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**THE IRISH LEGEND OF
M'DONNELL,
AND
THE NORMAN DE BORGOS.**
—
A BIOGRAPHICAL TALE.
—
BY ARCHIBALD M'SPARRAN.
—
CHAPTER III.—(Continued.)

On coming in sight of the cabin, they were met by the master before they came forward, carrying a weighty bludgeon of black thorn under his arm, and his hat in his hand.

"Musha, good marrow marning to you," says he, "and you're a thousand times welcome."

"M'Ilvannan," said M'Quillan, "we are about to have a race, if you allow us."

"Arrah, long life to yourselves; many a good race, my blessing light on the times, I have seen about Dunluce a hiskey. But why do you ask if I will let yes? Sure you know I have been sick this season almost from hal-lontide, and bad luck to the morsel of anything gave it to me, but just, as you observe, for want of a good race."

"Why," said M'Quillan, "the business is, Sir Henry John O'Neill has challenged all the North of Antrim, from the Bann to the Bush, and from the Bush to Croughmore, boasting that old Tarah could run away from them all."

"Arrah, by the frost, although I wouldn't like to pick a quarrel with Mister O'Neill, because, as I may safely say, he's an ould cronie of yours, master, but if he was Tarah over again, by Sheemiss a Murphy I'll find a horse will run with him, and that not very far off either, mind I'm telling yes," at the same time drawing himself up on his centre and assuming more confidence.

"And pray," said M'Quillan, "where is that horse, for I can think of none swift enough?"

"If yes don't know then, I tell you without putting a tooth in it, and bad luck to the other horse I mane than the Brimmagh Dhu," striking the palm of his hand sharply with the cudgel, and looking with determination in O'Neill's face.

"From this saying," said his master, "am I to understand that you will let him run to save the honor of our country?"—"Arrah, by the nine Whilans, if he could run with the wind, you'll get him with a faultie."—"I find, therefore, that you are willing, and since this day is so far spent, I wish that you have him in readiness pretty early to-morrow, and bring him to the ground with your son, who, I intend, shall ride for the honor of the family of M'Quillan and the castle of Dunluce." M'Ilvannan went away as much loaded with honor as if he had been chosen in the combat of the Horatii against the Curatii. A messenger was immediately despatched to Clanbuoy to prepare old Tarah, and have him on the ground before ten the next morning, with his jockey, O'Kelly and all his furniture.

M'Ilvannan turned into his cabin after the gentlemen took leave of him, and raising himself up like an orator, with the hat on his brows, and still retaining the cudgel fast grasped by the middle; "Musha, by my faith," said he, stopping in the middle of the sentence, and calling choo to Driver, who interrupted him by fawning on him; "Choo agaddy, I say, your bad manners; arrah, will some of

yes take hold of that dog till I be done speaking."

The dog was now laid hold on by two of the children, who, with much difficulty, held him down, but still the faithful animal kept his eye fixed on his master—a personage dearer to him than the emperor of all the east.

"I say," said he, "d'ye see me now? I am chosen to prap up the honor of Mister M'Quillan, by running the Brimmagh Dhu against ould Tarah of Clanbuoy, as I was saying, honey. What's that I smell burning in the fire over bye there? Arrah, why don't yes look out to the sheep, ye lazy blaggard spalpeens you, as I may say. Well, then, hang me—where did you leave the cow's pat? But, to make a long story short—who's that gwine whiskin along the ditch, and a brown dog after him?"

As he pronounced the last word, Driver, espying the dog, bolted through between his legs, overturning both the children, and nearly taking the feet from the orator, who struck wickedly at him as he passed, with a marafastie to the bad breed of yes; but, as soon as he saw him and the other engage, throwing away his cudgel, he ran after him with a thousand willillious and hirrus—Now, agaddy; now shake him, ahalligh.

The purport of this unfinished oration was to tell his family that he stood pledged for the honor of M'Quillan.

The place where the Brimmagh stood was, with wattles and plaster, made as close as a magpie's nest, then lined within with straw mats to save him from the walls, and appearing as dark as a vault.

A messenger now came from Dunluce for the colt, and bringing a good cover with him, so that he might appear as respectable as possible.

All the peasantry, even to the little boys, now gathered out and marched along with the young hero, who was about to make his first experiment on the sod. The ground on which the match was to be run, was a little green eminence having a stone fence of a circular form round its extremity, nearly a mile in length; the field was altogether flat, save this little protuberance, which was a good stand for the spectators, and which, including all the ditches and hills in the neighborhood, was well covered.

After they had waited long in anxious expectation, holding their hands above their eyes, and as every horse topped the hill, hearing the cry, There they come, old Tarah at length appeared, covered and led by a groom. When he was stripped, he showed like an old veteran, who, often victorious, and thinking that his services in the field were done, was yet obliged to come forth against a new opponent. As he passed along with a light step, his fiery eye rolled red and restless, viewing the ground and grading the well burnished bit, all laved in foam. His color was a dark chestnut, with a few scattered hairs on his tail, his back speckled with snowdrops, and the scars on his flanks represented the laurels of many a hard-earned victory.

The Brimmagh, when stripped, was what we would call a pretty animal, having a small white ratch, as some jockeys term it, turning over the far nostril; in color he was black as jet, and his glossy skin shone like oilcloth. He was hard and round, and for a horse of his height, few could be found occupying such a space of ground. His mane flowed in waves over his neck, one of his forefeet turning a little out, and to crown all, his sweeping black tail fell down to his heels.

Sir Henry John O'Neill rode forward, having Sir Coll M'Donnell on his right hand, and young Daniel M'Quillan on his left; and as they were riding up to the castle, said, "I will double the bets if you add another mile to the heat, making it four times round the course, or four miles."

"I fear," said M'Quillan, "the only chance we stand in is the short heat; for you know the animal is young, and I might almost say untried."—"He is active, however, and light of foot," said O'Neill, "and it is more than probable will take the first heat from Tarah,—that is, if he keep the course, otherwise it will spoil the sport."

He was at length prevailed upon to allow the colt to run the four-mile heat, and O'Neill giving orders for mounting, O'Kelly sprung him off, and put him half round the course, preparing him for the start, at which the other attempted to run off after him, and when he was overpowered by his rider, gaped and shook his head, bolting forward, and endeavoring to disengage himself of the rein.

"Arrah, gramachree," said his master, running forward and clapping him and chafing his neck, "be aisy for a little, and we'll soon give you freedom."

M'Ilvannan at this time became quite restless, running from one side of the course to another, muttering, and not thinking himself right in any ground.

As old Tarah came up to the start a second time, he appeared quite another animal, his veins swollen and sinews at full tension, his ears laid forward like those of a hare, and cutting all the capers he was wont to do at a more juvenile age.

The jockey was dressed in buckskin and scarlet, with a white sash round his middle; young M'Ilvannan in buckskin and green, with a scarlet sash, and white caps both.

If old Tarah had a noble appearance, the Brimmagh of his kind was no less so, proudly looking through his winkers like a young soldier something vain in his first habiliments of war.

The Dunluce men stood arranged on one side, with hope, fire, and anxiety painted in their features, and mostly armed with cudgels, watching only for an excuse to sally out on the Clanbuoy boys, who stood opposite them, as well prepared and as warm for the strife in favor of their hero.

There was a stand erected in the centre, with a canopy, but admitting a view of the course in all directions, and on this structure stood old Daniel M'Quillan with the ladies.

A universal murmur that spread from right to left, announced the moment of start, and that being followed by a huzza from both parties, caused the spectators, who were advanced on the course, to look back, when the first object that saluted their eyes was the white face of the Brimmagh Dhu, bearing for head, and his rider leaning back with both arms separate and at full tension. Old Tarah was running hard upon his rear, on whose back O'Kelly seemed to be exerting his utmost efforts in pulling, at one time leaning forward as if to collect strength, and again rising in the saddle and casting himself backward until his head nearly came in contact with the spine.

"Three cheers for Clanbuoy and old Tarah, that never came in hindmost yet," shouted those on the left.

"As many for Dunluce," shouted those on the right, "and the black colt that never was tried before."

"Keep him back," said Garry M'Quillan, to young M'Ilvannan, as he was passing.

"I am not able," said he.

As they came up to O'Neill in another part of the course, "Give the boy fair play," said he, "and not press him so much to the wall."

They had encircled the ground once and no great difference, each running nearly in the berth in which he started, and receiving the plaudits of their prenzled countrymen as they bore along. "Now, old Tarah for ever—now you're doing it in style, old veteran."

'Twas coming round the third time that those on the centre of the area thought that the Brimmagh was coming alone, so equal were they, head for head, man for man; and it was still evident to the spectators that there was a strong rein on them yet, but that they were coming to matters in a kindly manner, as a jockey would say.

The Brimmagh's rider had now shaken off much of the dread which he had at first, and it must be confessed, rode well. All called out it was as good a match as ever was run.

As they began to encompass it the fourth time, both were doing what they could, and receiving admonition alternately, from heel and hand, as the poet says.

"Can you do no more?" said M'Quillan to his man, at which, applying sharply both whip and spur, he gained the length of his neck, and kept it until he reached the goal, from which they were not more than two hundred yards.

The air was now rent with cries from the Dunluce men, and the master of the Brimmagh, being no longer able to wear either coat or hat, came bounding forward rather like a man out of his ordinary senses, whillillieing, "The Brimmagh Dhu Gobraigh a halligh," and "I knew he could do the business."

Every wisp now that could touch their bodies was busily employed in drying them, old Tarah appearing as small as the kidney as a foal, and the colt's glossy skin shining like jet, and copiously dripping the perspiration.

Young M'Ilvannan had his arms nearly shaken off by his neighbors, and happy was he who could get a hold of him.

Old Tarah was well caressed also, and hailed with almost as much joy as if he had come in foremost.

After they were drenched with cordials, and properly cool, they were mounted a second time, and a horseman sent off to clear the course before them.

As O'Kelly passed along, walking until the time of starting, O'Neill called him, and addressing him rather sharply, said, "O'Kelly, I do not wish that you should make child's play any longer, I know the horse is both durable and well winded, therefore I charge you, let him run off from the start, bearing him well, but by no means pushing, until you are within the last circle."

put his hand to his cap, as much as to say, your mandates shall be obeyed.

His opponent, hearing the harangue, knew that if he pushed from the start, he, through necessity, must do the same, and so he prepared himself accordingly.

Both being reined about, and getting the word, went off like a clap of thunder, Tarah taking the lead. After the first round the Brimmagh passed him, and got into his old berth with a cheer from his friends, at which O'Neill called to his man, "If he can do it let him not come in hindmost." They were now running remarkably hard, the wind whistling from them as they came round. In the last or fourth circuit Tarah fully cleared himself, a space of which he did not lose an inch during the heat. And now the uproar was around the victor, the air ringing with acclamations, and darkened by the throwing up of hats from all quarters, the Brimmagh being as much caressed as if he had been victorious, his master walking before him triumphantly, and brandishing his cudgel round his head in token of defiance. The cattle were well rubbed and walked till they were cool, and every cordial procured for them which was considered to be a restorative.

M'Quillan's jockey was pale as ashes, and rather weak, but was taken into the castle with his adversary, and there regaled with a glass of wine. There was, around all the course, at this time a double spirit of anxiety and deep interest, each of the cattle having taken a heat, and each party equally sanguine in favor of their champion.

They were ordered at length to mount, and M'Quillan, taking his jockey aside, said, "Let Tarah lead you by nothing more than a neck for the two first rings; then, if it appears to you that you can hold to him with any kind of ability for so far, I wish you to pass him if possible; but, be assured, if you let him away from you any distance, you'll never catch him again."

They were to start this time at the firing of a pistol, which they did, going off as if impelled by gunpowder, the Brimmagh, notwithstanding all M'Quillan's injunctions, taking the lead, and making as if he would run away with his rider; but he was hardly pressed by his veteran adversary running him up to the girth to the fourth round, when whips and spurs were all plied with vigor, old Tarah driven hard for the heat, and the Brimmagh pressed hard to keep his ground, when, to the astonishment of all present, they came to the goal even heads, the winkers of the colt barely distinguished by the judges past old Tarah's forehead, but no other difference, therefore it was made a dead heat; and all coming forward, declared it would be criminal to carry the contention farther. This being the opinion of the two undertakers, it was agreed that they should resign as they began, asserting that such a pair and such a match never had been witnessed on that course before.

They now procured a couple of bagpipers from Sir Coll M'Donnell's Scottish regiment, and caused them to play before them round the circus, leading those two beautiful animals after. Old M'Ilvannan came forward caressing his horse, and taking to him as was his usual custom, making moan for him, and praising him all in the same breath.

The gentry now withdrew to the castle to spend the night in hilarity, and talk over the pleasures of the day, which did not fail to afford abundance of entertainment, as scarcely a leap was taken on which there was not some remark made. About an hour after, the porter announced the arrival of a stranger at the outer gate, whose business personally was with Sir Henry John O'Neill, and that he refused to deliver a sealed packet which he bore, unless to himself.

"I am at a loss to know," said Sir Henry, "who this person is, or from whence; but you had better inform him that I await him at the drawbridge."

The porter having done as he was ordered, and the stranger coming to the place appointed, he was immediately recognised by his friend to be Sir Hugh M'Phelim O'Neill of Tyrone, son of old Sir Phelim O'Neill of said place.

After the ordinary ceremonies of salutation were over, the latter delivered the packet to his friend, with his father's sincere wishes for the family's welfare.

Sir Henry retired into an open apartment and unsealed the parcel. It contained thanks to him for his proffered services, but also informed him that a friendship was now cemented between Sir Phelim O'Neill and the illustrious house of Tyrone; that he was happy it had ended agreeably to his mind, for, otherwise, it must have been productive of many of those lamentable evils usually attendant on war. He also wished him in his name to thank the noble house of De Borgo for the like proffered services, and to assure them of his friendship.

"I am extremely gratified at this news," said Sir Henry O'Neill, "first on account of our

own family and connections, I mean, when I say so, the O'Neills and their friends, and secondly, on another account which I think you will learn before you leave the castle."

Sir Hugh O'Neill was only a boy at this time; but he, notwithstanding his tender years, was of an exalted demeanor, being handsome in his person, and tastefully arrayed in the uniform of an Irish officer of dragoons. He was informed by his friend concerning Sir Coll M'Donnell's arrival, and likewise the expedition on which he came, but also of his severe contention for the part he had undertaken, "hoping," said he, "that an accommodation would be effected before he would leave the friends whom Providence had raised and collected together on that tempestuous night, yes, even to the spot of our shipwreck, to save us from the merciless seas."

"Before said he, 'I could become an enemy to those who saved me and my men from a watery grave, and who have cherished me in their bosom ever since, I would cheerfully fight the tempestuous billows over again, leaving my safety to fate.'

"These are his words," said O'Neill, "and the words of a young man, who, to the finest feelings and character of a gentleman, adds that of a patriot and soldier. I shall have the happiness presently of introducing you to him, who, like yourself, is a young knight, and, I entreat, my dear friend, whatever topic of conversation the company chance to discuss, that you will avoid anything pointed regarding the expedition on which Sir Coll M'Donnell has come to Ireland. I shall also be happy in introducing you to my good friend and his family, I mean M'Quillan; and I charge you to guard your heart, for there is a young lady of this same family of a philosophical countenance that in a short time, I don't fear, will disarm you, and render you careless of all the beauties in Tyrone."

"You are introducing me, then to danger," said Sir Hugh; "a warm-brained soldier on the one hand, and a pretty fascinating girl on the other. So take care, I counsel you, how bring me out."

Having prepared him for the company, and led him in, he performed his promise, the entire family being overjoyed to hear of the tidings of peace between the Tyrone power and the Tyrone; but if the tidings of peace brought joy to them, it brought much more to Sir Coll M'Donnell, who thought the day on which he must leave Dunluce as fatal to him as it had been his last. His stay there was, indeed, short as yet; but, during that minimum of time, he had talked himself into love with that sweet, interesting girl, an original of her kind. On the other hand, the honor of his father's house was pledged for the fulfilment of this intended expedition to Tyrone, and, therefore, if tearing himself from Dunluce should be done at the forfeiture of half his life, he was resolved to do it, but never could think of drawing his sword against them, no, not even in defence of himself. So the news that Sir Hugh O'Neill brought to the castle that night could not fail to exhilarate the hearts of its inmates, but of none so much as that of the young Highlander.

Aveline and her friend had been well attended to during the day by their young knight, who, dismounting, and giving his horse to a servant, squired them around the circus, and then, when they wished, retired with them to the stand. They had been in an apartment of their own when young O'Neill arrived, and, before they entered the great hall, were informed of the event.

As there was to be a ball this night in the castle, as well as the night of Aveline's birth, they had the hall hung round with ivy and holly.

Aveline M'Quillan and pretty Rose O'Neill appeared in a dress altogether different from what they had worn on her birth night, although it was as genuinely national. They had made a bargain or contract that they should both appear in the same garb, excepting the necklaces.

When they came in, Sir Henry did to his friend the same honors which he on a former occasion had done to Sir Coll M'Donnell. As for pretty Rose she had seen him before. Seating himself beside the ladies, he was much entertained with their conversation, wherein they described to him as much as they possibly could the diversion of the day.

"I should have been glad," said he, "to have added one to your party, that is, admitting you and your guardians would have been complaisant enough to receive me."

"O, certainly," said pretty Rose, "your company would have been quite agreeable to us, but our protection did not consist of the plural number, we had only one."

"So then," said Sir Hugh, "fair cousin, I probably might have been delegated as a second in commission."

"Yes," said his friend, "if our commander-in-chief had approved of your services."

"And was it necessary," said he, "that I