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TURLOUGH O'BRIEN;

OR,

THE FORTUNES OF AN IRISH SOLDIER.

CHAPTER XII.—SHOWING THE HALL OF LISNAMES AND THE HILLS OF SLIEVE-PHELM BY NIGHT—AND NARRATING HOW NED O' THE HILLS SMOKED A PIPE OF TOBACCO AND STRUCK A BARGAIN.

On the same night, Miles Garrett was sitting in the same shabby habiliments in which we have last beheld him, buried in profound and by no means gentle thought, in the hall of his castle at Lisnamos. At a table—equally taciturn, though by no means as thoughtful—sat at a little distance, the very person who had, but a few hours before, so terrified the fair Grace Willoughby, and afterwards so roughly atoned for his discourtesy; and he was absorbed in the engrossing demolition of a mighty mountain of beef, which he washed down with copious draughts of ale, and abundant potatoes of more generous liquor. It was not until this unattractive personage had concluded his repast, and twice filled and twice emptied his goblet, that the silence of the apartment was disturbed. Pushing back the oak stool on which he sat, the brawny gentleman (for he claimed a gentle lineage) arose, heaved his huge shoulders, hitch up his breeches, and drawing the cuff of his coat across his greasy mouth, he approached his entertainer with an easy swagger.

"Well, sir, that's done; and how, I may say, I'm all as one as ready for the road," ejaculated he, planting his broad fists on the table; "so, if it's pleasing to your honor, you might as well give me the bit of paper for I'd like to be tramping at once."

"Sit down, then," said Garrett, taking pen and paper, "sit down and attend to me. You have deposed to having lost sundry head of cattle, and you now require a warrant from me, empowering you, in the king's name, to search for the same—is it not so?"

"To a micety," ejaculated the fellow, with a sly grin.

"You know your powers under this warrant—eh?" enquired the magistrate.

"Och, bloody wars? what id ail me?" answered he immediately.

"Then I shall place it in your hands, leaving it all to your discretion," continued Garrett, with marked significance, while he applied himself to draft the necessary document, which having dried it carefully at the fire, and read it through, he handed to the applicant, observing, as he did so, with emphatic deliberation—

"I have no choice in this matter, Mr. Hogan. As a justice of the peace, I have no choice—but to grant your application; and as a justice of the king's peace, I wish you success. You say you have an appointment for to-night elsewhere, touching this untoward business, so it were poor courtesy to press your farther stay;—should you desire it, however, you can have the same bed in which you last night slept."

"Well, Miles Garrett, a bouchal," cried the ruffian, exultingly, as he pinned the paper in his waistcoat pocket, "never believe me if you don't hear of quare news before a week is past and gone—and if I don't do all you want, and maybe a bit to the back of it."

"What do you mean, sir?" said Garrett, with stern abruptness, and staring full in the fellow's face, until the familiar gaze of the ruffian sank for a moment abashed and subdued under the steeper and more commanding idea of the superior villain. "Execute that warrant as seems most consistent with the king's service and your own interest; and, again, sir, I wish you may succeed in recovering your cattle."

"Well, well," said the other, "take your own way—it's all one—we both of us know what we want, and that is everything; and so, your worship, I wish you a good night and the best of good luck, and peace and plenty; and here's to your good health."

He had approached the wine-flask, as he spoke, and, filling a bumper, with a grin of savage meaning, he nodded to Miles Garrett, quaffed it down to the last drop, and then looking in vain into the unmoved countenance of his host for a single ray of corresponding significance, he muttered—

"Well, well, but you're a quare boy," and so, turning upon his heel he left the room, and was, in five minutes after, riding slowly along a broken and narrow way, which led through the heathy steeps and wilds of the savage and desolate mountains of Slieve-Phelim.

Miles Garrett, meanwhile, arose, and paced the stone floor of the hall, with an exulting stride.

"All goes smoothly and steadily onward," said he, with an ill-favored smile; "by this time to-morrow night, the better part of all his cattle and his other substance will be driven or waste, and thus the first act of the tragic drama will have been completed; and he resist their entrance, demanded in virtue of the warrant—then, in that case, comes the second act—the second and the best—for all the rest flows smoothly on from thenceforth to the crowning

scene—the tragic catastrophe. Stupid, headstrong, helpless bound!"

With a pale face, dilated nostril and a grim smile, Miles Garrett paced the floor from wall to wall. His ruminations seemed to afford him no small delight, for he slapped his head exultingly, and muttered—

"It's all the brain—the brain—the brain!"—He relapsed into silence for some minutes, and his countenance grew darker and darker every moment. At last he spoke again—

"And as for thy daughter," he continued, with an ugly scowl, and biting his thin lips at every pause, "as for thy daughter, if I but choose to have her, I shall have her, in spite of all thy frantic bluster. Bah! Hugh Willoughby, you ought to know me by this time; and he smiled in the malignant consciousness of his own dogged and resolute sagacity and daring. "Yes, Hugh Willoughby, you shall know within a month all you have lost in madly repelling my proffered hand. Old scores of vengeance and bright hopes of profit and advancement I was willing to forego; but, like an idiot, you repulsed your fortune. You have had your miserable triumph. Make the most of it; for now—now something tells me my triumph is at hand. Yes, Hugh Willoughby, you have made your bed, and you shall lie in it."

While Miles Garrett thus chewed the cud of sweet and bitter fancy—as with downward, ominous glance, and heavy stride, he stalked backward and forward through his gloomy hall—his recent guest and companion was under the hazy moonlight, pursuing his lonely and uneven road. This track, little better than a broken pathway, wound along the elevated surface of the broad range of hills, deep among whose vast and heathy undulations the horseman was soon tracing his solitary and melancholy progress. The sense of loneliness is nowhere so awful as among the gigantic and monotonous solitudes of mountain scenery, especially when the exaggerating and uncertain radiance of the moon shrouds the vast undulations of the bleak and mighty hill-sides, and invests their dusky outlines with undefined immensity of distance and magnitude. There the solitary traveller—lifted high above the sounds and sights of human habitation, with savage and gigantic scenery looming in deserted sublimity above and around him—feels, amid the vastness and the utter solitude of nature, awe-struck with a fearful sense of his own nothingness. An intruder, as it were, among elements and influences, stupendous, desolate, and unsocial, he loses all sense of companionship with the things around him, and a feeling of isolation and of undefined danger steals solemnly and fearfully upon him.

The horseman whom we are bound to follow, now found himself in the lap of a broad misty hollow, around which, as he proceeded, seemed to gather and thicken the dark and swelling summits of the hills—like monstrous forms closing him in to intercept his escape, and sailing slowly onward to overwhelm him in their awful confluence. Here and there the inequalities of the heathy flat, over which his course lay, were marked by huge strata of naked rock, lifted above the dark brown surface in vast riven masses, and strewn along the soil in grey shimmering lines, like the fragments and foundations of some Titanic fortification; and the grandeur and desolation of the scene were heightened by the rush and moan of the upper currents of the air, as they swept among the hill tops, and through the rocky glens and solitary ravines.

The cavalier had heard of 'phockas' and other malignant sprites, who, in desert places, encounter, scare, and even smite with decrepitude or madness the benighted traveller. He was familiar, too, with a thousand wild stories of the freaks, the delusions, and the malice of the good people.

He had heard how farmers, returning alone from distant fairs; or travelling pedlars pursuing their benighted way, had been met and accosted on these lonely hills by ugly dwarfs, or intercepted by calves or dogs of unearthly kind, and other strange beings, who had terrified or abused them, so that, by the morning light, they had lost either their wits or their lives. All these tales of preternatural terror floated in gloomy succession through his mind, as he rode slowly onward thro' the vast and misty solitudes of the mountain tracts. Often, as he pursued his way, he drew bridle and paused, fancying that he had heard a woman's shriek, and uncertain whether the shrill and distant sound might not have been the cry of some wild bird, scared by the night-owl from its nest; and listening on with a horrible misgiving, lest the sound should prove some phantom-wail, and be succeeded by some wilder spectral freak of unrequited and insupportable terror; again he would turn and gaze behind him as the hushed breeze hovered like close whispers in his ear, and scowling breathless, with blanched cheeks and parted lips, into the bleak void, subduing the half-muttered curse which instinctively rose to his lips, and mumbling a word or two of a forgotten prayer; and then, with an effort to reas-

sure himself, giving his hat a new set, squaring his shoulders, planting his arm a kimbo, and whistling a snatch of some favorite tune, he would once more resume his way, again to interrupt it as before.

It was, therefore, with a sense of relief which he would scarcely have confessed even to himself, that at last, after more than an hour's lonely progress, he found himself within a mile of the spot at which he knew he should find human companionship. Inwardly congratulating himself upon his proximity to his journey's present termination, he pressed onward at a brisker pace—still, however, very far from being altogether freed from those visitings of awe and doubt which he had, during his long and lonely night-ride, in vain endeavored entirely to suppress.

While he thus spurred onward, now traversing the soft, elastic peat with noiseless tread, and now clanging over the naked rock, a strange and dwarfish figure, which fancy might well have assigned to one of the malignant fairy brood, on a sudden started—he knew not how—as it seemed from the very soil beneath his horse's hoofs. A thrill of superstitious terror for a moment unnerved him, and it was not until he had gazed for some seconds upon the wild and startling apparition, that he recognized the elf-looks and smoke-dried visage of the ill-favored boy, whose unexpected appearance had that day so affrighted Sir Hugh's fair daughter at Glindarragh bridge.

"God bless us!" said the horseman, recovering from an indistinct attempt to cross himself; "and so it's only you, you devil's whelp."

And indulging the irritation which often follows causeless alarm, the burly horseman dealt the urchin a sharp blow of his switch across the head, which made him howl and caper in so unearthly and uncouth a fashion, that one unacquainted with his eccentricities of men might well have felt his supernatural doubts confirmed, rather than allayed by the wild and grotesque exhibition.

"Never mind it, Shaun Dhas, never mind it, purty boy," said the man, as the urchin gradually abated his strange demonstrations. "I did not know you, ashore—never mind it; but tell me like an honest gorsoun, is he down in the glin?"

"He is—what id ail him?" said the boy, "himself an' two or three more, *Leum a rinka* and Shaun Lauther, an' a boy in the Kelly's, an' a quare little gorsoun like myself, and the old Shanavan, an' that's all that's in it."

The horseman spurred his steed into a clattering canter, the boy running lightly and easily by his side; and thus they continued in silence to advance, until the track which they pursued swept into the course of a narrow glen, at first presenting a declivity so slight as to be scarcely distinguishable from the heathy level of the higher region, but gradually becoming more and more defined, until at last it deepened into a dark and craggy pass, precipitous and rocky, clothed with furze and heath, and traversed at the bottom by a stream, now dwindled to an attenuated thread, and whose gravelly bed supplied the broken and precarious roadway over which they dashed and scrambled. An abrupt turn of this defile brought them on a sudden to the object of their search.

From the door of a wretched hovel perched half-way up the steep and narrow pass, there streamed a strong red light, which flooded the rocky fragments and tufted furze, crowded closely about it, with warm and cheery crimson; and as it lay at the shadowy side of the deep ravine, the dusky light relieved the few objects on which it fell in fiery distinctness, and rendered the surrounding darkness but the denser and blacker by the contrast. Placing his horse's bridle in the hand of the uncouth and savage urchin who attended him, Hogan ascended the steep path which led to the cabin-door, and in a few moments he stood beneath the roof-tree of the hovel.

In the strong red light of the fire sat, or rather reclined, three men in the coarse frize, listlessly chatting in the strong gutturals of their native tongue; and thus disposed around the hearth in such attitudes as suited each, they occupied the hard earthen floor beneath the chimney, and warmed themselves the while. An old, smoke-dried, puckered hag covered at the back of the hearth, showing through the filmy turf smoke scarcely more substantial than the pale blue and yellow flames which flickered above the red embers. Pacing the uneven earthen floor at the front of this rude and comfortless chamber, and from time to time glancing sharply through the open door as he arrested his measured pace, was a personage, of whose appearance we must say a word or two. He was rather above than below the middle size; his structure compact, well-knit and wiry; and as he measured the floor with a firm and elastic tread, and turned his quick and fiery glance from object to object, there was a restless excitability and energy in his whole air and mien, as well as a piercing shrewdness, a promptitude and decision in his marked and swarthy countenance, which stamped him at once as a man of action and of daring.

His dress, though considerably worn and weather-beaten, was alike in fabric and fashion that of a man who pretended to the rank of a gentleman. His own coal-black hair escaped from under the broad leaf of his hat, and added to the effect of his dark and sharply-marked features, which alike from the intense brightness and activity of his dark eye, and from the peculiar conformation of the strongly-developed under jaw, bore a character of sternness and even of cruelty which impressed those who looked upon him with feelings bordering upon fear, aversion, and distrust. As he strode backward and forward he seemed wrapped in exciting meditation; one hand was buried in his bosom, the other held the slender stem of a tobacco-pipe, from which he drew the smoke, which, in dense and rapid volumes, he puffed into the eddying air. With downward aspect and knitted brow, and flashing glance, he thus traversed the breadth of the dreary hovel to and again, as Hogan reached the door.

A curt but cordial greeting passed between these two personages thus brought together, and a close and earnest conference followed, partly carried on in English, and partly in the "mother tongue." Through this it is not necessary to follow them; it is enough for our purpose to state its concluding words—

"You'll be able to gather the boys in time?" asked Hogan, doubtfully.

"With one whistle I'd bring them round me from Keeper to Monaster-owena, and from Doon to Killala," rejoined the other, scornfully.

"And you'll not fail me?" continued Hogan.

"When did O'Moel Ryan fail of his promise?" returned "Ned-o'-the-Hill"—for he was the speaker—"with tranquil disdain."

"Hand and word," cried the brawny visitor, as with emphatic energy he smote his broad hand upon the extended palm of his companion—"hand and word and the bargain's cleached."

At a word from Ryan, one of the followers at the hearth sprang to his feet, and filling out two drams of brandy, carried them to the door where the two principal persons stood.

"I drink to you, Mr. Hogan," said Ryan.

"And here's towards your good health," replied Hogan, in a voice of thunder, "an' success to us both, an' smashing to smithers be the luck of our enemies."

With these words he dashed off the liquor, and, with a wild hurra, he flung the glass high into the dewy night air, whence descending, it burst into jingling shivers in the craggy depths of the bleak glen—a type of the savage malediction to which he had just pledged its contents.

"To-morrow night, and half an hour before the moon goes down," said our new acquaintance shaking back his long dark locks, as a lion might his mane, when he scents the prey afar off, "in the wood of Glindarragh, and under the *Carrigna-Phoka*. And so, God send you safe home."

Thus they parted, Hogan to pursue, in his long and solitary night-ride, the purpose which occupied his mind; and his confederate to complete, in the hurried interval, the vast and deadly arrangements of their desperate enterprise.

Meanwhile, in her chamber in the old castle of Glindarragh—books, music, and old-fashioned tapestry work all neglected—sits in her ponderous high-backed chair, her soft eyes resting in deep reverie upon the changing embers of the hearth, the sweet Grace Willoughby, pensive, pale, and mournful; she who, before that night, scarce ever knew what one grave thought or one transient cloud of sorrow might be. What thoughts are now chasing one another through the clear stillness of her mind? The agitating dangers of the evening have ceased to quicken her pulse and flush her cheek; the flutterings of her proud and timid heart are now quiet, and yet she sits absorbed in the deep enchantment of her reverie. Her beautiful face, late so radiant and dimpling with the pleasant smiles of arch and girlish merriment, is now touched for the first time with the loftier character of pride and melancholy—yet both combined so softly, and in so lovely a look, that nothing but the nobleness of pride and the gentle sweetness of sorrow reign in its pure and mournful tranquillity. As she leans her graceful head upon her small white hand, on which falls thickly the golden shower of her rich hair, her memory is busy with the words, the looks, the gestures, aye, with the very plumes and spurs and gold face of the handsome champion who had rescued her that day. She hears him as he spoke—every accent of his rich, manly voice is sounding in her ear; he stands before her, in all his proud and martial beauty, as she that day beheld him—she sees again his look of chivalric, respectful tenderness, as he led her towards her home; and then, again, oh! sudden painful change, she beholds the stern and proud aspect, the averted look, with which her transformed deliverer took his abrupt departure. Innocent girl! as thus she muses, she persuades her willing heart that she but yields to the promptings of her simple curiosity; yet if she will but look into that heart, she will find a

deeper interest there. What makes it happiness to thee to recall his lightest word, or gesture; and when his sudden parting rises in thy memory, why that pang of wounded pride, and whence that rising sigh? Oh! girl, bethink thee ere it be too late; he is thy father's foe—the devoted enemy of all thy house; beware, sweet Grace, beware; love not where thou canst not be loved again; guard well the portals of thy warm and gentle heart; oh, dwell not on his words and looks so fondly, but banish that image from thy ber with fear and horror.

CHAPTER XIII.—SUNSET AND MOONLIGHT ON THE TOWERS OF GLINDARRAGH.

Though the meditated attempt on the castle of Glindarragh was vaguely known among the surrounding peasantry, and though it supplied the material of gossiping discussion at every forge and shebeen-shop for miles around, yet, neither to Sir Hugh nor to any one individual of his household, was one hint of danger spoken—absolute mystery sealed the lips of every peasant; and had it not been for the warning of which we have already spoken, the castle of Glindarragh might easily have been surprised, and all within it lain at the mercy of a wild banditti.

The sun was now hastening downward among the eastern hills, and, as it seemed, with a fiery and vengeful light glared markedly upon the old towers of Glindarragh. A low wind moaned and whispered through the chimneys and battlements of the doomed building and the neighboring wood, with a wild ominous sound, in fitful gusts, which muttered and swelled like the laughter of fiendish revelry, and died away in long wailing moans. On the castle walls, from time to time, might be seen anxious groups scanning the distance with stern and gloomy suspense. The gates were fast closed and barred, and the stout old building, in its bold and sombre isolation, might well have suggested the image of some gallant storm-beaten ship, with rigging taut and all hands on the alert, awaiting an approaching hurricane.

Occasional snatches of songs floated, as if in defiance, from the grey summits of the old towers, and mingled strangely with the lowing of cattle which arose from within the walls—and again all was lost in the bleak howl of the rising gust. Everything gave note of preparation—the loop-holes in the river tower flanking the great gate, which had been walled up for years, were now again opened for the play of musketry; and from the summit of the Banseah's tower, which at the other extremity, in like manner, flanked the entrance, peered downward the muzzle of an ancient and honey-combed demi-culverin, loaded with musket bullets half way to the mouth. The castle-yard, too, presented an unwonted spectacle; for all the best of Sir Hugh's cattle had been driven from the neighboring pastures, and cows and fat oxen and sheep stood in patient groups, penned closely within the precincts of a rough paling, which left but one free avenue down the centre of the yard, and a clear though narrow passage down the sides. Thus the crowded cattle stood in hundreds closely pent within the dark enclosure of the castle walls, and all the air of stir and bustle within the fortress was enhanced by the arrival, from various quarters, in prompt response to Sir Hugh's summons, of motley reinforcements, numbering in all full seventy men; some of gentle birth, accompanied by their servants; others, sturdy yeomen, with their sons or brethren; and all with due supply of muskets, matchlocks, birding pieces, or other servicable fire-arms, and proportionate and proper ammunition therewith; for Tyrconnell's proclamation for the disarming of the yeomanry and gentry had been but partial and imperfect in its effect, and, unless where there existed a pressing necessity, or what was so considered by King James's government, for enforcing its requisitions, had remained practically inoperative; except, indeed, that the new construction of the law exposed the man who ventured to dispute it to the risk of a state prosecution, if by any overt act he evinced his disobedience to the Castle manifesto, and thus was added not a little to the embarrassments and the perils of men, whose properties and lives the government had not at all times the power, even if it had the desire, to protect, and who were, therefore, in most cases reduced to rely for safety, under Providence, solely upon their own energies and resources.

It was now late enough, in all conscience, for Jeremiah Tisdal, the cool and cautious Puritan, to have sought the security of Glindarragh Castle, and along with his unguilty servant—Praise-God Bligh—to have contributed to the numbers of the little garrison its due contingent from the townland of Drumgunnion; yet Jeremiah Tisdal had not arrived, and Sir Hugh was perplexed to divine the reason of his absence, and often missed his sagacious counsel, as with the aid of the more experienced of his friends he apportioned the defence of the old fortress among its garrison and assigned to each his post and office when the emergency of actual conflict should have arisen.

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