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THE IRISH WIDOW'S SON; OR, THE PIKEMEN OF NINETY-EIGHT. — BY CON. O'LEARY.

(From the Boston Pilot.)

CHAPTER XVI.—(Continued.)

He was well armed, so likely were Milliken and McCracken. What if he would attempt a rescue? They were only three to six; but John felt, just then, that he alone could match any two of them, probably three. But the prisoners, no doubt were handcuffed, and John did feel miserable indeed.

At a point where the old and new roads verged into one, John pulled up for a moment. His quick ear caught the sound of horses' feet. Presently a car appeared, on which were seated four men. One moment more, and off sprang Cormac Rogan.

"Any word?" inquired Cormac, hastily. John Mullan's heart bounded with delight. "No time for explanation," replied John, fingering himself of the horse; "they are both prisoners."

"Both of whom?" asked Cormac, quite excitedly.

"Milliken and McCracken. They are coming this way."

In a few seconds, Cormac had his men close beside the hedge. The horse and car, and the horse used by John, were brought alongside into the shadow of the trees, and placed in charge of Peter Mullan.

The soldiers were quickly approaching.

"Nail the horses first," said Cormac; "then sling ourselves with a simultaneous bound upon the soldiers. The others will quickly comprehend the whole thing."

The words had scarcely escaped from Cormac's lips, when the cars approached. As no person could be seen, the soldiers were taken completely by surprise.

The reports of two or three pistols had scarcely ceased to be heard on the night air, when Cormac and his companions made a spring upon the soldiers, and disarmed them. Not a moment was lost on the part of Milliken and McCracken, both of whom started off as fast as their feet could carry them. It was with some difficulty that Peter Mullan overtook them, and, to their joy, they learned that a means of conveyance was at hand.

The soldiers, it can be easily imagined, were thrown into a panic. The attack was so unexpected; the quick demand, or, rather, the taking of their arms, was the work of a moment the soldiers believing that a larger force of men were present than what really were; all this, too, with the uncertain light, rendered them unconscious of how to act. The great joke, as it afterwards turned out, was that they believed the attack to have been made solely for the firearms, and not with any intention of releasing their prisoners, who they believed managed their escape during the momentary disorder. The horses attached to the two cars were not killed.

In a few minutes, Cormac and his party were on their way, arranging for their work that night, which had been so unexpectedly interfered with, and so suddenly put to rights again.

The explanation of Milliken, to the effect that he had taken Mullan for a spy, and who was borne out in his suspicions by McCracken, caused a good hearty laugh to all concerned.—They had certainly as good reason to indulge in their merriment, as the soldiers had to lament the misfortune that deprived them of their firelocks, and forced them to return unarmed and without their prisoners.

"The devil tak' those murderin' crooked carles, who made sic a raid on his Majesty's forces," said Sandy to his companion; "but I suppose," continued the canny Scot, "we maun be thankful to the rebel rascals that they did na tak' oor lives as weel."

"There ain't much use hollerin' till we're out of the wood," replied his English companion-in-arms, said arms being just then despoiled of what Cormac called "loyal marks and tokens."

"You dinna think the rebels will return and shoot us?" indignantly demanded Sandy.

"It is hard to say what the demned fellas may do, or may not do," said the Englishman in reply; "they had scarcely demanded the arms when you held out your gun to them."

"That's a strappin' lee," retorted Sandy with considerable vehemence, at this imputation on his bravery. "But gin I ca' to min', you sprang ower the madhine (car), and left your gun ahint you."

This was a pure fabrication on the part of Sandy, who felt there was some truth in the imputation of his companion, and wished to fasten some guilt on him.

The Englishman appealed to the others to bear witness in his behalf, that, when his gun

was grasped by the tall fellow of the party, he held on by it till he missed his hold, and was dragged from the car.

Sandy kept repeating his offensive language, calling the Englishman a liar, till the latter, feeling himself outraged by the voluble charges of Sandy, raised his clenched fist, and sent the Scotchman floundering in the mud.

Sandy was speedily assisted from his undignified position, and dared his antagonist to repeat his offence. The appeal was answered by another blow, which, not being relished by the recipient, an interchange of pugilistic compliments took place, leaving visible marks of the striking affection which those representatives of different nationalities bore to each other.

The ill-feeling thus engendered did not tend to the promotion of harmony among this particular portion of the British forces. Others of the men took different sides, according to their likes and dislikes, and, before they arrived at their quarters, they presented the appearance of men who were brave enough to fall out and fight among themselves, if not quite able to prevent themselves from being disarmed.

Next morning, when giving an account of the whole transaction to the officers in command at Antrim, Sandy, who had asked and obtained leave from the others, acted as spokesman, and did his work well, even to the satisfaction of the Englishman.

"By the shee'reet accident we got a hold o' the culprit Milliken, and anither, nae doot a rebel companion, who looked as if aboon the chiel Milliken, an' in a jiffey we had baith o' them tightly handcuffed, and proceeded on oor way. It was gettin' mighty dark at the time, for the moon hadna risen. A' o' a sudden, and afore ane o' us could say 'chappin,' about a hundred men sprang ower a hedge, fired bang at the horses' heads, an' afore we could catch a gun-stock in our hands, wrenched the firearms frae us. Wi' oor clenched neives, we at them, but were overpowered, and barely escaped wi' oor lives. There's no' a man o' us that didna fight—an', see, they bear the marks o' their manly prowess."

The canny Scot succeeded even beyond his expectations. Every man of the lot was praised for their daring heroism, their conduct would be reported to the proper quarter, and, there could be no doubt of it promotion would be sure to follow. A few days afterwards, Cormac and his friends enjoyed a good length at the following paragraph which appeared in the newspapers:—

"Whereas:—On the night of the 6th inst., a body of armed rebels, about one hundred in number, did, at a place on the Antrim road, known by the name of the White-well-Brae, attack a small military guard in charge of two prisoners, and after mistreating them in the most cowardly and ruffianly manner, took, or robbed them of their firearms. Any person giving information at the Military Headquarters at Belfast, which shall lead to the prosecution of all, or any of the parties implicated in this outrage, shall receive a reward of one hundred pounds.

Signed,
G. BARBER.

March 24, 1798.

GOD SAVE THE KING.

It is needless to say that no prosecutor turned up to claim the reward.

CHAPTER XVII.—A MEETING IN THE VAULTS OF SHANE'S CASTLE—ISRAEL MILLIKEN'S EXPERIENCES IN ORGANIZING UNITED IRISHMEN—DETERMINATION OF THE LEADING REBELS.

"Bide your time—your worst transgression were to strike and strike in vain; He, whose arm would smite oppression, Must not need to smite again."

During the night both Milliken and McCracken were secretly conveyed by Cormac and Pat to the subterranean passage or vault beneath Shane's Castle, where the pikes were safely stowed away.

"What a splendid place of retreat," said McCracken, viewing the place.

"There are several of the same kind hereabouts," said Cormac; "and now that Fleming is removed, we are almost safe in anything we choose to undertake hereabouts. A couple of boats on the Lough, one or two scouts at different points, and the exercise of a little caution on the part of those engaged at work, make us all right."

"What of Fleming?" inquired Milliken.—"Is he still improving?"

"Improving every day," replied Pat Dolan, who had joined the party. "He has not the slightest idea where he is, and Roddy Flynn tells him some strange stories,—how he happened to be coming home at night and found him lying in a ditch, bruised and bleeding. Fleming is grateful to Roddy, and asks him quite a number of questions, which Roddy declines to answer, on the ground that he is a poor ignorant man, and knows nothing about controversy."

"Never mind Roddy," said Cormac, "he is up to his business."

"He will be very kind to Fleming as long as the latter is confined to his bed, and gives no

trouble in looking over the country to find out where he is," suggested Pat.

"Roddy's wife," said John Mullan, "has no particular love for the villain; she gives Roddy a taste of her temper occasionally, whenever she sees him paying any extra attention to Fleming, and tells that individual plainly that she does not believe he will be able to pay her for all the trouble and annoyance he has occasioned them."

It was now far advanced in the night, and McCracken asked his companions' advice as to whether they should return to Templepatrick, or send a messenger for Mr. Porter to meet them there.

"Porter should see this retreat, and the interview can best take place here," said Milliken.

Cormac and the others were of the same mind, and Phil and Ned Dolan volunteered to start on the road. Milliken took out his pocketbook, and writing a small note, handed it to the brothers, who went on their message.

By Cormac's orders, Peter Mullan was despatched for more oil for the lamp, some firewood, and if Mrs. McQuillan had anything "special" to send, she was to make haste and send it.

In the course of a short time Peter returned with all the requisites for making the select party as comfortable as could be under the circumstances.

Seated around the fire, whose cheerful glow imparted additional animation, the members of this revolutionary party enjoyed each other's conversation with special relish.

Cormac was aware that Milliken had had many hair-breadth escapes, and requested him to favor them with the recital of some of the incidents. "You remember," said Cormac, "you were about rehearsing something of that sort when we thought it prudent to dismount from the stage-coach before arriving at Newry."

"I do, and it was concerning the place we had just then passed," replied Milliken. "You remember the night after the appointment of Russell to the chief command?" said the speaker, addressing McCracken.

"I do, well," rejoined McCracken; "you had two or three commissions to execute in that time."

"No less than five of them between Belfast and Newry," said Milliken; "and I was scarcely two miles beyond Lisburn when I got a reminder to be sharper on the lookout in future. I had been two nights without sleep; and, although the night was cold and frosty, the exercise of walking kept me comfortably warm.—The warmth would force on drowsiness; and, in order to avoid the sensation which was creeping over me, I opened my overcoat and unbuttoned my vest. It was no use. Sleep would overcome me; and several times I found myself sleeping and waking at the same time. I would give a start suddenly, and feel refreshed on awaking. However, I happened to stand for a few minutes at the post of a gateway leading into a field from the roadside, having heard the sound of approaching footsteps. I leaned against the post and fell fast asleep.—How long I remained so, I could not then tell. I was just feeling sensibly refreshed with my nap, when a violent shaking of my arm awoke me. There stood two men, wrapped up in heavy coats, before me. 'Who are you, and what the deuce are you doing here at this time of night?' they inquired, in a tone of voice not altogether calculated to strengthen my nervous system. I at once comprehended that they were yeomanry patrols, and determined to set them at defiance as boldly as possible."

"See here, now," I said, "who are you, and what the deuce are you doing here at this time of night?"

"Come on," said one of the fellows to the other. "Don't you see he is some drunken old tinker?" said the speaker, lifting his foot and kicking an old flat box that had been lying within about a yard of where I stood, and which gave forth a most discordant rattle. To my utter surprise, they both departed, believing, no doubt, that I was what they said. As soon as they were gone, I stooped to examine the "old tinker's box," and only judge my surprise when I found it to be—

"A box of pike-heads," said Pat Dolan, laughing.

"Precisely so," replied Milliken, not a little astonished at Pat's remark.

"Flung down there that same night by Sweeney and his cousin," repeated Pat, "after being chased for two good Irish miles by a lot of Orangemen coming home from a lodge meeting at Broomhedge. I remember it well.—They told me all about it on the following day, when they came home, after searching for their lost treasure."

"I found out afterwards," continued Milliken, "that I had not been over ten minutes dozing when I had been so opportunely shaken up by my passing friends. A meeting was to be held that night about two miles further on, in a barn belonging to one Murphy. The girls were to turn out as well as the boys. I was soon at the place, and, passing through Murphy's house, speedily put on my Quaker garb;

then, entering the barn, proceeded to work with the Bible spread open before me.

"The place was but dimly lighted, and the young men were coming forward to be enrolled as fast as I could enter their names, when Murphy, who was stationed outside along with some others, entered, and gave the word that a party of soldiers were coming in that direction.

"About one-half the young men quietly slipped out, the older ones and all the females remaining."

"Just as I had risen to my feet, with book in hand, in dashed a sergeant and about a dozen of soldiers. Without pretending to even as much as notice them, I proceeded with my Scriptural reading slowly and quite solemnly."

"The soldiers stood still for a few minutes; then, looking over my spectacles, I addressed them with the following words:—'Friends—what—cometh—thou—to—seek? We—are—people—of—peace—and—like—not—the—war—paint—on—your—coats.'

"We know ourselves what we come to seek," replied the sergeant, in a voice which at once satisfied me that he did not intend mischief.

"If—thou—and—thy—friends—wish—to—join—with—us—we—shall—thank—the—Lord—for—the—happy—change."

"We have something else to do just now. Go on, old man, we won't disturb you," said the sergeant, as he and his party took their leave.

"The faintest murmur of a distant laugh sounded on my ears, as the soldiers withdrew. Some of the boys who had gone out, remained eavesdropping, lest the sanctity of our proceedings should be profaned, and I believe they heard all that passed.

"Business over, a fiddler was speedily procured, and the night's proceedings wound up with a good country dance."

"In that case, you changed your religion, Mr. Milliken," said McCracken.

"How?" said Milliken.

"Oh, merely by changing from Quakerism to Shakerism!"

"But I didn't dance," insisted Milliken.

"Here are our friends," said Cormac, as the sound of advancing feet was heard.

The Rev. Mr. Porter, with Phil and Ned, were speedily in the presence of the others.—A warm shaking of hands took place, and Mr. Porter could not help remarking on the strangeness of the place they had met in.

"I had not the pleasure of knowing my two young friends," he said; "but the note from Josiah Wilson, alias Israel Milliken, at once decided for me that they were all right. As we drove along, however, I felt somehow dissatisfied, and once or twice felt inclined to return."

"I observed that," said Phil, "and was just thinking to myself that you didn't believe us, when we said these gentlemen were in a place like this."

"Well, to speak candidly," replied the rev. gentleman, "I had a few doubts, and, entering here, I felt convinced that somehow I was being led into a trap, although I could not, explain it as I might, see how to be mistaken in either one or the other, or both of my guides."

McCracken, and, in fact, the whole of the party heartily enjoyed the difficulties of the rev. gentleman. It never even occurred to them that he would have any scruple in proceeding at once with his guides.

"Now, when I look better into the whole affair," said Milliken, "you had some reason for what you say. However, let that pass; you probably heard that McCracken and myself were made prisoners?"

"Not till I was well on my way here," replied Mr. Potter.

The matter of the arrest and rescue was fully explained, and caused not a little astonishment during its recital.

The question of the intended rising was discussed in all its bearings. Government were driving all things before them; and what with the free quarters of soldiers, and the conduct of the yeomanry, the people would shortly be compelled in defence of whatever liberty was left them, to take the field, and resist by force the tyranny and oppression then grinding them down so fearfully.

"I see no other course open for us," said Cormac, "but one of open resistance. There is nothing left us whatever, that we may call our own. Whatever is ours to-day, may not be ours to-morrow. Neither altars nor hearths are free to us. I differ from some of you, gentlemen, in principles of religion."

"Pass all that by," said the Rev. Mr. Porter.

"But," continued Cormac, emphatically, "the altar I knelt at, the hearth at which I was reared, have been set in flames; the one saved as by a miracle, the other burned by fiends, and my poor mother ruthlessly sacrificed at the moment of our home's destruction."

And the tears trickled from the eyes of the speaker, as he thus gave vent to the thoughts that were burning within him.

"And what was his home was ours also," repeated John Mullan. "His mother was a mother to us, and to-night, my brother and myself are orphans in a double sense, since that fatal day."

"For my part, and that of my poor family," said Pat Dolan, "we must either quit the country, or fight for leave to stay in it. My own life, and the lives of these poor fellows," he said, pointing to his two brave sons beside him, "are not worth that"—and he gave a flip with his thumb and finger—"since the day we fought to save ourselves from being murdered at the fair of Antrim."

"None of us," said McCracken, "are safe, either from persecution, or prosecution—"

"Or worse," said Milliken.

"Quite so, or worse," repeated McCracken; "and, so far as I am enabled to see, things are not improving."

"My own personal experience, and the information I have derived from authentic and reliable sources," said the Rev. Mr. Porter, "enable me to come to this conclusion: Better, a thousand time over, to shake off the incubus of slavery that is dragging us all downward, and die in the attempt, supposing us to be unsuccessful, than lead the lives of suffering we are compelled to endure."

Arrangements were then made to distribute all arms at once, to those not already supplied; to attend strictly to nightly drills, and, wherever feasible and safe, to have midday drills in barns and fields. If surprised by soldiers, or yeomen to fight to the death, rather than to allow one man to be made a prisoner. To avoid as far as possible all conflict with the enemy; but, if attacked, to act resolutely, and give no quarter.

After discussing other matters, and exchanging items of news, the party quietly separated, each pledged to the other to redouble their exertions in the work in which they were engaged.

CHAPTER XVIII.—BRIGID AND KATE, OR, APRIL FOOL—KATE AND BRIGID, A JOKE REPEATED—A CONVERSATION ON COMMON SENSE.

"The cause is good, and the men they are true, And the Green shall outlive both the Orange and Blue! And the triumphs of Erin her daughters shall share, With the full swelling chest, and the fair flowing hair."

Brightly rose the sun in new-made robes of splendor. His refreshing beams were calling forth the imprisoned odors of earth and tree. Buds were thickening on the slender branches, ready to unfold themselves in all the loveliness of their emerald dress.

Birds were trying their earliest notes, half frightened lest the cold of winter had not yet departed. They hopped from branch to branch and chirped, then flew a short distance, and gave forth a dozen notes of melody; still timid on wing, and uncertain in song.

"T was a beautiful spring morning, and Brigid O'Hara and Kate O'Neill were admiring from a room window the early blushes of the season."

"As I live, there comes Cormac Rogan," said Brigid, with a smile.

"Where?" asked Kate, with the least shade of tremulousness in her voice.

"Oh, April Fool!" cried Brigid; and Kate blushed at the anxiety with which she had asked, "Where?"

"What a lovely rogue you are, Kate," insisted Brigid, "to try to look dissatisfied with yourself for noticing my trick on your temper."

Kate could not help laughing at the rosy smile that played around Brigid's mouth just then.

"I forgot it was April Day," she said, "and it is indeed a delightful morning."

"O, very delightful; and a delightful little attempt, too, to change our conversation," said Brigid.

"Do you know," she continued, "the thought of making a fool of you came into my naughty mind just as I had finished my prayers?"

"Then make an act of contrition for your naughtiness," cried Kate, "and I'll forgive you."

"Not till you repent a beautiful act of Hope for poor old Ireland," replied Brigid, catching Kate by the arm.

"That the spring-day of Freedom may one day dawn on this blessed Isle as calmly beautiful as dawned the golden splendors of this delightful morn, is the prayer and hope of my heart," said Kate, with animation.

"And from my heart, I say, Amen," replied Brigid.

"But there will, I fear, be a long night of sorrow and trouble ere that hope be realized, Brigid."

"It is hard to say," answered the girl.—"Troubles, no doubt, are in store for the poor country. She has borne much, and may yet have to bear and suffer a great deal more."

"Too true, too true! dear girl."

"I often wonder, Kate," continued Brigid, "why there is such disparity of mind among those who try how best to serve their country in the hour of their country's need. Look, for instance, at the enthusiasm of Cormac Rogan—"

"And of John Mullan," said Kate.

"Yes; of the whole of those whom we know. And then look at my own father."

"Men will often differ in these as in other things," said Kate.

"I can understand their differing in the usual business of life; but when their country is in