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THE HOUSE OF LISBLOOM

A LEGEND OF Sarsfield.

From legends of the Wars in Ireland, by Robert Dwyer Joyce, M.D.

CHAPTER III.—(Continued.)

"You will excuse me, young sir," returned Sarsfield courteously, "but methinks the command more befits you at the present, seeing that you are accustomed to the evolutions of these brave lads. Therefore I will serve as a volunteer under your orders to-day, and hope at the same time to do my devoir, like a man, with the rest."

"Well, my lord, I suppose it must be so," said Edmond of the Hill; "but, as I must thus command the whole, O'Hogan here will lead the horse, seeing that his own have not come in yet. When they do, Tibbot knows how to fall on with them like a man." To this O'Hogan assented. "My uncle here will keep by your side, my lord," continued the young Rapparee leader; "and, if he can get one good sword-lash at the crown of Gideon Grimes, why, in God's name! let him have that comfort before he dies. We must now away." His words of command rang along the line, and in a few moments the whole body was marching at a steady pace through the valley that led towards the foot of the far-off range of mountains.

After putting about a dozen miles between themselves and Glenurra, they arrived upon the verge of a bosky moorland, through which the Mulkern wound northward in many a shining sinuosity, overshadowed here and there by clumps of venerable ash-trees, that gave a peculiarly sylvan and picturesque aspect to its low, swampy shores. Out upon the other verge of this broad moorland the high peak of Comalte, the brawny giant that rears its shaggy head to the heavens in the van of the solitary range of Sliav Bloom, sent forward its rugged spurs, bedecked with many a cump of green holly or mountain ash, or shining all over with the blooms of the purple heather; and between these spurs, or hillocks, many a brawling rivulet shot down with its ever-murmuring song, and with its tiny waves glistening like silver in the golden sun of that pleasant autumn morning. From the spot on which they now halted, a broad bridle-path led through the centre of the moorland, and over a bend of the Mulkern by a two-arched bridge, so narrow that three horsemen could scarcely ride abreast over its rugged causeway. This latter was the Bridge of Tern, beside which poor Hugh of Glenurra had fallen on the previous day beneath the carbine of Black Gideon Grimes.

"Are your foragers from Lisbloom to cross this bridge?" asked Sarsfield, as his eye roved over and around the rude and ancient structure with a scrutinizing and keen glance.

"It is the only pass they have to the plain southward," answered Edmond of the Hill; "and we mean to wait for their coming in the wood at this side of it."

"I must certainly commend your judgment in the choice of a position," returned Sarsfield; "for the little plain between the wood and the bridge is a good spot for our horsemen to charge them when they are half over; and see, by my good faith as a soldier! at the very bridge the river takes a bend towards us, where our infantry can rake their flanks as they cross."

Again the little army moved on, and took up its position in the following manner: The horsemen, after forming in line in the wood in front of the river, dismounted, and concealed themselves under the trees, ready to mount again and charge at the word of their commander; while those of the infantry that carried muskets crouched down under shelter of the copes that clad the banks on each of the hither sides. The pikemen stood in a body under cover of the wood, on the flank of the horsemen; and thus they all awaited, with stern faces and vengeful hearts, the coming of their foe.

They had not long to wait. Before half an hour was over, they beheld the glint of weapons and armor in a winding valley that led down from the pass of Lisbloom; and at length the main part of the garrison of that important stronghold emerged upon the far verge of the moorland, and took its way over the bridle-path that led to the bridge of Tern.

CHAPTER IV.—CONTAINING, ALONG WITH THE END OF THE STORY, THE BATTLE AT THE BRIDGE OF TERN; THE DEATH OF GIDEON GRIMES, AND RECOVERY OF ELLIE CONNELL; WITH THE TAKING OF THE HOUSE OF LISBLOOM BY THE RAPPAREES.

"Were it not for my uncle, who insists upon avenging himself upon the very spot where Hugh fell, I would let them pass the bridge," whispered Edmond of the Hill to Sarsfield, as he saw the bright accoutrements of the enemy flashing in the sun; "I would let them pass, and then attack the House of Lisbloom in their absence."

"It would be the wisest course," answered

Sarsfield; "but, now that we will soon have them face to face, we must do as best we may. And a tough morning's work we have before us," he continued, peering warily out between the trees; "for, by Our Lady! they outnumber us considerably. See! our force only equals that of theirs in uniform. But look at that dark body of men in the centre, with the tall, lank horseman at its head. Who may that be?"

"It is Gideon Grimes, my lord," answered Owen of Glenurra, in a deep voice like the growl of a crouching lion.

"It is Black Gideon himself," said Edmond of the Hill. "O'Hogan," continued he in a fierce whisper, "pass the word to have the men lie close till they get the signal to mount and charge. I will blow the charge on my whistle when the time comes. And he held out a beautifully-chased silver whistle, that hung by a small chain from a ring in his belt."

O'Hogan crept in front of the line, executed the order of the young commander, and then returned.

"Ha!" exclaimed he, on looking forward again, "here comes their vanguard clattering over the bridge at last. I hope our men under the copes yonder will not be tempted to fire on them as they pass."

"My two foster-brothers, Theige Keal and Phadrig Garv, will see to that," answered Emain na Cnuic. "They command, one above and the other below the bridge, with strict orders not to pull a trigger till they hear my whistle."

The main body of the enemy was at last somewhat more than half over the bridge, the men bandying joke and jibe at the timidity of the poor Rapparees, whom they expected to find and cut to pieces on the spot; yet whose apparent absence not a little relieved their minds, however. The half-dozen men of the vanguard seemed in an unusually hilarious humor; for, as they leisurely approached the wood, they chaunted at the top of their bent the chorus of a delectable and popular Williamite ballad of the day, the verses of which were intoned in a rattling, jolly, and stentorian voice by the fat Yorkshire corporal who led them:—

"Och, be my sowl! but we've got de Talbott,

Lillabulero bull-na la!

And our skeans we'll make good at de Englishman's throat,

Lillabulero bullena la!"

"Yerra, then, be my sowl! if you were the father o' lies himself, but that's thrue for you anyhow, you red-nosed robber!" muttered Cus Russid to himself from a thicket about sixty yards in front of the corporal. "Hi, hi! I could split my sides wid laughin' at the way we'll carry out yer song, an' slit your wind-pipes, afore an hour is over."

"Ah!" sighed Sarsfield, as he too listened, "had both the subjects of that ballad, King James and Talbot, never set foot in Ireland, we would have managed our campaign to some purpose."

"It is but too true, my lord," whispered O'Hogan in return. "Had you been allowed by the king to charge with your Lucan horse at the Boyne, that disastrous day might have ended differently."

"Yes; and all subsequent affairs as a consequence," said Sarsfield.

Still the song went on, the chorus of each verse being now taken up by many of the men filing over the bridge:—

"Dere was an ould prophecy found in a bog,

Lillabulero bullena la!

Dat Ireland should be ruled by an ass and a dog;

Lillabulero bullena la!

And now dis ould prophecy is come to pass,

Lillabulero bullena la!

For Talbott's de dog and James is de—"

"Ass," he would have said; but at that moment the shrill note from the whistle of Edmond of the Hill rang over the moorland, and at the self-same instant also the half-pike of Cus Russid came whizzing from the thicket; and, as the unfortunate corporal was in the act of opening his capacious mouth to pronounce with thundering effect this last word of the verse, the weapon entered between his teeth, literally transpiercing his neck. With a horrible groan he fell from his frightened horse upon the stony bridle-way.

The first voice that broke the terrible pause that succeeded was that of Cus Russid, as he darted recklessly out from the thicket, and tore the sword from the hand of the dying corporal.

"Hi, hi, hi!" he laughed, whirling the flashing weapon around his head—"ha, ha! Dhar Vurrhia! but you're a man in earnest, Cus, to draw the first blood on a day like this."

The next was that of Phadrig Garv, or Patrick the Rough, the foster-brother of Edmond of the Hill. Phadrig was a man of nearly seven good feet in height, and even disproportionately stout and brawny into the bargain. His tremendous voice rang over the moorland like that of a mountain bull, as he ordered his men to fire on the exposed flank of the enemy.

The third was that of Edmond of the Hill himself, as he gave the word for the horsemen to mount and charge and the pikemen to rush out from their ambush and fall on. Then

came the shouts of the English captains, as they ordered their men to deploy into line, and stand the shock of the vengeful Rapparees.

For a short time the enemy seemed to waver as they beheld the well-arranged lines of Irish horse and pikemen emerge from the wood, and heard their terrible battle-cry ringing over the sombre moor. But it was only for a moment; for, just as they commenced to turn their beards over their shoulders, as the Spanish saying goes, and look behind, Black Gideon Grimes and his compeers, with their men, came steadily forward upon their right in a well-formed line, the appearance of which had the effect of re-assuring the English troopers. But a continuous line all along their front, they got no time to form; for in an instant, with a ringing cheer that rose high over the rattle of musketry and the clash of swords, the Rapparees were upon them, with a shock like a peal of crashing thunder. Then commenced one of those struggles, sharp, deadly, and decisive, that always ensue when the antagonists on both sides are men of strength and mettle.

The English, both horse and foot, were good and steady soldiers; and their auxiliaries, the undertakers, were not a whit behind them in valor. These men, descended from the veteran soldiers of Cromwell's armies, still nourished in their bosoms the fatalism of their Roundhead fathers; and believing that the hour of their death was predetermined from that of their birth, and consequently that none could die then and there unless their inexorable fate-willed it, inheriting also a mad contempt for their Irish opponents and a hatred of the latter amounting to frenzy, they now stood their ground, and met the gallant charge of the Rapparees with a coolness and spirit worthy of a better cause. But, notwithstanding all this, the enemy began gradually falling back, till their whole line, with both flanks drawn in, appeared, with the gaps made here and there in it, like a torn *to de point*, or half-moon, in front of the bridge. Round the outside of this grim semicircle, the Rapparees, both footmen and horsemen, were now raging like so many demons.

At length the whole line suddenly gave way, and, horse and foot, mingled pell-mell, endeavored to make their escape over the bridge, the approach to which was soon strewn with their corpses; for the victorious Rapparees, with vengeful weapons and stout arms, pushed them close behind, cutting them mercilessly down as they fled.

"Blood for blood!" roared Phadrig Garv, as he rushed sword in hand against the confused throng.

"Remember Hugh of Glenurra!" shouted Edmond of the Hill, as he clove a dragoon's skull, through morion and all, to the very chin.

"Give them a touch of Limerick breach, my brave lads," exclaimed Sarsfield, rattling up the causeway and overturning everything in his way.

"Yes, and a taste of Ballineety," laughed O'Hogan, as he slashed the bridle-hand from the arm of one of Black Gideon's comrades.

"Vengeance, vengeance for my son!" yelled old Owen of Glenurra, as he, too, went cutting right and left into the fierce *mobs*. "Vengeance for my son! Glenurra! Glenurra, for ever! and down with the Pagan Roundhead dogs!" and the cry was caught up and echoed long and loud by his wild Rapparee followers, as they now swept their enemies, like chaff, over the gory araway of the bridge.

The English at length succeeded in getting over the bridge; and the Irish were crowding the slippery causeway in order to pursue them at the opposite side, when an unexpected messenger stopped them in their mid career. This was nothing less than a heavy iron round shot from the large brass cannon so much admired by Cus Russid a couple of days before. The enemy had concealed it as they marched across the moorland, expecting to meet the Rapparees openly at the bridge; and now, after escaping over the archway, they suddenly divided right and left, thus leaving a space through which the round shot came ricocheting along the thick throng of the advancing Irish. The delay occasioned by this unexpected visitor gave time to the enemy to form their broken ranks once more at the other side of the bridge.

Both sides were now upon their guard; and the battle dwindled down to an occasional shot from the cannon, and a rattle of musketry now and then from the skirmishers, who crept out on either shore of the Mulkern. It would probably have continued at this ebb until night separated the belligerents, were it not for a wild freak of Phadrig Garv, whose warlike spirit would not allow him to remain in inactivity so long, especially with his blood up, and the enemy almost within reach of his long arm. Mounted on a trooper's horse he had taken in the beginning of the fray, he now rode over the bridge to the opposite side; and there, reining in his steed, politely invited the best man amongst the English troopers to come forth and meet him in single combat:—

"For," said he in his imperfect English, and in a voice that could be heard distinctly at the other side of the moor, "fwhile our blood is hot, it is a morthal pity an' a burnin' shame to let it cool; an' hur own self will fight the

best *Saidhera Deegy* (Red soldier) amongst ye for a silver skilling or a *dhroch* of *Isgeral* (A shilling or a drink of whiskey).

The stake he proposed for his tremendous game of hazard was so low and reasonable that the simple-minded Phadrig expected to have his proposition accepted immediately and on the spot. A long consultation followed, however, amongst the English, during which he several times reiterated his cartel. At last a trooper, somewhat like Phadrig in stature, rode forth from the ranks of the enemy, and accepted his challenge. To it they went, stoutly and warily, encouraged by shouts from each side,—each party expecting its man to come off conqueror. The result of it was, however, that the gigantic Phadrig at length wheeled his horse round and made for the bridge, with his equally gigantic antagonist a prisoner stretched before him, beyond the bow of the saddle, like a sack of corn taken to the market by a Kerryman.

Seeing this, half-a-dozen English troopers spurred forward to rescue their comrade, while, at the same time, about the same number of Rapparee horsemen rode over the bridge to support Phadrig Garv. Once more it came to sword and pistol between them; and, both sides being joined by the main part of their respective comrades and officers, a general and far more bloody fight than ever commenced at the further side of the bridge. The English, who considerably outnumbered the Rapparees, succeeded in driving the latter partly back over the archway; and here, in one of those strange alternations which sometimes occur in the common course of life, but more frequently amid the shifting scenes of battle, Sarsfield, with Edmond of the Hill and his uncle respectively on his right hand, sat his horse at the keystone of the causeway confronting one of the English captains; while, opposite his companions, with tightened reins and sword ready on the guard, rode another Williamite officer and Gideon Grimes, the eyes of the latter glaring with a look of immortal hate into the equally fierce orbs of the warlike patriarch of Glenurra.

"I have seen your face before," said the English officer, eyeing Sarsfield keenly.

"Probably," answered the latter; "and, after this renewal of our acquaintance, I hope to make your memory of me more perfect. Guard yourself, sir."

The answer was a slash from the Englishman's sabre, which would have taken Sarsfield across the forehead, had he not parried it dexterously.

"By Our Lady!" exclaimed Sarsfield, pushing forward in the press so as to crush the Englishman's horse tightly between his own charger and the worn parapet of the bridge, "but you give a warm welcome to an old acquaintance. However, here is to return it."

With that, after parrying another cut from his antagonist, he suddenly seized the latter by the bridle-hand, raised it, and plunged his sword deep under the armpit; then, as he was in the act of withdrawing his weapon, the tottering parapet of the ancient bridge gave way, and the dying captain and his horse were precipitated along with the falling mass of masonry, with a loud splash, into the sullen and blood-stained waters of the stream below.—Sarsfield's horse stumbled over one of the displaced fragments, and would probably have followed that of the ill-fated Englishman, had not the good rider who bestrode him tightened his rein, and driven the snorting animal in a flying leap over the remaining portion of the parapet in front, and down upon the boggy shore at the other side of the stream, where he would have slashed and parrying right and left in the thick and raging throng of combatants, amidst which he alighted.

Meanwhile, Edmond of the Hill and the other English officer were not idle. Both were accomplished swordsmen; and the fight between them would have lasted for a considerable time, had not a stray bullet struck the horse of the former in the chest. The wounded animal, probably receiving the bullet through its heart, stumbled and fell heavily forward upon its knees; and the English officer, stooping over his saddle-bow, was about to cleave the head of Edmond of the Hill, when O'Hogan, riding by at the moment, struck up his sword, and then literally sheared his head in two with one slash of the four-foot blade he had taken that morning from Glenurra. In an instant, Edmond of the Hill was on his feet, and, springing into the empty saddle of his late antagonist, the two Rapparee captains rattled side by side into the press in front, and left Black Gideon and old Owen O'Ryan to see it out upon the causeway.

"Ha!" exclaimed Gideon, glaring at Owen. "Remember the bloody field of Knoocknanoss, old Rapparee dog, where you and your leaders were stricken by the good swords of the Lord's chosen warriors; but where you, in your profane rage, lopped off the right hand of my father. You shall now die for that sore blow, as your Rapparee son died before you yesterday by this hand."

"Yes," answered the aged soldier, "I remember that field well, base murderer, and the cuckoldy old Roundhead drummer, your fa-

ther. See! this is the very sword I carried through that field of blood, and that slashed off your father's hand, so that he could never more twirl drumstick and beat the charge to call the damned Croopers into battle."

Without another word, the two enemies closed; and Black Gideon would probably have fared something worse than his father at the field of Knoocknanoss, had not a round shot from the cannon struck the keystone of the bridge beneath the stamping hoofs of their horses. The rickety and timeworn arch fell in at the shock; and down into the horrible chaos beneath went the two mortal foes, horses and all, the combatants around standing still for a moment at the unwanted mishap, and then falling to once more, more vengefully than ever. There was a struggle and then a lull beneath; but in a few moments Black Gideon bounded up the opposite bank, with his gory dagger in his hand, leaving the dead body of the brave old chieftain of Glenurra beneath the broken arch.

Although the principal English officers had fallen, others of approved skill and bravery had taken their places; and the battle would have gone sorely with the Irish, who were now all at the opposite side of the bridge, their right flank raked by the terrible brass cannon, were it not that at this opportune time Tibbot Burke came riding over the moorland to their aid, at the head of about fifty of the fierce horsemen belonging to O'Hagan. On they came, their green plumes of fern dancing blithely in the wind, and with a wild and vengeful war-cry fell with sword and pistol upon the flank of the enemy. A terrible rout ensued. The English infantry were now scattered and cut down; and the horse, wheeling round, swept like a scattered torrent across the moor, and away over the rough country that lay between them and the Pass of Lisbloom, the Rapparee cavalry behind them, sabring them in little groups here and there over slope and valley.

Phadrig Garv, who wished to join in the pursuit, now found himself mightily impeded by his gigantic prisoner, whom he had contrived to keep before him on the saddle through the fray. Catching the bridle of a riderless steed that stood near, he bent his large, wild eyes compassionately on his captive:—

"Hur own self!" said he, "was once a prisoner, and a good Sassenach released hur without eric or ransom. Sassenach, and he gave the hurly form of the Englishman a tremendous shake, "take this horse and flee. It'll never be said by foe or stranger that Phadrig Garv Moeklonan failed to repay a good an' generous deed done to hur own four bones in the day of trouble."

With that, he helped his foe tenderly to the ground; saw him mount and fly for his life down by the shore; and the striking his ponderous foot upon the steaming flank of his own charger, with a relieved heart and contented mind, he set off with a hilarious roar upon the track of those that fled towards Lisbloom.

One of the English gunners who had charge of the cannon was a brave fellow, and deserved a better fate. Seeing his comrades turn and flee, he limbered up the cannon in a moment, leaped upon the leading horse of the team that drew it, applied his whip, and was in the act of galloping away, when Cus Russid, who was gliding like a little demon everywhere over the field, presented a pistol, and shot him through the head. And thus Cus took upon himself the credit of capturing the cannon he so much admired.

It was now about half an hour after the commencement of the pursuit, and Cus Russid and several of his companions were congregated around the gun, debating amongst themselves how to dispose of it, when a horseman came spurring back with an order from Edmond of the Hill to take it forward to Lisbloom, in order, if necessary, to batter down the defences of that stronghold. The triumphant Cus seated himself in a moment astride upon the breech of the gun, while some of his comrades mounted the horses; and away they went, attended by a jubilant crowd of pikemen. Now, Cus Russid, as the reader was made aware on his first introduction to that lively individual, had a particular penchant for singing songs on every possible occasion. Deeming the present a more than usually favorable one for indulging his musical propensity, after kicking up his heels in the excess of his delight, and calling for attention from his noisy comrades, he rattled forth in an exceedingly lively and merry strain:—

"THE PRODESTAN' GUN."

"There are threasuros in Ireland as good as a throne
Mighty pleasant an' fine, could we make them our own;
An' this Prodestan' gun is a very fine thing
F'when it fights for ould Ireland and Shemus the King.
Yet to-day in the fray, be my sowl! 'twas no joke,
F'when this Prodestan' balls through the Rapparees broke;
But its mee' nashe the sway o' the Dutchman is ran,
For the Rapparees now own this Prodestan' gun!
Chorus, boys! F'whilst there's life there's hope,
As the worm said in the stomach o' the gamecock."

Dum erlium di tay, dum erlium ri da,
Dum erlium, fol edriam, dum erlium ri da!