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THE IRISH WIDOW'S SON;
OR,
THE PIKEMEN OF NINETY-EIGHT.

BY CON. O'LEARY.

(From the Boston Pilot.)

CHAPTER XIX.—(Continued.)

Being bareheaded, and caught in the unlawful act of firing a gun, Mike looked rather sheepish, as Kate and Brigid approached him. "Good morning, Mike," said Kate. "But what, in all the world, are you doing down here?"

"Tit-tit-trying to shoot Mim-mim-Mackenzie through th-th-the head," said Mike, as he pointed to his hat.

"Tut, tut!—bad boy, Mike, to be engaged t such naughty work," said Brigid, advancing closer to him.

"Nin-nin-not naughty work," insisted Mike. "If I'm m-m-m nin-nin-naughty, sis-sis-so is John Mullan," and both Kate and Brigid joined in a simultaneous laugh.

"And what is this for?" inquired Kate, stooping down to look at the pike.

"Did-did-don't t-t-touch that," shouted Mike, "mim-mim-might hurt you."

"There is no fear of it hurting me," insisted Kate, who really was glad of an opportunity to examine a specimen of the favorite arm of Irish warfare.

Brigid and Kate lifted and examined the pike with great curiosity, and evidently against the wish of Mike, who thought that girls should mind their own business, and leave such articles for men!

"Who intrusted you, Mike, with these weapons?"

"Nin-nin-nobody," he answered; "Pat sent mim-mim-me with them to-to-to old Roddy, bib-bib-but he gig-gig-gave me leave to have tit-tit-two shots at my own hat on-n-n a bib-bib-bush, and I mim-mim-must now away."

As Mike prepared to depart, both Kate and Brigid would have liked to learn something about Cormac and John; but, fool and all as Mike was, these girls felt a sort of bashfulness in alluding, even remotely, to either of the young men.

"What a pity," said Brigid, "he didn't speak of John or Cormac."

"What matter?" replied Kate.

"Oh, of course not; but I just wanted to know if there was any stirring news. I'll call after Mike, Kate, and inquire."

"No, no, Brigid, there's no necessity."

But Brigid did make a show of following Mike, and Mike, thinking that she followed him with some design of retaining the arms intrusted to him, quickened his pace, and soon left Brigid far behind. He had not yet gone out of sight, when a man was seen approaching, and remain some minutes in conversation with him.

Kate and Brigid both observed some angry gestures on the part of the stranger. Mike kept himself in motion, going round about as if to avoid too close a contact with the stranger. The sound of their voices could be heard, and it was plainly evident that an altercation of some sort was going on between Mike and the stranger. Suddenly the latter made a spring on Mike, and snatched the gun from him.—Mike dropped the pike, and caught his antagonist by the neck. When roused, poor Ginty was a match for any ordinary man. A scuffle ensued, during which Mike became master of the gun. Snatching up the pike from the ground, the poor fellow retreated his steps to where Brigid and Kate stood. He was closely pursued by the stranger. When Mike approached the girls, he bawled out, "Th-th-that devil-l Fleming wants to-to rob me.—Here, Mim-mim-Miss O'Neill, you and Brigid ji-ji-just watch these articles fit-fif-for a minute, ti-ti-till I pitch into him." Saying which, he deposited both gun and pike on the ground, and made a spring with such force on his antagonist, as brought both of them to the ground. Mike kicked up his legs, rolled about with Fleming as if he were a bundle of straw in his arms, hitting and biting whenever he got the opportunity.

Kate kept screaming at him to desist, but all was of no use. He kept Fleming pinned down to the ground, and whenever the latter endeavored to regain his feet, Mike was sure to give him another toss. The only articulate sounds heard during the encounter proceeded from Mike, who, at every blow, kept up a running volley of "Wud ye—wud ye—wud ye?"

Kate and Brigid were such interested spectators, that they did not observe the approach of a man who was hastily crossing a field leading to the spot where Fleming was in the unrelenting grips of Mike. Suddenly the man was down on the combatants, and, releasing Fleming, held him by the arm, looking straight into his face. Mike gave a cry of joy when he beheld Roddy Flynn, to

whose house he had been commissioned to take the gun and pike.

"And so you would leave your lodgings, young man, before settling your bill," said Fleming's pursuer, who proceeded deliberately to bind Fleming's hands behind his back.

Kate kept insisting on Brigid to return, but Brigid kept as persistently repeating, "Wait awhile."

"Here, Mike, give us a hand," cried Roddy. Mike was quickly obedient, and assisted in tying Fleming's hands, the latter crying out, "I'll make the whole of you rue this, yet.—Your kindness was a plot, a devilish plot, to keep me to be murdered," he said, addressing Roddy.

"Ji-ji-just you-u be quiet, now," insisted Mike, "till you're rir-rir-roped, and then talk," and Mike laughed and giggled at a great rate.

"I suppose you two young ladies saw the attempt to rob this poor fellow," said Roddy, addressing Kate and Brigid.

"We saw him strike the poor fellow, and snatch something from him at the same time," said Brigid, speaking for herself and Kate.

"It's a lie," said Fleming, dashing a fiendish look on Brigid, which startled both girls into a speedy flight.

But the word had scarcely passed his lips when Mike sprang at him again, and would have inflicted heavy punishment on the speaker but for Roddy, who made him desist.

"Turn now, ungrateful creature, and march back the way you came," said Roddy, addressing Fleming.

"Yes, tit-tit-turn now-w-w, 'grateful creature, and trot off-f with you th-th-the road you come," added Mike, imitating the words of Roddy.

Kate and Brigid, not a little frightened at what they witnessed, returned homeward as quickly as possible.

Judge their astonishment, to find John and Peter Mullan, Cormac Rogan and Pat Dolan, with his two sons in the kitchen, engaged in earnest conversation with Father John.

After an interchange of compliments, Kate rehearsed what had taken place.—Cormac looked at Pat, as much as to say, "What's best to be done?"

Soldiers and yeomanry were out that day scouring the country, and danger was impending everywhere.

An appeal was made to Father John for advice, but he declined, leaving those around him to be the judges of their own business.

Cormac and Pat retired outside, and after a few minutes' conversation, returned. It was arranged that Pat, accompanied by his two sons and Peter Mullan, should at once proceed to follow Roddy Flynn and Mike.

The carrying of arms in open day might probably bring them into trouble. Pat was not aware when he entrusted Mike with them, that anything could have occurred with Fleming, who would now, in all likelihood, call out for help, if he saw any one near at hand, and likely to be able to render him any assistance. This arrangement was an agreeable surprise to Kate and Brigid, who never dreamed that it was made by the young men in order to afford them an interview.

Father John had retired to his room, and John Mullan proposed that all four should go out to enjoy a walk. Kate alleged that she and Brigid had just returned.

"Of course," said Cormac, approaching, and taking the girl by the hand, "we know that, dear Kate, but come now, and we shall shortly return."

"Here are two cloaks and two hats," said John, approaching these articles.

"Just you allow them to remain there," said Brigid, saucily, seeing that John was singling hers out. "Kate has not decided yet whether we are to go out or remain within."

"But, surely, Brigid O'Hara has something to say to that matter herself?" inquired John.

"Nothing, whatever," replied Brigid: "I leave all such arrangements to Miss O'Neill."

Kate consented, and the party went forth. For a while they walked together, but then separated; Kate and Cormac remaining behind at some distance from John and Brigid.

"Matters are coming to a crisis with us," said Cormac to Kate; "we don't know the day we shall be required to take the field, and, till then, whenever it does take place, we shall be as busy as possible, and, in some places, night and day."

"I was just beginning to think as much," said Kate. "I suppose we shall not see you again for a long time."

"That is what troubles me, Kate," replied the young man, taking the girl's hand; "I cannot tell anything as to how or where I shall be situated. I am under orders, and shall follow them. I may mention to you that the late numerous arrests made by the Government have somewhat disheartened and distracted the leaders here in the North. The Commander-in-Chief of the insurgent forces, Lord Edward Fitzgerald, is not sure of his life a single day, and, after to-morrow, I shall be engaged between Belfast and here as dispatch carrier."

Kate leaned heavily on Cormac's arm, and the young man interpreted that to a feeling of anxiety as to his safety.

"And has my dear Kate so little to say?" said Cormac, in his most familiar manner.

Kate was silent. "I thought to find you remarkably glad to see your friend Cormac, and to wish him all sorts of good luck, and give him lots of promises of fidelity, and—"

"I was glad to see you, Cormac," replied Kate, "and wish you all sorts of good luck; but as to my promises of fidelity—"

"Excuse me, Kate," said Cormac. "Yes, yes—I know," said the girl, "it was only banter. You shall have all I can give you—my heart's love, and prayers for your safety, and for the triumph of the cause you are engaged in."

Cormac stopped walking, and, turning round a little, gazed into the sweet and truthful eyes that met his with a loving tenderness.

"Kate," he said—and he evidently spoke with emotion, for his voice trembled—"I am poor, at least moderately so; I am engaged in the cause of my country—"

"And of my country," eagerly said Kate.

"Yes, of our country, Kate; but independently of my poverty, should I come safely through the trials which are common to all those engaged in the same good cause, I shall then, dear Kate, be able to lay before you, for your acceptance, an undivided heart, and the labor of a life which shall be yours till death."

The earnestness of Cormac's language, his manner, which amounted to enthusiasm, and the kind, loving look of his face penetrated deeper than ever into the pure soul of the half-silent, gifted girl, who stood before him.

She felt the full influence of the truth that beamed from his every look; and her clasp of his hand was a sufficient index of the goodness and faithfulness of her own heart.

"I can only hope, Cormac," she said, "that you shall ever find me worthy of your manly and unselfish love."

Tears filled her eyes as she spoke. She would have said more, but that suppressed language which appears, although not spoken, beaming in every look, plainly conveyed to her accepted lover the fulness of her heart.

"But see, Cormac, we are far behind John Mullan and Brigid. Let us overtake them."

Cormac paid no attention to this gentle reminder. He walked along with his head half bent, half sorrowful looking, and somewhat dejected.

"You hear what I have said," repeated Kate; "we are lagging behind. See John and Brigid await us."

"Pardon me," returned Cormac; "we shall shortly overtake them."

In a few minutes our party joined.

"This is rather a friendly sort of walk," said Brigid.

"It was your fault," answered Kate, "you walk so quickly at times."

"And Miss O'Neill walks so confoundedly slow, sometimes, you know," said Brigid, addressing John.

"Quick or slow, here or there, I think we are all to blame; or, rather, none of us are to blame," said Cormac.

"We shall return, then," said Kate.

They did so; and this time it was John and Brigid who were behind. It is almost unnecessary to repeat what took place between them. The light-hearted girl was serious-looking; so was John Mullan.

Arrived at Kate's residence, they all entered; but as yet there was no appearance of the other party. Father John was present, and all were laughing and chatting, when Mike Ginty entered, the tears rolling down his cheeks.

Captain Mackenzie and his black yeos were out. Roddy Flynn, Pat Dolan, Phil and Ned, and Peter Mullan were taken prisoners, and were now on their way to Antrim.

"Quick, Jack. Let us be off; we can call at the Smiddy. There is a meeting there to-day. This looks like work," said Cormac.

There was a hurried hand-shaking; and neither Mullan nor Rogan heard the prayers that Kate and Brigid offered at their departure.

CHAPTER XX.—MACKENZIE OUTWITTED—AN UNPLEASANT ENCOUNTER—CORMAC ROGAN'S ADVENTURE.

"But a voice of thunder sending,
Through the tyrant brother's ears!
Tell him he is not thy master—
Tell him of man's common lot—
Feel life has but one disaster—
To be a slave, and know it not."

Pat Dolan had only proceeded about a mile and a half on his journey when he saw Roddy and Mike ascend a hill. Fleming was walking in advance. Suddenly he ran forward, and two men approached him, then five or six others; and Pat hurried forward.

Fleming was quickly released, while Roddy and Pat Dolan were immediately put under arrest.

Pat's sons and Peter Mullan were permitted to go away; but at the instigation of Fleming they were recalled, and also put under arrest. Mike retreated with the swiftness of a deer and was fired at.

The party then marched forward, and in the course of a short time, were re-inforced by additional members of the yeomanry corps under

Mackenzie. Fleming's hilarity knew no bounds. He informed Mackenzie that he was taken prisoner by a body of United men one evening when returning after a patrol.

Roddy heard him, and knowing that such was not true, told him "not to sin his soul with a parcel of lies. You know," said Roddy, "that you were found wounded, and that after taking care of you for several weeks, and attending to your recovery, you run off to-day without as much as saying, by your leave. I'm a poor man, and as I thought I was entitled to something for all my trouble, I followed you to make you return."

"It's all a conspiracy," shouted Fleming; "you saw that brute that has escaped strike me with the gun which you now hold."

"I saw nothing of the kind," retorted Roddy. "I saw you try to injure the poor creature."

"Poor creature, indeed!" sneered Fleming; "your poor creature, as you call him, is gone to alarm the whole country."

"Do you think so?" said Mackenzie, with evident uneasiness.

"No, I don't think it, I know it," answered Fleming.

Mackenzie then gave the word to halt, and turned his men in another direction.

Pat and the others saw that their chances of escape were thus lessened by that order; however, they never betrayed the lightest uneasiness at the turn of ill-luck.

Peter Mullan showed a good deal of stubbornness, which subjected him to a good deal of violence at the hands of his captors.

Phil and Ned Dolan were more guarded, and learned by a few glances from their father that their better plan was not to speak, and to appear to treat the whole thing with indifference. Their father began to whistle some popular air, but was instantly ordered to stop.

Roddy Flynn kept up his banter with Fleming, maintaining that this—referring to his being made prisoner—was a poor reward for all he had done for Fleming, from the night that he found him all but dead, and kindly took him into his house.

Fleming at last began to think that probably he had been over hasty in his suspicions of Roddy; however, in order to be on the safe side, he did not allude further to that part of the business.

Cormac and John were not long in arriving at the smiddy. The meeting was over, but some ten or twelve young men were loitering about, smoking and chatting.

To these Cormac immediately issued instructions, and told them what had befallen Dolan and his sons, and John's brother.

Mike had inadvertently conveyed word to Pat's wife and daughter. The latter ran out of the house half-distracted, and besought Cormac Rogan to hasten to her father's assistance.

"And poor Peter," she exclaimed. "Oh, I see how it will be. They'll be taken, and once that villain, Mackenzie, gets his toils around them!" and the poor girl ran up an down half-frantically, shouting, "Oh, my father, my poor father!"

"Sis-sis-send Mackenzie after Cic-cic-cic-Cameron, by the bokey," shouted Mike, as he witnessed the girl's sufferings.

"Come on, lads," shouted Cormac, after he had arranged his men.

Naturally enough, Cormac took the road on which he expected to meet Mackenzie and his prisoners; but after travelling a good distance he found, to his great grief, that he had missed them. Undecided as to what he should now do, Cormac felt woefully perplexed. How happy he felt only a few hours ago, and now he was perfectly miserable. His heart yearned for action against the enemies of his country, and all these were enemies, bitter enemies of his creed, although there were many brave and noble hearts engaged in the same movement with himself who differed from him in religious opinion. After a short consultation with a few of the leading spirits that surrounded him, Cormac ventured on the bold expedient of turning, and by another route enter Antrim. For this purpose he divided his men into parties of two and three, and these he sent in different directions, but in such a manner to be within easy distance of each other.

The plan succeeded, for immediately on entering the town, Cormac perceived Mackenzie and his prisoners entering by a narrow way adjoining Shane's Castle demesne. A sharp whistle collected his men, and Mackenzie immediately found himself surrounded by Cormac's party. To show fight was the thing farthest from Mackenzie or his men, for their chances of victory were not only doubtful, but their lives likely to be imperilled.

As Cormac approached, Mackenzie addressed him:—

"In open violation of the laws of the country, I find that you, sir, and your followers, are about to forbid my passage with these prisoners."

"In open violation of the laws of the country!" replied Cormac, with a bitter sneer.—"It is you, sir, and your cowardly minions, who violate and outrage every law."

Here Roddy Flynn cut a caper on the road,

which very much resembled an inclination to dance a jig.

"Come here, my fine runaway," he said, grasping Fleming by the arm. "Never you run away again, till you pay your lodging money, you thief that you are! When my wife gets hold of you, she will—"

"Hold," said Cormac, after a short parly with John Mullan and Peter Dolan. "Captain Mackenzie," he added, "consider yourself, and these men who accompany you, my prisoners. You will require to retrace your steps for some distance; on your acquiescence to my orders depends your own and the lives of others."

Mackenzie appeared irresolute; observing which, Pat Dolan pointed the way, desiring the men to move forward. Fleming had the hue of despair in face, and his good looks were not restored by the banter of Roddy Flynn. On their backward route, Cormac was joined by about fifty men, so that the capture of Mackenzie assumed the character of a demonstration.

The people turned out of their houses, and gave vent to their feelings in loud cheers.—"Hang every man of them!" was shouted from many a lusty throat.

Cormac had taken the precaution to proceed with his prisoners through by-roads and places not often traversed by the general public. He had arranged with Mullan and Dolan to take them on towards the smiddy. There was an old house in the vicinity, and in that house Cormac determined the prisoners should be kept, and disposed of according to orders from headquarters. He knew, right well, that the report would soon spread that Mackenzie had been arrested, and therefore it became necessary to send intelligence of the event as quickly as possible to Belfast.

Arrived at the place, Cormac informed Mackenzie that he should remain in the place selected for their detention. A proper guard would be placed over the house, and the penalty of the slightest attempt at escape, would, on discovery, be immediately followed by death to the party so attempting.

Mackenzie was silent and morose. After his capture he spoke very little, either to his captors or to his own men.

"This is an important piece of work," said Cormac to John, after their prisoners had been properly attended to.

"There cannot be a doubt of it," replied Mullan; "but we may make up our minds for hot work, immediately after it is discovered."

"I know it well," replied Cormac, thoughtfully. "We must have advice before to-morrow morning. How we are to proceed; shall I go myself, or send you and Pat?"

"Go yourself, by all means, and proceed alone," answered Mullan.

Pat was advised with in the matter, and seconded John's proposal.

Shortly afterwards, Cormac proceeded on his mission. It was late when he arrived in Belfast, and, in consequence, required to act with exceeding caution.

Meetings were then being held every night in different parts of the town, and especially in the suburbs. These meetings seldom consisted of more than five or six persons, and were not unfrequently held in utter darkness.

Cormac proceeded to a certain rendezvous, where he expected to find either McCracken or Milliken. After some difficulty, he obtained permission to enter, and was not a little surprised to find himself surrounded by others whose number he did not know, and whose faces he could not see. He gave the password correctly, and, on that account, was admitted. Finally, he began to think that he had fallen into some trap, when, a light being procured, he found himself among a party of seven men, sitting round a small table, in the basement story of an old house.

For some minutes Cormac was undecided how to proceed. At last, he determined to take his leave, but immediately on attempting to do so, was peremptorily ordered, by what appeared to be the chairman of the company, to be seated, and make known his business.

This he declined to do, merely stating that he came there in expectation of seeing a certain gentleman, and not finding him, he did not care to remain.

The company looked into each other's faces with a sort of undecided look. Some of them glancing furtively at Cormac, made him feel anything but easy in his position.

"We must learn the exact nature of your business here," said one of the party to Cormac, in a tone of voice not very assuring.

"The exact nature of my business you shall not learn," replied Cormac, most emphatically.

"I have already told you," he continued, "that I came here expecting to see a gentleman whom I knew, and not finding him here, I wish to leave."

"What's his name, young man?" inquired one of the party, rather mildly.

"Mr. Israel Milliken," answered Cormac.

"Is your business with Mr. Milliken of such a nature that it cannot be postponed until to-morrow; or, have you any objection to make it known, and it will be conveyed to him?"

"It cannot be postponed; and I will not make it known till I see him," said Cormac.