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## REMINISCENCES OF '98

A SKETCH OF THE LIFE OF THE DARING WICKLOW OUTLAW, ANDY HACKETT, OF ARKLOW.  
(From the Catholic Telegraph.)

Andy Hackett was the son of a comfortable farmer, Robin Hackett, who resided about a mile from Castletown in the Catholic Union of Arklow. He was born about the year 1774. At a proper age he was apprenticed to a blacksmith named Dunn, at the Charter-school of Arklow. Among the many persons of respectability who patronized Dunn was a Captain Atkin, of Ennmarvale. This gentleman had entirely won the good-will of Andy, and when any work of his was brought to Dunn's forge, the indefatigable apprentice, for such he was, never rested until that gentleman's work was done, particularly if it were horses that were to be shod. Then, as soon as the last rub of the rasp was given to the last hoof, Andy would mount and ride off at a rapid pace, and leave his charge in the stable yard of Ennmarvale. And Captain Atkin seemed to appreciate highly Andy's rude attention to his affairs. Then that fine county, for the previous hundred years, had been fiercely ridden over by an upstart gentry, that could not be exceeded for despotism and tyranny. Not one Catholic seed could be cultivated in the magisterial nursery until about the year 1824.

But at the time I write of, things were approaching to a crisis. And notwithstanding the hurry of business, and the gloom of the political horizon, Andy was not insensible to the charms of the fair; and without the permission or consent of his master or father, he took to wife Miss Biddy.

It is a property in animated nature to resist when goaded to a certain extent, and at the time I speak of the people were driven to distraction by proclamations, by informers, and by the worst of all, a gang of private well-paid spies. The spirit of defiance and resistance to tyranny drove the men to group in private discussion, and have themselves initiated in the bonds of fraternal affection, as the phrase then went. Our newly-wedded apprentice was not backward in taking the United Irishman's oath, and, as far as the influence of an apprentice went, he was indefatigable in procuring recruits. And, although most assiduous to the heavy labor of his trade, he never seemed to be tired. He was one of nature's roughest children, and though slight in his personal construction, he was muscular and sinewy, strong and enduring, and his whole person possessed a willow flexibility. His vigorous and ardent nature craved difficulties as animals crave food; and it seemed to be his pleasure to tear down obstacles, such as would deter other men from coming into contact with them. These things are passing away, and very little have been recorded, and the waves of time are beating against the memory of the few survivors, and fast obliterating what was not placed on the imperishable page of history; and if not placed in such a position in time, the maligners of our country and creed will start up ere long, and write down those outlaw men as very demons, without one quality in modification. We can boast of one branch of our press, faithful and true, and to it with pleasure we can confide such little notices to live in security, where they may defy the slanderer and hired traducer of our country and her rights.

Andy was still organizing in his own sphere, when Cooper, alias Morgan, the professional informer, about November, 1797, clutched a large number of men, and had them domiciled in the gaols of Wicklow and Wexford. There was now something more than the organization of numbers to be considered. Arms were necessary for effectual defence, and the fabrication of pikes was commenced and carried on with perseverance. In the manufacture of this warlike weapon Andy was most assiduous, and when circumstances threw a piece of good Swedish iron or steel in his way, he was not over scrupulous in making an exchange, and reserving the esteemed metal for a pike-head for some of his young favorites. When opportunity served he forged out these weapons, and in the dead of night, when all were enjoying their sleep, Andy, with two or three of his associates as sentinels and helpers, were carrying on their reasonable manufacture in J. Dunn's forge. And when some six or a dozen would be released from the noisy operation of the hammer, they would be carefully secreted until a time would be assigned for the grinding of them, when each man would take home his own blade to fit a handle to it.

The Spring of '98 witnessed the North Cork Regiment of Militia quartered through the Co. of Wexford, and led on in all its rampant Orangism by its head colonel, Lord Kingsborough, and his man of business, Captain Swayne. Both officers and privates endeavored to rival each other at the triangles and in pitch-capping. There was one in the ranks that far exceeded all that had exhibited themselves on the rostrum of persecution in his ingenuity in barbarism, and his refined and novel cruelty; and he was called

Tom the D—l. He certainly distanced all the Cork sportsmen, not even excepting "The Rakes of Mallow." In his romantic turn for cruelty he wished to glut himself and to feast his superiors on the agonies of his victims. This monster's forte lay in the cutting of two seams about an inch wide, one from the corner of the forehead to the nape, the other at right angles to that, and from ear to ear, and then rubbed the head all over with a mixture of oil and gunpowder.—He then, as he facetiously termed it, set fire to the copse. I wish to draw the reader's attention to but one instance of this villain's ferocity out of scores, although it is already on record:—Anthony Perry, Esq., of Inch, near Gorey, a Protestant gentleman, who had the manliness to condemn the unlawful proceedings and tortures of the day, while the Ancient Britons—the no-quarter regiment—was riding down the brave people of Wicklow beneath the crimson hoofs of their Cambrian chargers, and while Hunter, Gowan, and Hawtry White revelled in blood and persecution around Gorey. At this time it was that Mr. Perry was dragged to the guard-house at Gorey, and handed over to the care of Tom the D—l, who cut his face as above described, out of derision to the sign of the cross, the glorious ensign of man's redemption; and having set fire to it, he burst forth into an immoderate fit of laughter, that drew the whole garrison and loyalists of the town round him, to laugh and cheer him for his ingenuity and spirit. It may not be amiss in passing on to notice that the loyalists of Gorey are the descendants of that nondescript class of animals called Palatinates, that were imported here from some of the infidel states of Germany, and brought over here as a bonus after the glorious William had robbed us of our woolen manufacture.

Thus Andy Hackett may be said to have grown up in the centre of persecution, and every day there was conveyed to the workshop the news of some newly-tortured and mutilated victim, and every such report set the hammer and grindstone in active operation for the fabrication and finish of that formidable weapon of destruction—the pike.

The day was now fixed for an assault on Newtownmounkenney, and the securing the passes leading from the metropolis to the sea-side of Wicklow and Wexford. Andy, with two or three associates, set off from the vicinity of Arklow, through the woods and wilds of Wicklow, a distance of more than twenty miles, which they nearly accomplished in four or five hours; but when within a short distance of the place, they had the mortification to hear of their party being defeated, and had not even the possibility of joining the rebel ranks. On the following night they succeeded in gaining Lord Carysfort's wood at Poolahoney, the point from whence they started. Not thinking it safe to appear in public for two or three days, they kept themselves concealed. At length the news of the complete victory of the Wexford men over the North Cork Militia and several corps of mounted yeomen on Oulard Hill, on the 27th of May, 1798, tinkled on their ears like the gladsome toll of joy-bells. On Monday night they set out to join the Wexford men; and after a march of about thirty miles, Andy appeared in the camp at Enniscorthy, on Tuesday morning, with a green sash and a band of the same color encircling his hat. From that period to the end he was foremost in every daring act that lay within his reach. He knew nothing about fear, and caution was equally as great a stranger to him; very few, if any, in the popular army bore more dangers, and none thought so little about them. After taking part in all the general battles, after he left Wexford he went with the two idolized generals, Edward Fitzgerald, Esq., of New Park, county Wexford, and Garret Byrne, Esq., of Ballymanus, county Wicklow, to the Boyne, where they, with the men of Kildare, hoped to effect a junction with their brethren in the North. But they hoped in vain; and these brave fellows, after marching across the kingdom from Wexford to Ardee, were much disappointed in not finding that vigorous effort which they had a right to expect to be made by the Northern United Irishmen to form that wished for junction with the men of the South. This was enough to dispirit the stoutest hearts—still they bore up against it. Captain Anthony Perry, who well knew Hackett's turn of mind and ready wit, with which nature was bountiful to him, said one morning—"Hackett, I see there's no account from our Northern friends yet." "No, indeed, sir, I believe they are not up yet. ('Are you up yet,' was a common password with the United Irishmen.) They made a great deal of noise some time ago about being early up, but I believe they went to bed again and overslept themselves." After the failure of that expedition, a remnant of them got back about the 23rd of July to that celebrated fortress, Glenmalur, in the county Wicklow, and then our hero remained under the command of Dwyer and Holt till about the 1st of November.

Whilst quartered in these defiles they had

many hair-breadth escapes. Their physical courage, their indomitable daring, surprising agility and capability of enduring fatigue, rendered them almost equal to any undertaking. Hackett and another daring devil named Dalton, with a couple of comrades, rode up to the door of a public-house in the Glen of Imaili, and having called for some drink, they were allaying their thirst as they sat on their gaunt chargers, when on a sudden, and within a few perches of them, at a short turn on the road, Mr. Hume's yeoman cavalry appeared in view with a party of the 89th Foot. The coming into such close contact was unexpected, and perhaps unwished for, on both sides.

This was not a moment for hesitation; the forces were unequal, and to ride off along a narrow and straight road on jaded chargers was certain death. "Come," said Hackett, "without the least hesitation, let us dash at them; we have nothing else for it." And as he wheeled round, he cried out with the highest pitch of his voice, "Come out; what are you all delaying in there for? here is the enemy." They rushed on like furies, and discharged their wide-mouthed blunderbusses at them, with the well-known challenge, "Come, you b—y set." The enemy were thrown into confusion, and the call, "Come out," impressed on their minds the presence of Captain Dwyer and a party within. They wheeled round, and dashed off with the greatest precipitation.—In the retreat Captain Hume's girths were shot off, and he swore that he would never go out with them again. But when they got clear of danger, they fired upon every man they saw working in the fields.

The government had taunted the yeomanry magistrates for not expelling them; and Hunter, Gowan, and a few commanders of yeomen, let out their corps one day to clear the country of them, but were shamefully defeated by Dwyer and Holt, at the village of Aughrim, county Wicklow. Hunter led the retreat; he had one horse shot dead, another wounded, and the third, covered with foam and trembling with fatigue, carried him to the garrison of Rathdrum. At the onset Hackett, with Antrim John, made a desperate effort to gain the bridge of Aughrim before him, and take post under the arches, and to oppose his crossing it, but was a few yards too late, and so close as to be known by Hunter.—And when he got about two miles from Aughrim, having left his pursuers at a safe distance, he called out to such as he saw employed by the wayside to run away and hide, that there was mad Hackett and all his men coming after him. This race of the gallant Hunter may be aptly compared to John Gilpin's by the celebrated Cooper.

The loyal gentry and wealthy farmers about Rathdrum had now for some time been debarred of their favorite pastime, the sports of the field. They proposed a dinner, and although not the season for hunting anything but human game, they announced a day's hunting, and led out a pack of hounds as restive and intractable as the mountain outlaws. The animals, overjoyed at being unkenelled, ran wildly on towards the locality where their masters so lately suffered such a humiliating defeat. Hackett and a few more of his comrades were on an eminence as the dogs rushed from the woods of Redonagh. Always bent on fun when convenient, he resolved to take advantage of the present, and to change the loyal sport into a practical joke at their expense. He was well acquainted with every note of the sportsman—the barkaway, the whoop, and halloo were as familiar to him as the ringing of the hammer on the anvil or the roar of the wide-mouthed blunderbuss, and he could hunt a pack of dogs as well as he could fabricate a pike. He gave the well known shout to draw off the dogs to a trail, for they were now at a loss. The leaders of the pack, Ringwood, Trueboy, and Venus gave an open, the whole pack responded to their cry, and regardless of their huntsman's control dashed fleetly on to where Hackett led the way up the highland, leaving the Rathdrumers in the valley in the most exasperated state, showering down imprecations on the Croppy soul of the reptile rebel. What was to be done? The dinner was cooking at the Rockingham arms, the Orange hotel kept by Jenny Bates, and where, after dinner, they went to perform a comic drama in three acts—the first was to consist in the singing of the "Boyne Water," "Protestant Boys," and "Croppy lie Down," &c. The second was, without trial or mainprize, to transport the Pope, the priests, and papists to a certain sultry kingdom without permission to return. The third act was to be performed by tumbling from their chairs under the table, and to close the drama with a snore. Powder was now scarce in the rebel camp. The Fernanagh militia supplied them with some, and the yeomen in their vicinity purchased their protection by sending them all they could spare. But there was always a supply kept at the mine rocks for the mining operations, and to them they went to obtain some, but our poet's peaceful Avoca was disturbed by Hackett and a couple of his daring companions, who left the main body and went down to Mr.

Johnson's, of Millmount, in quest of arms.—Passing by Mr. Charley Cooper's, of Newbridge, his young brother fired on Hackett and then ran into the Avoca river to escape. Hackett followed quickly and made him a prisoner, but gave him no ill-treatment, and complimented him on his courage, but told him he should bring him up to General Holt. "I am not afraid," said Mr. Cooper, "for Holt is a cousin of ours." His hopes were not realized. A man named Tate, who had got the character of a violent Orange yeoman, had been just brought into camp, and such as knew him were much incensed against him. Mr. Cooper was too young to have acquired any notoriety as an Orangeman. The strangers and deserters classed him with Tate, and unfortunately, both were shot. Holt showed a great want of firmness here. Had he acted with firmness and vigor he could have saved at least Mr. Cooper, although the wrecking of Newbridge chapel was urged against him.

Captain Dwyer about this time, with about forty men was on Kilmallone Hill; when he received intelligence that the enemy was advancing, he instantly sent couriers to Holt and Hackett to repair to him as soon as possible. Holt came, but was too late to effect anything; but Hackett did not come, and Dwyer threatened him severely for it. And Hackett knew that he was not the man to be disobeyed, and shunned him. The chill nights of winter were now approaching, and consumption seemed to be threatening many of them on account of lying out at night for the most part of the last six months. At this time the poor farmers who cheerfully supported them were greatly harassed, and death and the destruction of property, without trial or mercy, was certain if rebels were suspected to be on their premises, for suspicion in those days was guilt. Pressed now to the utmost limits of human endurance, want of food, and clothing particularly, shoes to shield them from the biting cold of the winter nights, their coughs and catarrhs from exposure to continual night air, so that none but men of iron constitutions could stand it, several of them abandoned their unequal guerilla warfare. And with them Hackett and a few more separated from Holt. For they did not at this time entertain the most favorable opinion of the self-created General. These latter established themselves partly on Lord Cary's pits and woods in the beautiful Vale of Avoca, the gold mines and the Croaghian mountains. Being at a farmer's house in the vicinity of those woods, partaking of some refreshment in a private room, the house was unexpectedly entered by a member of the Arklow horse yeomen, a very large man, and armed to the teeth, who commenced a set of interrogatories and denunciations of the guest to a young woman, who stood in a state of perturbation on the floor at the critical situation she was placed in by the unexpected intrusion of the cavalier. After throwing a scrutinizing glance into every cranny of the homestead, he said, "Does Hackett visit you now in this lonesome place?" "This is a bad time for visiting, Mr. M.—. You know we are forbid to entertain any one that does not belong to the family." "Ho! by G—, you pay very little attention to such orders; but if I catch that scoundrel here, or any place else, he will never pay another visit; I'll blow and cut the traitor into ribbons." When he had exhausted his vocabulary of loyal abuse and imprecations the outlaw made his appearance with a "Good morrow to you, Mr. M.—; you have said a great many handsome things about me this morning, and now let me tell you that your death should be as prompt as your abuse of me was uncalled for. Tell me now, if you can, where do you know was it that I earned the title of scoundrel?" Mr. M.— endeavored to apologize, but Hackett cut him short. "It is useless for you to say one word. There are two things that save you for the present—the respect I have for the people of this house, and a compliment I wish to pay to your very good mother, who was always foremost in relieving the distressed. Tell her I spare your life on that account; but I must take your ammunition, and then you may go to that place where you were sending me; but let me hear no more of your swaggering."

The *Sun* newspaper, of October 30th, 1798, has a letter from Gorey, dated the 21st of that month, which says Captain White, of the Baloghkeen cavalry, pursued Hackett and his gang, who had just before burned Middleton Chapel, to Ballyraddon, where he came up to them, and killed nine rebels, Hackett with difficulty escaping through the bog of Birag. I mention this to show that there can be but little reliance placed on the newspaper accounts of those days. This story of burning a chapel by a man who would expose his breast to all the bullets of the Irish yeomanry to save one wisp of the thatch that covered the miserable Catholic temples of the time, is untrue; but it was a pretext to shift the odium from the Orange yeoman. As to killing the nine men, we shall immediately see the fact. About the same time, there were three yeomen of the Castletown corps put to death for burning

the chapel. The loyalists said the deed was done by Hackett, but I have no authority to affirm or deny it.

The following is from a member of White's cavalry, who was himself in the engagement:—"On the night before information reached Captain White that the rebels were to burn a grove at Ballyfad, about three miles to the land side of Gorey. Several corps of mounted yeomen were summoned to attend. We received the first information, and were the first on the ground. I remained on the road, and my brother was down at the grove. We were even led to believe that Antrim John, that terror to all loyalists, was in the grove. The firing from the grove was tremendous, considering the few that were in it, not more than eight or nine in all; but it appears that some were charging for John, whilst he with deadly aim discharged the pieces on our party, for several of our men (seven or eight) fell dead, with thirteen wounded. John was wounded early, and for a considerable time fought after partly lying. Hackett and the other men, I suppose, were not idle. When John had expended his last round, and that we plainly perceived their battery was silenced, our forces closed on them. The party then halted, and fought their way through our ranks. Five or six of them got off, but three were dead, and John was expiring. We thought he was Hackett, but some of our men said he was too large. He was soon sabred and his head cut off, which was carried on the points of our swords in triumph, following each other by turns. I had the honor of carrying it a part of the way—an honor that several aspired to but could not obtain. We reached Gorey in ovation. In our own eyes it was not less than the greatest Roman triumph, bearing the grim and bloody trophy through the streets in triumph, amidst the acclamations of our partisans. We retired to a hotel to have some refreshments, bringing the ghastly head of the daring rebel John with us. We thrust ourselves into the parlor of the house, and then got seated as well as we could; and in a few minutes afterwards, we had a steaming round of tumblers of punch of Susy Hill's best. Our venerable Captain, Hawtry White, who had the chief command on that expedition, rose up and said:—"Gentlemen, it is my command that no man will take his punch until he will stir it with something dipped in the blood of the rebel's head," which was still oozing from the saline cuts on the neck. There was a cheer, and the order was immediately complied with. There were a few exceptions. The command was thus complied with. Each man touched the bloody neck with his finger, and then dipped that member in his punch, and some, through their loyal zeal, stirred it round. Then the chief gave the well-known bacchanalian sentence, "All at home, gentlemen," and a favorite toast, "Here's perdition to all traitors, priests, and rebels," and the punch was gulped down.—A young lady in the house, hearing the hilarity, threw aside her maiden graces, smiles, and attributes, and had the masculine curiosity to come into the apartment to gaze on the unsightly object and be one of the party. After viewing the ghastly spectacle for some time, and after a rude but pointed remark from one of the men, her feminine qualities began to return, and she seemed dissatisfied with her position, and was about to withdraw. It was our Captain's will that she should do as every one else had done, and that she should perform the brutal and disgusting ceremony. She shuddered and refused, and he was about to compel her to perform her part of the after act. She shrieked most violently, and was about to precipitate herself from the window. I quit the apartment when I saw the bloody and brutal drama carried to such an extent. The shrieks of the lady, and her change of color, which indicated a fainting fit, put an end to this unheard-of ceremony. Was it pity for the lady that induced the hoary-headed and iron-hearted Captain to relinquish his design?—No, but there were two or three by who, from their position in life, had no necessity to crouch to him, and they, by their demeanor, told him plainly that the ceremony was overstretching.—There was a deputation sent off immediately to decapitate the other two men, and the three heads were impaled next day in true Elizabethian style on tall spikes on the market-house of Gorey, where they remained for years." So far from one of the party.

The Gorey loyalists were greatly disappointed in the head of the man they took to be Antrim John, and I believe they are not yet disabused of it. The man in question was John Doherty, a deserter from the King's County Militia. The real Antrim John (Mooney) got off to Lisbon, where he became foreman in a calico manufactory, and in 1803 might be seen walking the quays of Lisbon, dressed like a gentleman, picking out his country's sailors to hear the news from Ireland.

To return to the grove and follow the chase. There was scarcely a branch left on the trees but was shot off from the constant firing of the yeomen. A man who visited it that evening