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SHAWN NA SOGGARTH;
OR,
THE PRIEST-HUNTER.
AN IRISH TALE OF THE PENAL TIMES.

BY M. ARCHDEACON, ESQ.,
Author of the Legends of Connaught, &c.
CHAPTER XXXII.

It wanted still some two hours of sunset when the intended emigrants reached their place of halt and concealment. The cave of Drimlecon fronted a deep, solitary tarn, in the centre of which was a small island, crested with the ruins of a little chapel. About a hundred yards to its rear, ran a road leading to the coast; and behind a hedge on an eminence impending this, lay Tony, concealed, to have a look out, should anything suspicious approach. The party had some humble refreshments with them; and while Fergus and the pedlar, with two of the wounded rapparees and the children, seated themselves on the floor of the cave, to enjoy the cheer, such as it was, the remainder were too much wrapped up in their own melancholy reflections to partake of any.

Approaching the mouth of the cave, Ned looked out on the little lake and the ruin, and then at the sky. The early part of the day had been oppressively hot; but clouds had gathered and spread and deepened; and the sun was now, like an overpowered warrior, struggling to burst through the dark, dense mass, that had surrounded him; but vainly. The wind, too, was beginning to rise, sweeping, in fitful gusts, across the little lake, and stirring up its waters into pigmy waves, just as turbulent as their giant brethren of the ocean, while the birds began to scream and creak, and the cattle turned up their noses to sniff the coming gale.

"It's the promise of a wild night, I'm thinking," said Ned, looking up again at the sky, which was, momentarily, becoming gloomier and more disturbed looking; "but what signifies that to them that's forced to leave their native country for ever, and in their old age too?"

"There for you, Ned," said Tony's father, one of the wounded men; "it's a cruel thing to have to lay our old bones far away from all belonging to us. But you're better off than us any way, Ned. You have no family bar'n wan son an' he's to be with you. Now, God help me, I have to leave these behind to the mercy of the world."

"Yes, Martin Graham, I'm not so bad but I might be worse, the Lord make me thankful. But, after all, it goes to the heart, to be quit-ting for ever, your old Ireland, where the bones of our forefathers, and our wives, and our children are, and the spots themselves and ourselves worshipped God in, and the fields we played in. O, where'll we get a spot, in the wide world, like what we're going to leave behind us for ever? O, *noctale saltem*—but ye don't understand the classics; that quotation means 'our native soil.'"

"No wonder," said Nancy, mournfully, "that ye should grieve for quiting the country ye wor born in, when even my heart is heavy to leave it—me that has now only a name to be curst by every Christian!"—she wept freely.

"No, Nancy, don't fret yourself that way," said Ned; "crime is personal, and the world knows you were as good as your brother was—but as the old Latin sayin' has it, *De mortuis nil nisi bonum*, that is, 'talk well of the dead, bad as they were.'"

"But isn't it a murderin' int'rest," said Martin, "that, black as the times wor, we might still have our old bones with those that went afore us, if it wasn't for wan murderin' family. O, the Ffolliott's is a bad *kinnaul* (breed) int'restly."

"Well, poor Harry Gorham (God rest his soul) put wan of them out of the way of don't any more villainy, any how," observed his comrade rapparee.

"Yes, Dick, an' it wd lighten our hearts goin' if his brother, Black Bill, was with him—may a meltation come over him and his—and that reminds me that Tony saw him ridin' with Sir John, as he was passin' through the town."

"O, they're *par nobile fratrum*, that is, 'they're fit for one another,' and from the bottom of my heart I wish them both *Thubbodh na lung's* (Theobald of the ship's) journey to Ballintubber."

"Well," said the pedlar, "what's the use of fretting and grumbling, as neither one nor the other of them can help us? My motto is, to take the world as it comes, rough and smooth, and never to fret, and to remember that—"

When the rain is thick, a change is near,
And the sun, after storm, will soon appear.

"Whew Johnny," said Ned, "that's only makin' doggerel of a sentiment from the classics, which Dan Heraghty himself could do."

Desplendens sol!

"We all know you could be talkin' Latin till the cows would come home, Ned," said Johnny;

and that Dan Heraghty's is but bog Latin in comparison with yours."

"Bog Latin, inagh! It's no Latin at all.—What would the spalpeen know about quatin' Latin, that never passed *verbum personale*?"

"And that's the truth, to be sure, Ned. It's like the grace o' God to him: he knows no more about it than a Spanish cow does of talkin' English. But the spalpeen isn't worth talkin' of;—and do you, Ned, like a gay old cock, instead of wasting your Latin on us, that don't know a word of it, tell us the meaning of *Thubbodh na lung's* journey to Ballintubber. I heard the phrase often; but, long as I'm rambling through this district, I never heard the explanation of it, and, if there's a story about it, it'll help to pass some of the time, before we can venture to stir from this, pleasanter than grumbling or crying."

"Faith, thin, Ned's the boy that can do that same story justice any way," observed Martin.

"Aye, do sit down, father," said Fergus; "though you're in no humor for eatin', here's some rare stuff fit to drink farewell to poor Ireland in; an' thin you can tell Johnny the story." He reached over an ample bottle nearly full, from which his reluctant parent took no stinted pull. Then seating himself, and waving to such of his companions as were still standing to be seated also, he commenced his legend, which we shall give in our own words, as well in order to avoid spoiling out our story, now so near its close, as to spare the reader the infliction of Ned's numerous digressions, Latin quotations, and allusions to the gods and heroes of the classics.

Within a mile of Ballintubber stands Castle Burke, and at about double that distance from it are the remains of Kanturk, the most extensive, ornamental, and mansion-like of the baronial ruins in the county Mayo. Both of these castles were the occasional residences of the Mayo family—a family which, some centuries ago, possessed so large a portion of the fairest parts of the county, though the present Earl of Mayo derives nothing from it but his title.

Even in the seventeenth century, Kanturk was the residence of Theobald Bourke, the *Thubbodh* of the legend, and the son, by her second marriage with the head of the Bourkes, of "the lady of the isles," *Ginnia Valle* (Grace O'Malley) so celebrated for her daring acts of piracy, and whose extraordinary character and exploits have occupied the pens of some of our popular writers.

Thubbodh na lung married one of the O'Connor family; and we may readily imagine that the lady's life, with a desperate and remorseless man like him, was not one to be envied. She appears, however, to have possessed a high and bold spirit, derived from the noble stock she sprung from, and which enabled her the better to cope with his violence; and he was still further kept in check by the power and daring bravery of her family; towards whom, it would seem, he gradually contracted an inveterate and inextinguishable hatred. Indeed, so fiercely did the fire of that hatred burn that, according to the tradition, nothing but blood, and that shed by himself, could quench it. Accordingly, his evil passions, goaded to madness by some after-dinner taunts and idle boastings of his brother-in-law and wife, the former of whom was then sojourning as a visitor at the castle, he proceeded to put his murderous project into execution. So, as he had not courage to cross swords with O'Connor, and nothing but taking his life with his own hands could appease his mortal hatred, he asked him one day to look at the leg of a favorite horse which (he said) had received a hurt; and on his brother-in-law's stooping unsuspectingly, he, by a treacherous sword cut, struck off his head, which he forthwith despatched into the castle for his wife's view.

The lady's feelings, on beholding the fearful spectacle, and learning the source whence it proceeded, may be easily conceived. Her deed we are not informed of. But the fiendish act so stirred up the vengeance of one of O'Connor's attached retainers that, month after month, he tracked the steps of the cowardly murderer, till he found an opportunity of burying the scene he always carried to the haft in his body; and this bloody and richly deserved end it was that gave rise to the proverb, whether *Thubbodh* was stabbed in the abbey itself, as some state, or whether, according to other chroniclers, the retainin' murder occurred elsewhere, and he was only buried there after.

"Myself" said, observed Martin, when Ned had finished his legend, "that it was at Ballintubber, the grand castle o' the O'Connors, an' that in old times, belonged to the kings o' Connaught they say, *Thubbodh* was killed, and that they pitched him into a vault and left him there till the rats eat him alive."

"You hard! And what would the likes of you know about such stories in comparison with me?" asked Ned, angrily.

"Nothin' at all, sure enough, Ned asthore; an', raisin' why, you're a larned schollard an' mysel'

doesn't know a B from a bull's foot. Any way, *Thubbodh* never went back from Ballintubber; an' that's the mainin' o' *Thubbodh na lung's* journey to Ballintubber."

"Here's glory to the hand that gave him his due," said Johnny, applying the bottle to his mouth. "Why, if he was living now, he'd be qualified to be a partner in the firm of Ingram, Ffolliott & Co."

"O, he was a born divle out an' out," said Martin. "We have another story o' what he did to the widow's son that all the imps couldn't bate out for cruelty; but Ned can tell id better nor me, if you wish to hear id."

"Tell it yourself," said Ned, sullenly, not a little chafed at his companion's having ventured to put in a word at all respecting the former tradition.

"Aye, tell it you, Martin, said Fergus; 'my father will be in better humor after another kiss at the bottle.' His father looked as if he could have willingly gone back to former years, and applied the switch once more to his athletic son's back. "But first," continued Fergus, "take a sup to wet your whistle; and while you're tellin' Johnny the story, I'll step out and thray how Tony's comin' on, and if any thing's stirrin' abroad."

Martin, after having complied with Fergus' request, commenced his tradition, which we shall also give the reader in our own words, for the reason just alluded to in Ned's case, and which still widely preserved, attests that, though *Thubbodh* inherited none of the heroic qualities of his mother, he possessed largely that remorseless cruelty so well suited to a sea-born pirate-descendant.

There was a widow among his wife's (the tradition saith not her name) who had the misfortune to have an undutiful son; and, one unfortunate day for her, she went to the castle of Kanturk to complain to its lord of his evil doings:

"And he is so very undutiful then, good woman," said the evil minded and relentless lord, after she had detailed her grievance.

"Sure enough he is, your lordship, as bad as bad can be."

"Then I will put him from ever annoyin' you again. So come in, good woman, and refresh yourself while I manage the boy."

The poor widow went in rejoicing, and continued to regale herself till the voice of her master summoned her forth, to witness the change that had taken place in her son. Gladly she came forth to ascertain the blessed change.—Bright and exulting were her thoughts of an obedient child and a happy fireside, as she stepped lightly out. But, oh, what a spectacle for a widowed mother—the mother, too, of an only son—saluted her view abroad. Better, a thousand times better, her sight were blasted at her birth, than be condemned to witness the terrible object that now met her gaze. Her son was suspended in the death-agony from the castle door.

"I told you I should prevent him from further annoyin' you; and you see I have kept my promise," said the monster, pointing to the swaying and struggling body. Instantly the air rang with appalling shrieks; and, falling on her knees, the wretched widow heaped the most fearful and vehement maledictions on the head of the ferocious chief till driven away by some of the retainers, and never did a day's good during her whole after."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

The tradition had barely closed when Fergus re-entered the cave, accompanied by Tony and Sheamus Fadhia (long James) the young man who had been wounded in emerging from the Mass cavern, as described in our second chapter, but who had since, to a great extent, recovered from the effects of the shot.

"Sir John an' Ffolliott, an' Dixon, an' Roche is comin' up in a gallop, with a party," said Fergus, rapidly, as he entered; "and I wonder what brought Roche among them, any how?"

"O, we're murdered, we're murdered, after all," exclaimed half a dozen voices together, while the children crouched behind their mother.

"Hould yer tongues, ye omadlawn's an' onshoughs—male and female idiots. It's the vessel Sir John's looking after; and isn't here Sheamus Fadhia with an account that she sailed upwards of an hour ago. Besides neither himself nor Ffolliott know any thing about us nor the cave, and we're only to stay quietly—"

The clatter of the horses' hoofs ceased suddenly, at the bend of the adjacent road; and terrible were the fears and doubts of the cave occupants. There was not a face among them, with the exception of Fergus and Johnny, that was not blanched to death paleness, nor a heart that did not throb with mortal terror.

The pause of the horseman was, however, but momentary, to enable their leader to have a chance met peasant mounted behind one of the party, as a guide, despite the man's true protestations that he did not know the shore well at all. In an instant the clatter was resumed more rapidly than before, and continued, waxing fainter

and fainter, till it was entirely lost in the distance.

The countenance of the fugitives now resumed their natural hue, and their hearts began to throb as calmly as usual.

"Why, Fergus, I'm inclined to forgive you your impudence a while ago," said Ned, "as you turned out so thrue a prophet about the sagers goin' away. God help us, we fathers are sometimes foolish enough; but *nemo mortaliu*—"

"That's the thruth for you, father—but," continued Fergus, after a minute's cogitation, "a thought's come into my head, that maybe we could give the party a good sounsin' afore they have the comfort o' seein' the vessel out o' their reach. Could we be at the long strand this side o' the point o' Kilglass afore they get there, Sheamus?"

"To be sure we could, in a throt, by takin' to the bog that's quite dry now, crassin' the black strame and passin' by the old monument; besides that, the horseman must dismount, a quarter of a mile, any how, afore they can get to the strand."

"Thin come along with me yourself and Tony, and let us not lose a munit—do ye (speaking to the fugitives) remain here till the party passes back, unless wan of us three comes for ye afore. Ye see ye are perfectly safe, an' need only remain quite within; an' ye may be sure we'll keep out of harm's way."

So saying, he struck into the bog with his two companions, at a rapid pace.

"Now, my old boy," said the pedlar, after Fergus' departure, either wishing to derive amusement from the old man, as apprehensive of danger he had none, or desirous to keep up the spirits of his companions by his liveliness, "as there's no use in being either sad or sulky, and we can't venture to sing to raise our hearts, what would you think of another story?"

"I'm no story teller," said Ned, "but you have an illigant one there inside you?"—pointing to Martin.

"Well I'm sorry to hear yourself sayin' that," said Johnny, "for it was only last week that I contradicted Dan Heraghty, when he said that you knew no more than a horse how to tell a story. He said something, too, about your writin' being now but an old shakin' hand, that you were a batch at fractions, and didn't know how to pronounce the dative case of *hic, hacc, hoc*. But young fellows will be talkin', and I didn't mind much what he said, though there were others by—friends of his, I suppose—that seemed to believe it all."

"A shakin' hand—fraction—and dative *hic, hoc*! The spalpeen that I taught myself the little he knows."

"And I forgot that he said, too, that you could no more build the bridge in Cæsar (I forget what book he mentioned) than you could talk good English."

"O, the big *lasthoon*, that has no more brains than a goat, I'd make a bridge of his crooked body, the disciple—I would by—God forgive me for cursin'! The old man clenched his withered hand and looked, if not martial, at least very pugnaciously inclined."

"Pooh, my old boy, don't vex yourself about him. He's but a young whip and will give tongue; and surely it's not the one day ye should be spoken of. I never believe the half of what he says, though (as I said before) he has friends that believe it all."

"The half o' what such an ignorant as him would say."

"Pho', choke the dog; he's not worth wastin' any more words about, particularly as, though he has certainly the gift of the gab, he hasn't a line of the poetry in him, like you or me, old boy."

"You Johnny—poetry!" exclaimed Ned, with considerable asperity, as he had relished neither the matter nor manner of the pedlar's recent allusions to Dan Heraghty.

"Yes, me, old boy: surely I've a knack for poetry."

"Why, Johnny," rejoined Ned, rather contemptuously, "you can rhyme doggerel fair enough in the way of your business. But what do you know about the classics or the Hæthen mythology—about Jupiter or the Sybils, Diana, or Hector, Venus or the Styx, or any o' th' other old Gods or Goddesses; and how could you make a line o' *raie* poetry without allusions and similies about them?"

"A fig for goddesses and gods, A bet I'll make and give you odds— This bottle to your *duodec* black!"

(Johnny drew forth from his bundle a bottle as ample in its girth as that produced by Fergus, and full to the brim, and, placing it before him, he continued his rhyme)—

"Without their help, that I've the knack To spin a verse, and faster too Than you with all their aid can do. The stuff—primo stuff, as I'm a sinner, To be divided by the winner 'Mong all friends here. So now, old Ned, Do you agree, or hang your head,

And own yourself a beaten man, As meny did, by Jack McCann, The roving blade that rhymes at pleasure, As easy just as cloth he'd measure."

"Rhymes, indeed! you call them rhymes," said Ned, with much contempt. "Johnny, you might measure a yard of linen or dinitry ready enough; but you don't know the first principle o' versifyin'. Sure you have eight syllables in one line and nine in another, so that it seems you didn't know how even to reckon them on your fingers, not to talk of your knowin' nothing at all about the feet in a line accordin' to the measure."

"Is it I that don't know how to measure, you're sayin'?"

"O, I don't allude to the measure o' wares, but to the measure o' poetry. But there's an old Latin proverb that says—"

"No Latin, Ned."

"I won't coat (quote) it, as, of course, you couldn't understand it. But it means 'So do you, Johnny, stick to your park, and have feet and syllables and invocations to those who understand the poetry.'"

"Invocations, and syllables, and feet! O murder in Irish!"

"For feet this minute what care I? 'Tis wings we want when we would fly, And mouths we use when we are dry. So, as we're then inclined to wet, Let us your own bold verses get, And ev'n the Gods and spouses help you Upon my soul I think I'll skip you."

There was a burst of low laughter at this effusion; and Ned looked, if we must tell the truth, a little stupid, after Johnny had closed, and as if undecided whether he should accept the challenge or not. Then, after a moment's pause, he whistled into Martin Gorham's ear: "Did you ever hear any verses about the rose-bud of Ballintubber, Martin?"

"Did I ever hear the wands blowin'! But don't repeat these verses for so that, fear that dhrill togin' along, and say you war like the piper that had but the wan tun."

"Come, Ned, my good lark, where's your heathen Gods now; and what value are they, if you can't draw on them for a verse or two when there's a demand in the market?"

"Johnny's right," said Martin; "and now Ned, let's see what you can do in the honor of old Ballintubber."

Ned looked up to the roof of the cavern, then down on its floor, then to the right and left, then simpered and looked forth, then turned up his eyes again, as if to catch inspiration, and chanted forth, with a serious though unobtrusive emphasis—

"Miuerva, Wisdom's goddess, shine,
And aid me, too, ye Latin line,
Bright Phœbus also, God of day,
Incline thine aid to me, I pray,
Diana emste, and Juno graia,
It's you I beg my friends to stand,
Ould Homer blind sung wars o' Troy,
Caused by the amorous Trojan boy;
And Virgil, in his *Eneid* bound,
Of Dido and *Aeneas* told,
But, if to me ye will incline,
Ye Gods and Goddesses so fine,
Bright Venus, Jupiter and Mars,
Bellona, too, that rules o'er wars,
With th' other Gods, if ye'll combine,
In junction with the useful nine,
To sanction my poor, humble verse,
I will an Irish rhyme rehearse,
That shall outdo Rome and Greece surpass
As does a racer a lame ass—"

"That's a vulgar simile," said Ned, balking in his rhyme.

"Ned's fairly beat when he's obliged to descend as low as his brother for a rhyme," exclaimed Johnny, chuckling, "isn't he boys and girls?"

"Why he gey up himself, sure enough," said Martin; "tho' some of his rhymes must be very grand, as mysel' couldn't understand only an odd word in them. But maybe if you'd let him thray agin an' mind his hand—"

"No! no second offers: he's as beat as ever a badger was, after a hard day's fighting. I knew all along, with all his stuff about heathen Gods and blind poets and the muses, that he couldn't do it; and I only wonder that he wasn't stuck in the mud before the third line."

"Right well I knew the tune of rhyming nine Would not to help out Ned's bad verse incline. His heathen Gods, too, left him on his back, Because they were no match for rhyming Jack. And for his idle busy Goddesses, I'd cage them up in iron bodices, Where every other lazy, crazy slut, That turns poor silly brains, should still be put; Instead of wasting every foolish phrase, To smear them thick with flattery and praise, Hoping they'd help him with a drawing chime Whom nature neyer gave the pot rhyme."

"Do you mane—have you the assurance to say, Johnny McCann, that I can't versify?" asked Ned in high wrath.

"I mane," rejoined the pedlar, winking at his other comrades, "if you had any knack at all, would you be obliged to fall on a lame jackass