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THE IRISH WIDOW'S SON;

OR,

THE PIKEMEN OF NINETY-EIGHT.

BY CON. O'LEARY.

CHAPTER V.—(Continued.)

There can be no doubt that the French Revolution gave an impetus to the founders of this society, and there can be as little doubt that its members sought by the use of legitimate means alone, the fulfilment of their programme, before the idea of having recourse to arms ever crossed their minds.

The first great impetus given to this society was in July of the following year, on the occasion of a review of the Ulster Volunteers, in Belfast, "in honor of that day, which presented the sublime spectacle of one-sixth of the inhabitants of Europe, bursting their chains, and throwing off, almost in an instant, the degrading yoke of slavery."

The popular sentiments of the people found expression in mottoes on transparencies, such as: "May the example of one revolution prevent the necessity of others." "May all governments be those of the laws, and all laws, those of the people." "May the free nations of the world vie with each other in promoting liberty, peace, virtue, and happiness among men."

In that same year, the Belfast Light Dragoons issued a declaration, stating that a government by King, Lords, and Commons—the Commons being freely, and frequently chosen—is the best adapted to the genius of the country.

The first petition that emanated from any Protestant body, praying for the immediate and unconditional emancipation of the Roman Catholics, came from the Protestants and Dissenters of Belfast.

A leading spirit at that time was Mr. Thos. Milliken, the father of Israel Milliken, who will figure in the future chapters of this historical tale. This gentleman, together with the Thompsons, Sinclairs, MacDonnells, Montgomerys, Magees, and Nelsons, addressed the inhabitants of Belfast, in 1792, in the following terms:—

"As men and as Irishmen, we have long lamented the degrading state of slavery and oppression, in which the present majority of our countrymen are held; nor have we lamented it in silence. We wish to see all distinctions on account of religion abolished,—all narrow, partial maxims of policy done away. We anxiously wish to see the day when every Irishman will be a citizen,—when Catholics and Protestants, equally interested in their country's welfare, possessing equal freedom and equal privileges, shall be cordially united, and shall learn to look upon each other as brethren, the children of the same God, the natives of the same land,—and when the only strife among them shall be—who shall serve their country best!"

Such programmes, resolutions, and declarations, soon produced a feeling of brotherly love among all true Irishmen. To obtain redress, by every legal and constitutional means, was the aim of the founders of this society; but finding that their efforts in this way were of no avail, that they were treated with contumely while they themselves were despised by those to whom they appealed, the society merged from an open into a secret one. Its progress in the latter character was even greater than when its councils were open and aboveboard.—This is partly accounted for by the secrecy of the Orange society, whose members were enabled to effect their evil purposes with greater certainty and security on account of that secrecy.

Many of the country people joined the society of United Irishmen; not so much in opposition to the government, as such, but for mutual protection of their lives and properties.

John and Peter Mullan had been active members for some time, and used their influence to make Cormac Rogan "one of themselves." Cormac resisted all their persuasions, not from any feeling that he entertained against the society or its members, but from a fear that his enrolment would displease his friends. The late conversation with Father John had, to some extent, removed his fears, so that the entreaties of the Mullans were gaining on his mind every day. The attempt to burn the chapel, and the selection of his own dwelling for destruction, finally overcame his scruples, and made him as anxious to join the United Irishmen, as he was previously averse to such a step.

After leaving his mother and Father MacAuley, Cormac, in company with the Mullans and Mike, proceeded across the country to Pat Dolan's house, a well known rendezvous of the United men.

Suddenly turning at the base of a hill, Mike grasped Cormac by the arm, and pointed to a dog.

"What do you mean, Mike?" said Cormac. "Did-did-don't you see th-th-the dog, the dog?"

"Yes; I see a dog,—but what of that?"

"Ti-ti-Tiger," said Mike,—"Cameron not fiff-far off."

"The lad's right," said Peter Mullan.

Cormac suddenly stood still. His whole body quivered with emotion, and it was evident from his appearance that, if Cameron crossed his path just then, a serious encounter would take place. In a minute or so, they saw Cameron, in company with Mackenzie, the Captain of the Yeomanry, and Fleming. Their direction lay in a different way, and so the parties did not approach each other; neither did it appear that Cameron had observed Cormac or those in whose company he was. Arrived at Dolan's house, Cormac was not long in announcing his desire to join the Society of United Irishmen. Dolan clasped him kindly and warmly by the hand, and when Cormac confided to him the news he had learned that day, honest Pat Dolan's surprise knew no bounds. Dolan was a blacksmith by trade.—He had two strapping sons, Phil and Ned, as they were familiarly called, who, besides assisting their father, took charge of a small farm.—Their mother was a true type of the Irishwoman, who had conceived a strong liking for Cormac Rogan, and was anxious that her sons should "throw themselves more in his way," as she preferred his companionship to that of others, for Phil and Ned.

Pat Dolan expected a stranger that night from Belfast, and expressed a desire that Cormac would return again in the evening with the Mullans. Cormac assented, but could not leave his mother alone; so that either Peter or John must remain in the house during his absence.

Peter proffered himself, and matters being thus arranged, they returned, not wishing to cause the widow any anxiety additional to that which she had to bear.

Father John had a heavy heart after parting with Mrs. Rogan. "It is a sad thing," he said to himself, "that the best and dearest of my poor people are thus exposed, daily and nightly, to the vengeance of those infamous men whose hands are never clean of the blood of innocent people. Is there to be no end of this state of things? or, what will the final result of them be if they continue to go on at this rate?"

"Arrived at home, Kate betrayed the greatest anxiety to learn if her surmises regarding Mike's hasty march over the country were correct.

"Alas! too correct, too true," said her uncle; "and my fears are, that they do not know the worst of it."

"It was some good power that directed poor Mike to Cameron's," said the girl. "God often makes use of the humblest instruments to carry out his designs."

"Quite true," replied Father John; "and my sincere prayer is, that matters may appear worse at the present moment than they really are, perhaps."

"Aye, perhaps, Uncle."

"Yes, perhaps," he repeated, and the sorrowful feelings of the good old man found vent in tears.

With a loving tenderness, Kate tried to soothe him, but it was no use; he was overwhelmed with sorrow and affliction, and earnestly besought heaven to spare him any further pain in witnessing and hearing the terrible scenes and details that were so constantly before him.

That was indeed a sight to behold. The old Irish priest standing almost on the brink of the grave, looking around him mentally, and beholding those who in happier days he had baptized, now suffering the heaviest persecutions for the promises, "I BELIEVE," which were uttered, through their sponsors, at the fount of holy baptism. To behold that weeping girl at his side, whose purity of heart and goodness of mind were stamped on every action of her life, dividing her sorrow with her beloved relative and those whose sufferings caused his own.—Well was it that such affliction was hidden from the sturdier portion of Father John's flock.—The sight would have been too much for the one-tenth of them to bear.

"It's a good point, after all, to be forewarned of the danger," said Kate.

"In one way it is, and in another way it is not," replied her uncle.

"Yes, I understand," she said. "No doubt Cormac will make preparations for the defence of his place, and, God help us, there may be lives lost in that same defence."

"It is hard to say," said Father John; "but, if I am to judge by the young man's appearance to-day, there was some terrible resolve working in his mind. His mother, too, God help her, saw danger brooding in his looks."

Kate was silent. The workings of her mind were varied and perplexing. Father John retired to his room, there to reflect on the wonderful and mysterious ways of God, who permiteth things to happen which no human power can divine.

CHAPTER VI.—ISRAEL MILLIKEN—DEATH OF WILLIAM ORR—HIS DYING DECLARATION.

"He dies to-day," said the heartless Judge, "Whilst he sat him down to the feast; Ask a smile was on his ashy lip, As he uttered a ribald jest."

Proceeding quietly on his business, a man

dressed in the garb of the Society of Friends might have been seen wending his way, from an early hour, on the Belfast road, toward Antrim. As he approached the village of Templepatrick, he betrayed some signs of uneasiness, especially when he saw the residence of the Rev. Mr. Porter strictly guarded by soldiers. This reverend gentleman, the author of a very seditious song, known by the name of "Cruiskeen Lawn,"* was suspected of being a member of the Society of United Irishmen, and from reports which reached the ears of the authorities, his house was visited regularly by soldiers and yeomanry, as a precaution against the visits of strangers, and to watch that the premises concealed no firearms.

Our Quaker friend had no intention of loitering on his journey; but, happening to possess an inquisitive turn of mind, he approached the house of Mr. Porter, and, in a very humble sort of way, inquired of a soldier the cause of his friend's house being guarded.

"Is the rebel a friend of yours?"

"Easy," said the Quaker; "thou—and—he—are—alike—my—friends; you—are—my—brother, and—he—is—my—brother."

"Oh, stuff! you're all alike, black cloth, and drab cloth, I see no difference," said the soldier.

"Why—not—say—red—cloth—also, friend?"

"Come, go your way, old fool," said the soldier, in an irritated tone.

"I—must—first—speak—with—my—brother, if—thou—pleasest, friend," said the Quaker, quite unmoved.

"Be quick, then," said the soldier; "we can't remain here, dawdling away our time with the likes of you. Here, Sandy, see this man inside, and remain there while he remains.—Don't be long."

"A' right, Major; I keen hoo to act as weel's ony ither. A sharp cen, an' a quick lug for a'." So saying, the Scotchman and Quaker entered.

The Rev. Mr. Porter was in the act of speaking very hurriedly to his servant-maid. On seeing the Quaker in company with the soldier, he betrayed some uneasiness, and inquired their business. A steady glance at the eyes of the Quaker, through the large spectacles which he wore, caused them instantly to shake hands. Mr. Porter apologizing, in an off-handed way, for not instantly knowing his old friend and neighbor, Josiah Wilson.

"Will ye no' step in a wee, an' tak' a mouth-fou' o' something to sen' the heat through your shiverin' banes?" said the servant, addressing Sandy.

"Gin ye speir after my health in that fashion, lassie, I canna weel see what richt I hae to refuse your kindness," said Sandy not in the least displeased at the rough and ready invitation.

"That girl is worth her room," said the Quaker to Mr. Porter.

"Her services are invaluable," said Mr. Porter; "but what in the name of heaven, Milliken, made you dare so much?"

"Never mind," said Israel Milliken, alias the Quaker, Josiah Wilson. "I'm for Randalstown, to-night; going to preach, you know. What about the two wide mouths?"

"Safely stowed away at the foundation of the meeting-house."

This was in reference to two field-pieces, presented by a merchant in Belfast, who was a leading member of the organization.

"Many thanks, lassie; an' gin ye be a sojer on duty, o' a cauld day, I warrant ye, I'll stan' as muckle." Sandy now appeared, smacking his lips, just as the Quaker and the clergyman were taking leave of each other.

"I'm in nae hurry," said Sandy, quite patronizingly; "ye may talk awa together there as lang as ye please."

"Talk—is—always—dangerous—friend," said the Quaker,—"but—never—more—so—than—now;—and the two passed out together."

Josiah proceeded on his way, sometimes walking as if afflicted with rheumatism in the knees, again, moving on briskly, and humming the air, "Cruiskeen Lawn."

That night there was a large meeting held in a barn belonging to Pat Dolan. Dolan's house and workshop, the latter commonly known by name of "Smiddy," were well situated for the purposes to which they were often devoted.—Four houses stood at the angles of a square, about five hundred yards distant from each other, and Pat's occupied a position nearly in the centre. Each of these houses was occupied by friends; and Milliken used to aver, that he never felt comfortable except when inside Pat Dolan's Smiddy. There were reasons for this which will become apparent as we proceed.

Late that evening there was a grand muster of men in Dolan's house, and in the forge also. Mr. Milliken was momentarily expected. "Speak of the deil, and he'll appear," said one of the men, as our Quaker friend just entered.

"Any news, any news?" cried several at the same moment.

* The Rev. Mr. Porter, the author of "Billy Bluff" and "Squire Eirebrand," was one of the contributors to the *Northern Star*, in which paper appeared some of the finest prose and poetical contributions of the day, in support of the national cause. Many of them were from his pen.

"Take your time a little, boys," said Pat, who appeared in excellent spirits that evening. "I have first to introduce to you, Mr. Milliken, our friend, Cormac Rogan, as true a boy as ever sprang from the sod. Mr. Milliken, Mr. Rogan," and the Quaker grasped the hand of our young friend with cordial warmth.—"Any news?" cried some of the men again.

"Lots of news—good news and bad news," said Milliken. "Just as I left Dublin, after an interview with the leading members of the Directory, it was reported that Lord Charlemont was turned rebel, and as such must be strictly watched."

"Bravo!" shouted several voices.

"A letter had been found, said to have been written by his lordship to a friend. In that letter the following words occur: 'Indeed, among the sad effects of the present abominable transactions, none is more striking than that our feelings have been blunted by the perpetual repetition of horrors; and the man who would formerly have wept over the loss of an individual, can now bear, unmoved, the death of thousands.'"

"The copy I hold in my hand," said Milliken, "was obtained by one of ourselves, who occupies a post in Dublin Castle."

"I'm afraid, boys," continued the speaker, "there are some in our body who are keeping the government posted in the matter of our private transactions; and, not knowing who they are, we have adopted the enemy's tactics, and sent our spies into the Castle itself. Let the Viceroy find them out if he can. And now, boys, one of the chief purposes of my visit here to-night, is to warn you against any strangers who may come amongst you in the guise of friends."

"Never mind," said Dolan, "we have our eyes open. Since that day of Orr's execution, we have learned a lesson. That Villain, Landy, never showed his face in these quarters since."

"Poor Orr!" said the Quaker, and his eyes filled with tears. "The last time I shook him by the hand, little did I think that in a few short weeks his body would be hanging from the gallows. His poor wife is broken-hearted, and won't be long behind him, I fear, and then what becomes of the five poor orphans?"

"God look to them," responded several of those present; "sure we'll support them and rear them ourselves."

"All that is provided for," said Milliken; "but who can restore their father?"

The fate of William Orr, of Ferranshane, in the County of Antrim, did more to influence the minds of the peasantry than all the councils of the United Irishmen. That man's death was simply a butchery in cold blood. He was accused of administering the oath of the United Irishmen to a soldier named Wheatley. That same soldier came forward afterwards, and made an affidavit that his testimony against Orr was FALSE! It was of no use. The government wanted victims, and must have them. Two of the jurors also made an affidavit, that, on the night of the trial, a quantity of spirituous liquors had been conveyed to the jury-room, that they, and several others, were intoxicated—that one of them was threatened with being prosecuted as an United Irishman if he did not concur in a verdict of "GUILTY!"—that at length he did so, contrary to his judgment—worn out by fatigue and drink, and subdued by menaces. Subsequently the whole of the jurors substantiated the sworn testimony of the two—all did not save Orr.

On the day of his execution, the people closed up their houses and places of business, and retired into the country, their whole appearance betokening grief at the untimely and cruel death of their innocent friend and neighbor.

The execution took place on the 14th day of October, 1797.

The dying declaration of William Orr, of Ferranshane, in the County of Antrim, Farmer.

TO THE PUBLIC.*

My Friends and Countrymen,—In the thirty-first year of my life, I have been sentenced to die upon the gallows, and this sentence has been in pursuance of a verdict of twelve men, who should have been indifferently and impartially chosen. How far they have been so, I leave to that country from which they have been chosen, to determine; and how far they have discharged their duty, I leave to their God, and themselves. They have, in pronouncing their verdict, thought proper to recommend me as an object of humane mercy; in return, I pray to God, if they have erred, to have mercy on them. The judge who condemned me, humanely shed tears in uttering my sentence; but whether he did wisely in so highly commending the wretched informer, who swore away my life, I leave to his own cool reflection, solemnly assuring him, and all the world, with my dying breath, that that informer was fore-sworn. The law under which I suffer, is surely a severe one; may the makers and promoters of it be justified in the integrity of their motives, and the purity of their own lives. By

that law I am stamped a felon, but my heart disdains the imputation. My comfortable lot and industrious course of life best refute the charge of being an adventurer for plunder; but if to have loved my country, to have known her wrongs, and to have felt the injuries of the persecuted Catholics, and to have united with them, and all other religious persuasions, in the most orderly and least sanguinary means of procuring redress;—if these be felonies, I am a felon, but not otherwise. Had my counsel, for whose honorable exertions I am indebted, prevailed in their motion to have me tried for high treason, rather than under the *Insurrection Law*, I should have been entitled then to a full defence, and my actions and intentions have been better vindicated; but that was refused, and I must now submit to what has passed. To the generous protection of my country, I leave a beloved wife, who has been constant and true to me, and whose grief for my fate has already nearly occasioned her death. I leave five children, who have been my delight; may they love their country as I have done, and die for it, if needful. Lastly, a false and ungenerous publication having appeared in a newspaper, stating certain alleged confessions of guilt on my part, and thus striking at my reputation, which is dearer to me than life, I take this solemn method of contradicting that calumny. I was applied to by the High Sheriff, and the Rev. William Bristow, Sovereign of Belfast, to make a confession of guilt, who used entreaties to that effect; this I peremptorily refused; and I think myself guilty, I should be free to confess it; but, on the contrary, I glory in my innocence. I trust that all my virtuous countrymen will bear me in their kind remembrance, and continue true and faithful to each other as I have been to all of them. With this last wish of my heart, nothing doubting of the success of that cause for which I suffer, and hoping for God's merciful forgiveness of such offences as my frail nature may at any time have betrayed me into, I die in peace and charity with all mankind.

WILLIAM ORR.

Carrickfergus Jail, Oct. 5th, 1797.

N.B.—The declaration was signed by William Orr, in the presence of the Rev. Mr. Savage.

There was work done in Pat Dolan's that night. Thirty stand of arms, and nearly a hundred pikes, were unearthed from their hiding-place, and delivered to those in attendance.—The pike-heads were the handiwork of Pat Dolan and his sons, Phil and Ned. It was amusing to hear Pat ridicule those who possessed the guns, telling them they were sure to be shot while loading them, while the fellows with the pikes were complimented.

"Not that I should praise the goods," said Pat, "because I made them myself. But don't you all know, boys, that the British are famed for their charges; and when I say the British, I mean our own poor fellows also whom bad luck has cast into the red-coat fraternity.—There is no noise nor smoke to prevent you seeing what you are about when you have a pike for your companion; and then think of the terrible slaughter that a charge of the bayonet makes! Now what is a bayonet but a pike-head spoiled?" And so he continued expatiating on the merits of his favorite.

It was a beautiful, clear, moonlight night, and Milliken took out his men to allow them to stretch their limbs, as one of them remarked. Scouts were placed in commanding positions while the men were put through their drill exercise.

Cormac Rogan was provided with a gun—an article which he was used to handle long before—and repeatedly expressed his satisfaction to John Mullan, at the step he had taken.

"Had it not been that I knew you well, Cormac, and knew your love for the old country, it's many a time I could have felt angry with you."

"Better late than never," said Cormac; "I must just now endeavor to pull up for lost time. What is your opinion about mentioning that affair to Mr. Milliken?"

"Don't speak of it. I have been thinking the matter over in my own mind. Such a course might lay you open to suspicion, and I cannot bear that."

"Suspicion! How?" said Cormac quite roused.

"Understand what I mean. Some of the men present might think that you joined us merely through fear, or to obtain assistance."

"Such a thought never entered my mind," said Cormac, warmly; "and I would not accept it if offered to me!"

"I know that," replied Mullan; "but you are a young hand among us yet, and I am too anxious that the men retain the high opinion they have of you, than run any chance of being it by taking the opportunity of telling them anything."

Cormac assented to this arrangement, at he began to view the matter in the light that Mullan saw it.

"Besides," said the faithful fellow, "you and Peter, Pat Dolan, and perhaps the two boys and myself, will be more than a match for all that Cameron can bring."

"Yes," said Cormac—"it is quite natural."