



CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

TURLOGH O'BRIEN; OR, THE FORTUNES OF AN IRISH SOLDIER. CHAPTER III.—THE ROAD TO GLINDARRAGH—THE THREE HORSEMEN WHO TRAVELED IT.

It was on the evening already referred to that a cavalcade, consisting of three horsemen, might have been seen slowly approaching the steep old bridge of Glindarragh. Foremost and alone rode a young gentleman, apparently somewhere about six-and-twenty years of age, dressed in a riding suit of rich material, which was cut, moreover, in the extreme of the then prevailing fashion; a low-crowned hat, whose broad leaf was slightly cocked in front, overshadowed his handsome but somewhat sallow features, which were not unbecomingly relieved by the sable curls of his flowing peruke. The richness of the lace, which fluttered in the loose ends of his short neck-cloth, as well as in ruffles, together with the expensive elegance of his whole attire, bespoke him a gallant, profuse in his habits and courtly in his tastes; while the delicacy and hauteur of his features, and a certain negligent and graceful ease with which he sat his horse, betokened one of gentle birth and high breeding; there was, moreover, in the bearing of this gentleman a kind of bold, good-humored frankness, which indicated one who has seen the world, and knows how to make the most of it, go where he may, upon the shortest possible notice.

Behind him rode, at a little distance, his valet, a small, withered, bilious Englishman, bestriding a singularly tall and raw-boned steed, and looking with a soured expression and a "careless desolation" from object to object, as he mentally and not unfrequently audibly contrasted the uninviting prospect before him with the substantial comforts which everywhere greeted the eye of the traveller in his own happier land.

Beside him, and carrying behind his saddle a huge leathern trunk, containing so much of his master's wardrobe as he brought with him for present use, rode Tim Dwyer, an appendage picked up at a Dublin inn, rather for his supposed useful than for his decorative attributes, and whose office it was to have an eye after everything, and see that nothing went wrong—an office which, though apparently one of considerable anxiety and trouble, yet seemed to cost that individual marvellously little of either. His tastes ran strongly in the direction of blarney, quiet quizzing, and ardent spirits. His secret philosophy pointed to "number one" as decidedly the most important object in nature, and his leading principle was embodied in an injunction to take the world easy. Tim Dwyer's outward man was almost as lean and little as that of his companion; but, unlike him, his face wore a genial flush, which improved into a purple as it mounted to the sharp extremity of his nose; his eyes were small grey ones and seldom more than half open; and his mouth, which was remarkably wide, was singularly flexible at the corners, which were generally slightly drawn downward when the rest of his face appeared to be laughing—a peculiarity which gave habitually to his own countenance a sort of humbugging expression, strongly indicative of his propensities. When we add that this person presented, in his threadbare and slovenly attire, a marked contrast to the equipments of his natty companion, and that his years appeared to number some four or five-and-forty, we have said all that we have been able to collect respecting his external peculiarities.

As the young gentleman who headed this cavalcade rode slowly forward—for one of his horse's shoes was loose—his ruminations at length embodied themselves in a soliloquy like this:—

"And so, like a dutiful son, here I am, beset with bogs and mountains, wild geese and savages, and about to play the amorous Romeo at the feet of a rustic hoyden, whom I never yet beheld, in this old mildewed castle of Glin—Glindarragh, I think they call it—and if the lady but please to pity my amorous distress, forthwith I must be married! Percy Neville, Percy Neville, was ever filial piety like thine. Yet needs must, they say when the devil drives. A younger son, without provision, can't defend himself, lies at the mercy of his parents, and is the natural prey and sport of paternal atrocity. Here have I been for full twelve months marooned upon this desolate island; and when I expected a letter of recall, and looked day by day for my deliverance, lo! there comes a new paternal despatch—I'm ordered to the wilds of Munster, to be murdered or married, as the case may be. Oh, Percy Neville, great is thy filial obedience, and thy odds my life, thou hast had thy reward, too;—for thy days have been wondrous long in this land."

The young man concluded with a discontented shrug; and speedily recovering his constitutional gaiety, he hummed a madrigal, as his eyes swept over the broad and wooded expanse which spread before him to the very feet of the Slieve-phelim hills.

"Well," said he, as if the expansive view and the freshening breeze had given a new impulse to his spirits, "who knows but the girl may turn out, after all, to be just what I've pictured to myself a thousand times, as the very creature most formed to delight and dazzle mankind; a Chloe or a Phillis—an Arcadian beauty, with the charms of Venus, and the simplicity of Flora. I'm tired of your fine ladies, with their essences, and paint, and buckram, their easy airs and their easy virtue: and, egad, if I could meet with such a damsel as I describe, methinks I could, with a good grace and heart's content, take her to wife, and help to tend her cabbages and turkeys, without a wandering wish or a roving thought to tempt me back into the artificial world again."

Meanwhile the two squires, to borrow the language of knight errantry, interchanged pleasant and profitable discourse, as they followed their master side by side.

"The more I see of it, the worse I like it," observed Gick Goslin, glancing superciliously around him; "it's all bogs and starvation."

"Bedad, it's throe for you," responded Tim; "bogs an' starvation, sure enough."

"Starvation and stink, sir," continued the foreigner, with increasing asperity. "Eugh! I wonder the very pigs don't cut and run; now, just you look round at that 'er prospect, will you?"

Tim looked round accordingly, with the good-humored compliance of a nurse "humoring" a spoiled child; and not knowing exactly what was expected from him in the way of remark, remained silent.

"You call that the country, I believe?" resumed the valet with bitter disdain; "the country, eh?—the country is the word; you'll correct me if I'm wrong?"

"The country we call it, be the hokey, throe for you," responded Tim with a contrite air; "but how in the world id the likes of us know the differ, Mistor Goslin, sir—oh murder, but ignorance is a poor thing."

"The country! Yes; ha, ha, the country!" continued Mr. Goslin, scornfully; "why not?—But do you know not I call it, my honest feller? for if you don't, I'll tell you."

"Why then, I'm ashamed to say I do not," replied Tim.

"I call it," he continued with extreme severity, "a low, dirty, vulgar, howling desert, and that's not I call it, my fine feller, do you mind me?"

"An' that's just what it is to the life, all over," chimed in Tim, "a low, dirty—phiew, it fairly goes beyant me, Mr. Goslin, there's no telling what it is—it bangs all the powers iv discourse, an' laves me that I'm fairly frustrated for the want iv words."

"And then the people—the Irishers," resumed Mr. Goslin, turning up his eyes and his hands, as well as his bold of the bridle would allow him; "did any inhuman being ever look at such a nest of land savages? for I'm consumed if ever I did."

"Throe for you—what else are we but savages, every mother's skin iv us?" rejoined his companion.

"And then, in the matter of getlemanlike amusements—why rat me, if the beighted pagans at the inn last night understood me, we'en I asked if herer they ad a bear-fight in the town; 'and then their cooking—faugh! it's enough to make a gentleman swear against whittles."

"Whisht!" said Tim Dwyer, prolonging the ejaculation, while he nudged his companion once or twice, and stole a furtive glance all round.

"Why, wot's the matter now?" inquired the valet, rather uneasily, and following the cautious glance of his comrade. "Nothing wrong—eh?"

"Whisht—nothin' at all, but myself that was going to tell you something," replied Tim Dwyer, speaking still in a whisper, and looking cautiously from side to side, "only I was afeared some iv the boys might hear me, do you mind, an' if they did, it might lead to murder."

He stooped as he uttered the last emphatic word in a grim whisper in the ear of his companion, and followed it by a portentous wink.

With a good deal of excitement, Mr. Goslin exclaimed— "I say, Tim Dwyer, my good feller, wot the devil are you at—speak out, man—can't you?" "Are you mentionin' their cookery," observed Tim.

devil's savages, and flogs the blackmoors—devil a doubt iv it!"

"Come, come, my good man, speak out, can't you?" urged Goslin, pettishly.

"Speak out! Bedad I won't, for how 'id I know who'd be listenin'?" retorted Tim. "But the long an' the short iv it's just this, we're rale tearin', devourin' savages—devourin', do ye mind, bastes iv prey, Mistor Goslin; savages by nature, an' papists by religion, an' as hungry as vultures, do ye mind."

"Why, you don't mean for to say as 'ow you'd eat inhuman flesh?" ejaculated the Englishman, with a slight change of color, and eyeing his companion with horrible curiosity.

"Not in Dublin, iv coorse," replied Tim Dwyer.

"Nor anywhere else neither, I should say—eh?" continued the valet, with increasing consternation.

"Whis—sht!" ejaculated Tim, putting his finger to his nose mysteriously; "the Munstermen has their odities, an' no wonder; it's a mighty poor place entirely, an' provisions is so murtherin' scarce; it's hard to deny the crathurs when they're cryin' for a bit; an' necessity's the mother iv invention."

"Why, strike me flat, do you mesn for to go for to say—" exclaimed the Londoner, much excited.

"I main for to say this much," interrupted Tim Dwyer, "that if I was so befrinded by heaven as to be an Englishman—do you mind me?—an' so illuminated as to be a Protestant—do you see?—an' if I found myself in a strange part iv Munster, do you consave, where I wouldn't be missed if anything was to happen me, why I'd special good care to keep myself onkinminly quiet, an' not to be lookin' in before male times especially, into the cabins iv the poor, starvin' crathurs, that's fond, to a fault, iv fresh mate and black puddins—do you understand me?"

The cockney turned very pale, and breathed hard, as, with lips compressed, and a sidelong glance of horrible significance, he exchanged a ghastly wink with his companion.

"Don't tell, for the life iv you, it was I told you. Mind, honor bright, isn't it?" urged Tim Dwyer, in a low and earnest whisper.

"Word and honor, hand and glove," replied the valet, with chivalric emphasis, and then sank into profound and moody silence, which he doggedly maintained until the three horsemen rode leisurely under the echoing archway of Glindarragh Castle.

CHAPTER IV.—THE PROPHETIC SONG—AND HOW THE CALICOON READ THE OMEN OF TURLOGH O'BRIEN.

The castle of Glindarragh occupied the bank of a broad and devious mountain river, and presented a striking and somewhat sombre coup d'œil. The buildings of which it was composed formed a quadrangle of considerable dimensions and, though varying in height, were all alike structures of an ancient date, and of exceeding solidity and strength. Its eastern side overhung the stream, from whose waters its walls arose in grey and sombre masses; and in that which looked toward the north, under a lofty arch, lay the chief entrance to the castle; in the olden time guarded by a portcullis and drawbridge, but now protected solely by an old and ponderous gate of oak, studded with huge iron nails, with beads as large as penny pieces. The fosse was dry, and choked with bushes, and at the entrance had been raised to the level of the road by which the building was approached, so that as a fortress or post of military defence, the structure had manifestly been long disused. From the western side sloped gently downward, as if in further evidence of the peaceful character and pursuits of its present owners, a closely hedged flower-garden, varied with long grass terraces, and many trim living walls and arbors of close dark yew, exhibiting the exactest care in its culture, and in the richness and pattern of a fantastic carpet. To this rich and formal flower-garden, a smaller gate or sally-port in the castle wall gave admission; the remaining side, which faced toward the south, contained those buildings which supplied, though upon an unwieldy scale, and in a sufficiently quaint and clumsy fashion, the purposes of a modern dwelling-house. At the moment when the three mounted travellers entered the great gate, which stood hospitably open to receive them, and gazed curiously around upon the antique buildings, in whose shadows they stood, two very different figures were seated within the walls of the old castle.

The chamber which they occupied was a low room of moderate dimensions; the floor was covered with matting, and the ceiling was of clumsily-joined, time-blackened oak; gilded leather hung on the walls, and a lofty mantel-piece, supported by two spiral stone pillars, masked with its projection the broad arch of the hearth, in which a pile of turf and wood was burning. An old picture of a gentleman, in the costume of Charles the First, much in need of cleaning,

and which had suffered, whether accidentally or of malice prepenze, a very ugly scar across the lower part of the visage, hung at the far end of the room in a dingy frame, and very imperfectly lighted.

The furniture of the chamber presented nothing remarkable, except that it was a little behind the fashion of the day, and of an unpretending and somewhat threadbare aspect, but still comfortable, and with a sort of snug air of house-keeping about it, which more than made amends for its want of elegance. A narrow bed occupied a recess in the wall, and a single window, commanding a view of the winding river, and a vast and ancient orchard, and beyond them of a broad plain, bounded by undulating hills, with the mighty Galties in the dim distance, admitted the light.

In a massive arm chair, singularly disproportioned to the dimensions of its occupant, was seated a little old woman, dressed in a sort of loose red wrapper, with short sleeves showing her shrivelled yellow arms above the elbows, and with a colored handkerchief brought over her head and knotted under her chin; a comical mixture of good nature, gratification, and self-importance, was impressed upon her withered features, round which, escaping from beneath the folds of the kerchief which bound her head, there wanted a few locks of grizzled red hair.

Seated near her feet, upon a low stool, with the guitar on which she had, but the moment before, been accompanying her sweet and silvery voice, lying carelessly in her lap beneath her snow white arm, her other hand being laid upon the old woman's knee, while with a beautiful smile, half of fun and half of fondness, she looked up into her nurse's face, was the fairest girl that ever yet combined the matchless graces of perfect form of feature with the lovelier charms of expression ever varying, ever beautiful—the subtle, heart-stirring magic of true loveliness—the witchery, that, sweetly, sadly, passionately beguiles the senses, and steals away the heart of the rapt gazer even while he looks.

"God bless you, my mavourneen," said the old woman; "God keep you my darlin' with your purty lace and your purty songs; but of all the tunes you have, the one you sung the last, though it's the best maybe, I like it the least."

"And why, nurse?" asked the girl with a smile. "Is it because the tune is a mournful one?"

"It is not that alone, alanna," replied the old woman, with a shake of the head, "though it's lonesome enough, God knows, it laves me."

"What is it then?" insisted the young lady merrily. "Why does old nurse scorn my poor music? I know no sweeter tune than that; it needs must be you think I spoil it in the singing?"

"Spoil it! my darlin'—spoil it! acushla," ejaculated the old nurse. "No, no, it's only too sweet and beautiful you sing it, my darlin'; if you knew but the mainin' iv the tune—an' it's little I ever thought I'd bear one iv your name singing it, my purty child—aiah! but it's a queer way things comes round, and it's many's the day since that song was heard inside these old walls before; not since bloody Cromwell's wars: I was but a slip of a colleen then myself—aiah wisha! but time runs on, flows for ever, as constant as the river there, and no one noticin' it all along; and it's many's the acorn is grown into an oak, and many's the strong man is under the grass, and many's the purty girl is turned into a wrinkled old calicoon like myself, since then days, avourneen!"

"Well, nurse, but the tune," urged the young lady; "what harm is in the tune?"

"Harm, darlin'—why, then, it's little harm, or may be less good there's in it," continued the old woman, oracularly; "but who in the wide world larned it to you, my own purty colleen?"

"That, nurse, is more than I myself can tell," rejoined the girl, whose curiosity was a little piqued at the air of mingled mystery and anxiety with which the old crone dwelt upon the song; "I heard a girl sing it, as she went through the woods on the other side of the river, and so sweetly, that I listened until her wild notes were lost in the distance; and thus it was I learned the song, first one cadence, then another, and so on until the whole was learned; and for the words I sing with it, they are Master Shakespeare's. The girl from whom I caught the air was singing in Irish."

"I'd give a gold piece I had my thumb on her windpope," replied the beldame, fiercely, with a sudden and savage ferocity almost appalling. "I'd have lightened her whistle for her the robber; for it's an' old sayin' I have often heard, 'a crowing hen was never lucky.'"

"Tell me, nurse—do, dear nurse, tell me what is there in the song to move you thus?" asked the lady, at the same time drawing her stool closer to the old woman's feet, and coaxingly looking up into her face.

"It's a song, darlin'," answered the nurse, "that was made in the old times, by the O'Briens; before they lost this castle an' all the

lands, the last time in Cromwell's wars, as I often told you; it was med near a hundred years ago, when the Willoughbys first got the court—the time the monks was turned out of Glindarragh abbey, as I often heard my grandmother tellin'—God rest her—an' it's all full iv promises how the O'Briens is to come back, and to hold the castle and the lands again, in spite of the world; and it's well I can think iv the time before your grandfather's father—the saints receive him—its well I remember him, though I was no more nor a slip iv a girl, an' he an' old man—was killed in the troubles on the bridge there below, ripped up and hacked to pieces with their skeins, like an' old horse they'd be tearing up in pieces for the dogs, and tumbled over the battlements, that you would not know him from a big sack of blood, if it wasn't for the nice long grey hair he wore—God rest him—into the river, that was rollin' and foam'n' bank high, and roarin' like a mill sluice under every arch that blessed day. It's well I can remember how we used to hear them in the long night before that, singin' the same song in the wood opposite the castle; and, throe enough, the O'Briens did get it, an' had it to themselves, as I told you, for eight long years, until Cromwell's war come, and your grandfather—God rest him—got it back; an' Cromwell drew them all out of the country, and left them not a sod, not a stick, nor a stone belonging to them; an' they were great men of courage in Spain—generals and the likes, as was reported here—an' was always promis'n' how they'd come home some day, and win back the old castle, and the twelve townlands, and the three of the estates and the wood of Glindarragh, an' all the rest; and latterly there was talks of Thurlough Dhuiv—a young boy of the O'Briens—as it was reported here, the greatest and the wickedest of them all, a terrible man of war and blood; an' it's said moreover—the Lord guard and save us all—that he swore himself, on the altar, before the blessed and holy Pope, as I'm told, in furria parts, never to rest until he had revenge them that took the lands and the blood of his family."

"That is Turlogh Dhuiv, whose name used to frighten me when I was a child," said the young girl. "Do you remember, nurse, how you used to say, 'Don't go there, or Turlogh Dhuiv will have you, and so on! But, in truth, I do believe from all I have learned, that he is a bad and violent man—nay, if report speak truth, a very monster of cruelty. My father heard but a weak since that he is coming over to this country, and moreover, to have a command in the king's army."

"May God forbid, my darling child! God, in His mercy, an' all the saints, forbid!" cried the old woman, while her withered cheeks turned pale with horror, and in the energy of her terror she started up from her seat, and stood shaking and wan as the guilty resurrection of the old woman of Berkeley.

"Why, dear nurse—why are you thus appalled?" said the young lady, herself well nigh affrighted at the unadvised terror of the old woman.

"Ah, my child, I'm afeard the lands and castles are lost—lost to you and yours for ever, darlin'—an' what worse, I know not, mavourneen. The old prophecy is coming out: he has the mark on his forehead, they all say that; and now he's comin' to this country. Oh, warristru! warristru!"

"Dear nurse," said the young lady, half afraid that agitation had unsettled the old woman's wits, "what does all this mean?"

"Mean, darling, mean!" echoed the agitated woman; "it's too soon, I'm afeard, you'll know the meaning of it all, acushla. Hasn't he the mark: an' isn't he comin' to the country—may be in it this blessed minute—the Lord be merciful to us all; an' then it's a little thing id bring him to Glindarragh-bridge. Oh, voh, voh, but it's myself that has the sore heart this day."

"Dear nurse, tell me what so much affects you in all this?" said the beautiful girl, earnestly.

"Listen to me, mavourneen—listen to me, an' then," replied the nurse while she shook her head raised her trembling hand, "it's an' old prophecy that was made long ago; an' they all knew when Cormack got the castle, in the troubles, that he'd lose it again, for he had not the marks in the prophecy. It was made in Irish when first they lost the lands, in the old queen's time, a hundred years ago, an' this is the way it runs."

The crone paused as she conned over the fatal words; her white lips moving, and her shrivelled hand and arm uplifted, while she covered over the lovely girl in the earnest effort to recall the syllables of the mystic rhyme, looking the very impersonation of one of those benevolent but hideous fairies who, in nursery tales, delight to attend at royal christenings, and mutter over the high born heroine of the story those spells of auspicious potency which guard and save her through all the enchanted dangers through which she is to pass.