiny which we trust shall yet be hers when all her children unite to uplift her.

II.

The O'Kelly was pacing thoughtfully round the ramparts of his castle of Aughrim. He had just finished examining his defenses, for now that the O'Flaherty had been attacked by the English he felt sure that his own turn would come soon, and it behooved him to see that everything was in good repair and in the best order to repel the invader. His brow was sad and gloomy. Distressing thoughts agitated his mind. Notwithstanding the enmity which existed between them, and which either was too proud to take the first step to terminate, he felt deeply sorry when he heard of the extremity to which his friend of old had been reduced. Above all, he felt sad to think of the foothold which the common enemy would obtain in the country by the success of their enterprise.

"How is it," he asked himself, "that at every crisis of our history, at the very moment when unity is most essential, we are divided against ourselves? How is it that some senseless quarrel, more worthy of children than of men responsible for the welfare of their people, has always weakened us at every juncture, and left us open to the malice of our enemies? These quarrels are more fatal to us than the weapons of the English. We know that our enemies rejoice to hear of them, and yet—"

Here his sad reflections were interrupted by the appearance of one of his clansmen whom he had sent out that morning to gather what information he could about the movements of the English, and what progress they had made with the siege.

"Well, Fergus," said the chieftain on recognizing him, "what news?"

"The English are in good strength, my chief. They expect to get possession of O'Flaherty's castle to-morrow or the day after, for the report goes that the food has given out inside the walls, and that the few men who remain alive are reduced to skeletons. Nevertheless, their valor has struck terror into the hearts of their besiegers, for they are afraid to attempt to capture the place by assault, and trust the slower work of famine."

"The O'Flaherty was always a brave man. They took him completely by surprise, I suppose?"

"The villains, they do nothing that's honest. Often I feel sorry that you are not my friends still. It's far-off the English would have to keep if you were."

"How, now, Fergus; would you have allowed his bard to practice such a fraud on us at the bardic tournament? Why, there wasn't a single famous deed done by an O'Kelly that wasn't put down to an O'Flaherty by that bard of his. You wouldn't have your chief stand that, would you, Fergus?"

"Well, I can't say but that I'm jealous of the honor of the clan; but as for that bard, I have a suspicion that he was one of the English themselves."

"But still the O'Flaherty backed up his fraud, and offered no explanation or apology."

"My chief, there are greater things at stake now than the fame of any clan or number of clans. Our existence as an independent nation is threatened. My advice to you now would be to make war on the English before they have time to make war on you, if not for the sake of the O'Flaherty, for the sake of Ireland."

The O'Kelly was not angry at the clansman giving him advice. He took it as a matter of course. The humblest of his clan was never treated by an Irish chieftain as a serf. He was simply a member of one big family of which the chief was looked upon as the father, and he was free to express his opinion on anything that concerned the welfare of his clan. The Irish clansmen were never servile like the vassals of the English feudal lords, and nothing so astonished the Anglo-Norman invaders as the familiarity of the terms which existed between them and their chiefs.

Scarcely had the clansman ceased speaking than the O'Kelly's son, a fine boy of fifteen, named Kevin, came to tell his father that there was a messenger from the English waiting to see him inside the castle.

When he and his visitor had exchanged salutations, the latter at once proceeded to disclose his errand. "I came," said he, "from the commander-in-chief of the English forces west of the Shannon. He has frequently heard of the splendid fighting qualities of your clan and of your own valor, and is most anxious to have you for a friend instead of an enemy. If you will become his ally and serve under him you can name your own reward. What wealth or titles you wish for will be yours."

So utterly was the O'Kelly amazed at the proposal made to him that he sat as if transfixed. Was he dreaming, or had the English really dared to ask him to turn traitor to his country? His speechless silence encouraged the messenger, who fondly imagined that he was reflecting on the advantages which the proposed alliance would bring him, and he proceeded: "The commander-in-chief will require from you no difficult or arduous task, though he knows well that the post of honor and of danger is what you like best. A friendly neutrality will meet his demands for the greater part, though it would be well at the commencement of the alliance to show good-will by some trifling service. Here the visitor paused, evidently expecting the Irish chieftain to speak.

"What would you have me do?" said the latter in a voice almost inarticulate with passion.

The visitor went on, either not noticing his emotion or putting it down to a wrong cause: "Why, there's that castle held by the wife of the O'Flaherty— with the forces at your disposal you could easily reduce it in a few hours, mostly old and infirm to guard the walls. Her husband's castle will be ours the day after to-morrow at the latest. Then it would be a matter of little difficulty for us to take her, but if you will volunteer for the task it will win you great favor with the commander-in-chief."

"Do you mean," said the O'Kelly, while his eyes blazed with an indignation which he was utterly unable to control, "was it not insult enough that you tempted me to turn traitor to my country without asking me to make war on a woman. Go back and tell your master that the O'Kelly is neither a traitor nor a coward, and that the Irish never make war on women. They leave that to him and his Begone! I say, and if you ever dare to pollute my castle again with your presence you will never leave it alive. Begone!"

The messenger retreated in hot haste the way he came, nor did he dare look back until the castle had faded in the dim distance.

When he had gone the O'Kelly paced up and down the room with an elegant and while his eyes emitted sparks of anger. What had he done, what unworthy act had he been guilty of that the English had thus dared to insult him, had supposed him capable of such treachery. He reviewed his whole career, but his conscience upbraided him with no act unworthy of a patriot or a man of honor.

"Aye," he sighed he, "it is their own baseness and not our unworthiness that suggests to them their vile means of conquest. Bribery and treachery and poison are their most potent weapons. God grant that they be not successful."

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side the castle gate, and the flag of the clan bearing the tower and the lions rampant and the words, "Turriss, Fortis mihi Deus," embroidered on it in gold was floating over them in the silvery moonlight.

"No! not that flag," said the O'Kelly when he saw it. "We are going to help an enemy for the sake of our bleeding country. Let us march under the banner of Ireland!"

A flag of green with a harp of gold, and the words, "Erin-go-Bragh" was then brought and hoisted aloft. A volley of cheers burst from the ranks. The O'Kelly placed himself at their head, and they marched to rescue an enemy for the sake of Ireland.

Well would it have been for our unfortunate country if the men of Ireland had always marched under that flag rather than under the banner of clan or of party.

Meantime the O'Flaherty had been reduced to dire straits, and his rations scarcely sufficient to support life for another day had been dealt out to the men, and not another particle of food remained in the castle. But the gallant defenders had resolved to die rather than surrender. A haughty summons to the garrison to yield was answered with defiance, and the O'Flaherty had his flag nailed to the beam from which it "oiled over the castle."

The besiegers, knowing the weakness of the defenders, now prepared for an assault, and O'Flaherty and his gallant few determined to die fighting. The English, fresh and well-fed, and vastly superior in numbers, were rapidly gaining ground, when the attention of both parties was arrested and the progress of operations stopped by a shout which rang out in the distance. Gazing in the direction from which it came, the defenders uttered joyous cries to see a friendly flag on the horizon. The besiegers were in consternation, and now directed all their efforts towards saving themselves. With wild Irish cries, the O'Kellys came on, seized every available boat, and surrounded the castle. Exposed to fire on every side the English could offer no effectual resistance, and were completely annihilated.

After the battle the O'Kelly and the O'Flaherty embraced like brothers, and all the latter could say for some moments because of his emotion was: "My noble enemy!" There and then they entered into a covenant of eternal friendship, and all the intrigues of the English were never able to break it. Leaving some of his own men with the O'Flaherty in case of a fresh surprise before he could muster his own forces, the O'Kelly now returned home. What was his astonishment on hearing his own castle to hear the noise and shouts of war. In a fury he rushed on, to find the English storming his ancestral home which was gallantly defended by his young son, Kevin, with the small force which he had so wisely left him. The chieftain made short work of the besiegers, for he was angered almost to madness by their treachery.

It appeared that before the messenger whom they had sent to bribe the Irish chief had returned, word had been brought them that he had set out from Aughrim Castle with an armed band. Thinking that their intrigues had been successful, they imagined that he had gone to take the castle held by the O'Flaherty's wife, as had been proposed to him. They considered it, of course, a glorious opportunity of relieving him of his own possessions, for their treachery towards the Irish stopped at nothing; but every-thing that he had set out from Aughrim Castle with an armed band. Thinking that their intrigues had been successful, they imagined that he had gone to take the castle held by the O'Flaherty's wife, as had been proposed to him. They considered it, of course, a glorious opportunity of relieving him of his own possessions, for their treachery towards the Irish stopped at nothing; but every-thing that he had set out from Aughrim Castle with an armed band. 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