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THE IRISH LEGEND OF M'DONNELL, AND THE NORMAN DE BORGOS.

A BIOGRAPHICAL TALE.

BY ARCHIBALD M'PARRAN.

CHAPTER III.—(Continued.)

The three brothers, now forming a line from right to left, that is, Garry on the right, Daniel on the left, and Finn in the centre, prepared for renewing the battle—the minstrels still continuing the humorous lilt, "Musha, lead miel a faultie, we'll try them again." The words to this air was composed by one of the minstrels who was present at the battle of Clontarf on the part of royal Bryan.

The wing of Baldearg's army that had been separated from the main body, and which had occupied the heights of Glenchinn after the commencement of the battle, marched off coolly and joined their friends. It was now manifest that the victory was undecided, notwithstanding the vigorous efforts on both sides since the early morning. Owen Roe O'Donnell did not think that even the discomfiture of his enemy could have stood him such a struggle, but he now found that he had to deal with men of intrepidity and perfect experience in war, and that Cooney Na Gall O'Caahan had given him a true character of the descendant of De Borgo, the red earl—a name by which William, Earl of Ulster, commonly went.

As he saw that night was coming on, and the business not finished, he ordered his son Odo to march to the old cemetery of Drumachose, and fortify it as well as possible for their night's encampment; also, to escort his sister thither with her maids and attendants, to fit up a place for the wounded, and to have three of the largest beaves slaughtered, and a quantity of fuel collected for the preparation of victuals. As the two parties were pretty well fatigued and exhausted by this day's hard labor, neither had any great wish to commence hostilities again. They, therefore, occupied the remaining part of the day in burying their dead, sometimes within speaking of each other; indeed, there were not many killed in this first engagement, excepting what fell at the time the contention was around the standard. During the time of interment the bards, on both sides, as if in emulation, performed, in melancholy tone, the Irish caoine, accompanying their mournful harps with their voice, and over the slain, lamenting the fate of their fallen companions. The peasantry of the surrounding villages crowded forward to this distressing scene, and could not omit mingling their tears as they silently looked on.

When the last rights were performed to the dead, the bards played a farewell, and each detachment resumed its former position. As

* At the battle of Clontarf the gleaming of the swords in the sun appeared to those at a distance like the flying of white sea-gulls. Bryan received his death-blow from the Dane Bruadhur as he was reaching for his battle-axe given in token of submission, but did not fall till he laid his murderer dead at his feet. Murrough was stabbed by Cnutus, a royal Dane, as he was in the act of raising him where he had fallen under his wounds.

soon as O'Donnell had evacuated the entrenchment. Finn M'Quillan immediately entered it with all his forces, and thereupon sent an express for his father, whom he sincerely pitied, standing all day and beholding the doubtful contest, in which he was so deeply interested; but, to their inexpressible contrition, they saw the enemy drive off all the cattle, not leaving a single hoof behind. The distance which Baldearg fell back might be between two and three furlongs, not so much through necessity as wishing to occupy a strong position in the presence of such an adventurous foe. The place which he had chosen was well calculated for defence against any intruder, having a deep glen behind, and secured by a tolerable ravine, which ran around the graveyard, and served as an embankment. Although this eminence was not remarkably high, yet the building was raised on the very pinnacle of the hill, and had all the advantages in regard of defence that such a situation could possess, as the assailant must ascend, let him approach in whatsoever direction he would.—On seeing the cattle driven off, M'Quillan called to his friends—"Were they willing with him to pursue and renew the engagement? for I plainly see," said he, "and so may you all, that Baldearg, from what he has smelt of our swords to-day, is afraid to retain his position during the night, and, therefore, assisted by darkness, wishes to avoid us."—"We are all as ready to renew the battle now," said they, "as we were to commence it in the morning, and will follow the eagle of De Borgo wheresoever he spreads his wings. Lead us on, lead us on," was the universal cry.

"It is better," said old M'Quillan, who had come forward to the camp, "that a few scouts of the Kerns and light armed infantry follow after them, hovering about their rear, and observe whether, in the course of a mile or two, they halt and go into quarters for the night. If so, we will not molest them till the morning, but, should they appear to continue their march, I would advise that the choice of our troops, by forced marches, cross the river Roe, and post themselves strongly before them, while every man who can bear a sword, not excepting myself, shall follow them up behind, and, when we know that we have them closely wedged between us, let the attack be commenced by the rear-guard raising the shout, so that when they turn to defend themselves, our advanced guard may throw them completely into confusion." To this proposal all unanimously agreed, and the scouts being sent out, returned in the course of about an hour, bringing information that O'Donnell had retired to the chapel of Drumachose, in which he had placed the wounded, and guarded it both behind and before by a strong picket, that they had chosen a large field in front of the graveyard, into which they had put all the cattle, securing them also by a guard, and kindling a number of fires about the field. They saw them also engaged slaughtering some of M'Quillan's largest bullocks, and that the windows of the building were sparkling with light, as if a fire was kindled within. "Since these things are so," said M'Quillan, "let a temporary camp be erected, and cattle slaughtered for the men." They were obliged to drive in some that were pasturing in an adjoining field and have them prepared for the troops. "So we must do," said De Borgo, "as we are done by, and if we obtain our own we can repay them."

After the tents were well secured by boughs and every other material that could make them comfortable, as also fires kindled, and proper guards appointed, they all sat down and feasted heartily. "Come, my brave fellows," said their chief, "I hope you will dine with a good appetite on that for which you have fought, while others are taking the same liberty on your property, yes, even without thanks, and that at our noses, we may say; but if to-morrow morning were come, they shall either severely account to us for these wrested privileges, or otherwise it will be the last dinner to many of us." His words were awfully prophetic; for, to half these brave fellows, it was their last meal in this world. "If," said he, "this day's fight was undecided, I hope we will not have the same story to tell at the conclusion of to-morrow, for we must either return with victory, or sell our lives as dear as possible to our enemies."

The night was calm, and the sky mantled over with lowering clouds, not being illumined by a single star; all nature was hushed around, save these. The cattle, which filled the spacious bounds of Gortmore, thinking of their familiar plains, hills, and wonted stalls, were uttering their innocent plaints in various tones. From the north, the Tons* were roaring like peals of distant thunder, and seemed to be sounding the alarm of the bloody day, that was hastening forward with rapid strides, that day

* The Tons always roar loudly before a storm, and are that part of the sea which beats over the bar of Coleraine.

that was to seal the fate of many brave men. The hoarse Banshee, with dismal yell. Thrice walked the graveyard round. And thrice from the ruin on Knockanban, Made woods and rocks resound. The howling wolf from Evenney's cliff. Roar'd wildly through the gale: And the shrieking owl from Drocnagh's wood, Told forth the fatal tale.

A gentle heart in sorrow sunk, Hung over the grass-grown tomb, And oft she wished for that silent bed, But she wished a night too soon. O'Donnell's flag shall be stained in blood. That never was stained before, And De Borgo's eagle shall flap her wing, Red, red with M'Quillan's gore.

Finn M'Quillan, not being well in mind, from the scenes of the past day, and also from other reasons unmentioned here, and which it would almost be unnatural to introduce in such a place, walked out, alone and unattended, to enjoy the stillness of the night. He was armed with his broadsword, and had on a military cloak and helmet. It was easy for him to hear the distinct voice of the watch that kept guard over the cattle, every one answering and calling to his fellow-sentinel, and that call echoing round the hills. Keeping these men on his right hand, and inclining to the left, he stole quietly down the little stream which occupies a deep glen south of the burying ground; and in the church or chapel of which his bloody enemy was posted at the time. He had crept through the brake, until he was immediately below the yard which descended in an abrupt declivity to the spot where he was; and from an opening in the back part of the building, his ear was stricken by the groans of the wounded, to whose distress, we must suppose, at that time they had few physicians skilful enough to administer. While he lay concealed here, two voices approached him in deep consultation, and talking of the events of the past day; it was Owen Roe O'Donnell and Cahir Roe O'Dougherty. "I had no expectation," said the former, "that our enemies were so masterly in manœuvring their forces, and choosing the advantageous ground both for attack and defence. They made a bold push for our colors, but the reception was too sharp for them to abide long. To do them justice, we must confess, they are brave men, and were as firmly supported by their gallowghs."—"I should like much," said O'Dougherty, "to meet Finn M'Quillan in single combat; I think I would stop his manœuvring for one day. Did you hear that noise among the bushes: had we not better explore those recesses? Perhaps some of our enemies are lurking about to overhear our deliberations."—"You need be in no fear of that," said the other; "the business of to-morrow hangs too heavy on their hands to allow them time for such practices, nor do I think any of them would have the audacity to risk himself near our trenches. I intend, however, to give them an early morning of it, if I can, and with that intention have ordered all to be in readiness for action at break of day. See what a daring attempt they made to-day, in order to get behind us, a ruse de guerre which we might more easily have predicted on them."

They at length returned into the fortress, leaving this solitary young man by himself, and unaccompanied by any, save those who peopled the regions of the dead, lying here free from wars, and the rumors of wars, and free from the manifold broils and commotions that agitate this lower world. As he lay here almost lost in a deep and gloomy reverie a glaring light spread itself over a great part of the yard, reflected from the old lattice windows of the chapel, and giving to his view the dilapidated state of the sacred edifice. The graves that were heaped close together were all grown over with rank grass and nettles, the common vegetables of such places. At length he heard a number of voices, and saw several persons approach carrying a dead soldier. Six men pre-

* The former name of Fruithill the present residence of Marcus M'Causland, Esq. † I am informed that there is a record in the Cathedral of Londonderry, showing that this church was founded in the year 1300. How true it is, I will not venture to say; but think it might be of a longer standing. It bears, however, in its north-west corner, the manifest marks of Cromwell's cannon, a salutation that he, in his true character, gave to all Catholic houses of worship. As these breaches have never been repaired, it is a complete proof of his never having been occupied by the worshippers in any other religion. It is now above 175 years since Cromwell came to Ireland. The other day, in a neighboring gentleman's house I have found the lock and key of this antique building. It is of curious but coarse workmanship; its bolt is a small bar of iron nearly two inches in breadth, and one in thickness, being staked in glenwood oak, half-an-inch deep of which is completely decayed, so that it may be picked away by the finger; the key has been weighty, but is greatly corroded by rust, the front part of which, from grating against the bolt, is much worn down. The lock and key weigh nine pounds, but formerly, I should think, must have been more. When the bolt is shot, the letters H and E appear, engraved with a coarse tool, probably the initials of the mechanic's name. Whether this has been the first lock of the building, is uncertain.

ceded the body, bearing torches, and two others bearing his sword and habergeon. Having come to a vacant corner of the yard, they dug a grave, and laying the body into it, just in the manner in which he came from the field of battle, they afterwards filled up the pit, each looking upon his fellow with an ominous aspect.

The bards, tuning their harps over the deceased, then sang a long requiem to his manes; and after this doleful scene was over, they performed the last farewell, or bennacht leat, marching away in the order in which they came, arms-bearers, torch-bearers, and all.

The last sight that M'Quillan witnessed had a powerful effect on his mind. The glare of the sombre light across this silent recess of mortality; the old crumbling pile that stood there exhibiting in its falling roof and fretted cornice the lapse of time unknown; the two venerable sages hanging over the yawning grave, with their beards of snow; the wild and softening pathos of the harp, with the body coming to meet its kindred dust; and that situation in which he himself might be ere that time to-morrow. I say, the sum of these scenes could not but leave him in an awful and thinking posture of mind. As he lay here pondering over these deep striking pictures, not indeed troubled with any supernatural fears, for his heart was as stout as that of a lion, he fancied that he heard a profound sigh towards a dark corner in the yard, and immediately beside where the soldier so lately was interred; turning himself around, he heard another, and still a deeper.

"Dost thou not behold, Malvina, a rock with its head of heath; three aged pines bend from its face; green is the narrow plain at its feet; there the flower of the mountain grows, and shakes its white head in the breeze; the thistle is there alone shedding its aged beard; two stones half sunk in the ground show their heads of moss; the deer of the mountain avoids the place, for he beholds a grim phost standing there. The mighty lie, O Malvina, in the narrow plain of the rock."—(O.

From the obscurity of the night he could not easily perceive any object, although it might be pretty near to him; but still he heard a weighty sigh, and, if one might trust to conjecture, it seemed to be the effusion of a troubled heart. "Can this being," said he, "be any individual, who, overwhelmed with grief, has sought this dreary abode to pour out the overflowings of a distressed mind, while nought stands by but a few time-bleached head-stones, whose low-lying tenants hear not the mourner's tale; or, is there such a thing as the return of any supernatural existence to this nether world? If, indeed, there is a reality in the last idea, it is what I never believed, but shall be glad now to have the matter determined."

As he said these last words to himself he arose, and was retiring down toward the stream, but immediately, hearing a light foot behind him, he looked back, and saw a slender appearance, wrapped apparently in a white shroud, following him slowly. He turned round, and spreading his arms to catch the shadowy appearance, it fell cold against his breast. 'Twas Laura O'Donnell. She had seen and known him, even in the dark, when he first came down the river side, and followed him secretly wherever he went. She knew that this would be their last interview, whether her father were victorious or not, and could not leave the spot before she spoke to him. "Can you speak to one of the hateful race of O'Donnell," said she, "after what they have done to your family, to your country, and to yourself? Was it thus I was treated at the hospitable castle of Dunluce, with my dear Avoline M'Quillan? Tell her I have come like the basest and most ungrateful enemy against the parent who nourished her, against the brothers who supported her, and against her pillaged country. And what has urged a female mind to such revenge? The warmest friendship from a father, the sincerest affection from a sister, and both from a —"

At this place she burst into a flood of tears, and gently leaned her head on his shoulder.—"The cold of the night air," said he, "I fear, will be injurious to your delicate frame," and, stripping his cloak from himself, he wrapped it around her.—"Such trifles," said she, "cannot be injurious to her who, leaving the softness of her sex, comes out like an amazon, intent only on blood."—"Cease these severe invectives against thyself," said he, "and let us not lose our precious time talking over such disagreeable matters. I am perfectly aware of the compulsion used toward you, and have felt very much since I was informed that you were brought to a place so unbecoming you. But how could you come alone, and in the clouds of night, into this region of the dead, a place even appalling to the heart of a soldier?"—"I came," said she, "attended by two maids, accompanying the remains of the poor soldier.—They are standing beneath yonder thorn that hangs over the late-made grave, while I walked hither, wishing to meet with I know not what, only fulfilling the chimera suggested by a dream which I had to-night."

"And, beautiful Laura," said he, "were your thoughts composed for dreaming, and you sleeping under the open canopy of a bed, alone hard enough for the adventurous veteran? If I would not be accounted an intruder, or rather if you would not account me importunate, might I ask if your dream was happy or otherwise? Did it concern your friends or your enemies?"—"This was an insurmountable interrogation, in answer to which she hung down her head, and said she hoped she had few enemies. "But I beg you ask no farther than I shall tell you; my dream is fulfilled in part, and the remainder was rather unpleasant. I thought I saw you rolled in blood."—He smiled at this latter part, saying, "And why, my sweet girl, would you not like to see the blood of an enemy? but this means nothing more than what I shall do to your countrymen to-morrow."—"Were you wounded to-day?" said she. "I have been informed you were."

"My younger brother received a slight scar," said he; "but I remain unhurt, excepting an old wound which I received the last time you were at Dunluce, and I fear it is opened afresh to-night."—"I think," said she, "there is some person not far from us, for I have seen two heads above the hill that have now disappeared. I wish that you had either not come, or that you were safely away, for the sentinels frequently patrol the circuit of this yard."—"I have tired your patience," said he, "and, I fear, detained you too long in the cold; but it is long since I had this happiness, and was led some how or other this way to-night, scarcely knowing for what or where I came, and if this interview should be our last, —"—"I cannot leave you," said she, interrupting him, and clinging to his arm.—Her two maids came forward now and whispered to her that she was missing, and that her brother and one of the sentinels were searching for her. "I shall see you through the yard," said he.—"No, no, no," said she, putting his cloak about him, "leave me, leave me, leave me."

This she spoke in a frantic manner, and walked hastily through the yard, attended by her maids, uttering, as she went, "Alas, alas, to-morrow." After M'Quillan had departed some few paces, he perceived a little dog following him, and used many fruitless exertions in attempting to send him back. At length, seeing that he could not prevail, he said to him, and almost involuntarily, "And, my pretty little friend, what shall I do with you?"—"Let him follow you," said she, speaking from the other side of the trench. She had heard him talking to the animal, and her anxiety, lest he had fallen in with the guard, caused her to return. "Let him go with you; 'twas from Dunluce he came, and has attended me faithfully since. Not all our endeavours could cause him to stay behind me on this ill-fated journey: let him be your aid-de-camp to-morrow. Good night, my dear friend," uttering the last words in a low tone of voice; "good night, Dunn." She named him after the castle of Dunluce, where all her happiness centered. As he was leaving the outer part of the fosse that surrounded the yard in the back part, and turning to the right, wrapped up in his cloak, and meditating on the events of that night, a man leaped before him, calling aloud, "Who comes?"—"I am the spirit of the soldier that was interred to-night," said he, "going in search of my enemies; stand off!" at which the other hesitated a few minutes; but concluding that an aerial being would not press the ground so weightily as he did, he leaped before him a second time, and demanded, in a more peremptory tone, "Who are you?"—"An enemy to Baldearg," said he, grasping his sword and retiring two steps; "an enemy to bloody Baldearg," roared he a second time, and with a spring took the hill of him, rolling his cloak round his left arm. The other, however, with an equal effort, gained the same height, and swore—"To that very name you shall surrender, or your fate is the fate of the deceased soldier whom you wish to counterfeit," and at these last words attempted to close upon him.

Having defended himself for some time, with difficulty he got clear of him, and ran backward; at which the other, thinking that he had betaken himself to flight, rushed after him up the hill, but was disarmed at one stroke as he attempted a second time to grapple with him. "Beg your life from me, Baldearg," said he, "I know you perfectly."—"I scorn to receive it at your hands," said the other; "your superiority was accidental, and, therefore, you should not exult."—"Well then," said M'Quillan, "I shall teach you a lesson of humanity by giving that which, perhaps, I could not obtain, if in your situation."—"On what private business have you dared," said he, "to come so near our garrison? Or is it, sheltered by darkness, and stealing like the midnight thief, that you come forth murderously intent on the execution of some base design, and also to a place where, in the broad glare of day, you dare not show your face.—Dare you meet me," said he, "to-morrow,