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TURLOUGH O'BRIEN;

OR,
THE FORTUNES OF AN IRISH SOLDIER.
CHAPTER LIII.—THE CAMP AND THE FIELD OF
AUGHRIM.

After little more than an hour's brisk riding, Turloch O'Brien found himself traversing the straight and narrow paved road, which in those days formed the immediate approach of the ancient town of Aughrim.

The misty moonlight covered the whole landscape: to the left rose the softened outline of the hill of Kilcomedan—a gentle eminence of a mile or so in length, with the little town of Aughrim snugly nestled at its foot, and the white canvas of the Irish camp studding its crest from end to end. Hundreds of ruddy fires were glowing and around them were visible the gliding forms of soldiery and peasants; a hum and murmur like that of a crowded city, filled the night air. The lowing of cattle, penned for slaughter in the ruined castle which flanked the road, close to its entrance into the town, the distant neighing of horses, and the sullen roll of drums, enhanced, by a thousand martial and thrilling associations, the excitement which made his heart beat thick and fast, as he drew near the destined field of battle.

He soon fell in with the Irish pickets, and having stated his rank, and proved it by producing his commission, was, at his own request, conducted directly to Lord Lucan's tent. Passing, therefore, through the then excited little town, with its stout, heavy-chimneyed, thatched houses, ringing with laughter, and singing, and all kinds of merriment, he pursued, with his escort, the steep road which mounts the crest of the sweeping hill, and entering the entrenched camp, found himself in a few minutes in Sarsfield's tent. His welcome was frank and cordial.

"You have a keen relish, colonel, for danger," said he, briskly; "you have just arrived in time—to-morrow we expect hot work enough, and to spare; but it is needful you should see the precious commander-in-chief they have sent us from Paris, before you assume the command of your regiment; so let us to his tent at once, as much is to be done, and little time to do it in."

"Had I not better first see O'Mara, and get at my trunk mails?" said Turloch, glancing at his unimpaired attire, "these French generals, they say, are punctilious in matters of the toilet."

"Pshaw! what care you or I for the coxcomb's fancies," said Sarsfield, gruffly, at the same time planting his cocked hat carelessly on, and taking Turloch by the arm; "we don't want *petit maîtres*, but men of head and action, and the oftener we let him see it, the better he's like to behave himself; besides, I command the cavalry, and I stand between you and the fellow's annoyance; if he don't like your dress, we can't help it—there's matter more important for to-night, than trimming of ruffles and unpapering of gold lace."

As he thus spoke, he led O'Brien through a portion of the camp, until they reached, near the very summit of the hill, one of these ancient raths which abound in Ireland; this was an unusually large one, with a high embankment hedged with wild bushes and brambles surrounding it; and in the centre of the enclosed area stood the tent of the Marquis de St. Ruth. Passing the sentinels who guarded the levelled way into the fort, and who saluted Lord Lucan, that officer led his companion to the general's tent.

"Lord Lucan," said Sarsfield, curtly announcing himself to the starch old military servant who came to the tent door.

"Pray come in, my lord," answered the grizzled veteran, with a low inclination, and employing the French language, in which the subsequent conversation was also conducted.

General St. Ruth was sitting writing at a table under a strong light. He was a well-built, handsome man, of some fifty years; sharp and masculine of feature; dark complexioned; and with a countenance decidedly bold and energetic, though marred a little in expression by a certain superciliousness, not to say disdain, which had, perhaps, helped to provoke the positive dislike with which Lord Lucan regarded him. Without raising his head, the French general continued to write in apparent unconsciousness of the presence of his visitors. If this unconsciousness was assumed, it was certainly well acted. Sarsfield, however, abruptly terminated it by intimating his presence in a sharp and peevish tone.

General St. Ruth rose and received Lord Lucan with a formal and distant salutation, and remained standing, it is to be presumed, to avoid the necessity of asking his visitor to be seated.

"Some business, I presume, my lord?" he said, drily enough.

Sarsfield replied by presenting Turloch O'Brien, and to him St. Ruth spoke for several minutes with easy courtesy, never addressing one word to his companion, who, much nettled at the foreigner's studied coolness, constrained his resentment so far as to affect indifference.

"Adieu, colonel," said St. Ruth at last, still confining his attention to O'Brien, "we much needed cavalry officers, such as I already judge you to be—gentlemen who understand and do their own business, without interfering in that of others."

"By my faith," interposed Sarsfield, unceremoniously, and almost savagely—for he knew that the last remark had been pointed at himself;—"there is, indeed, a sore lack of men who understand their business here—a dearth by no means mended by any late arrivals we can boast. It was conspicuously proved at Athlone, and I trust may not be so again to-morrow."

"If you have no further business with me, my lord," said the general, tartly, "may I pray you—as ceremony seems to be dispensed with here—to direct your care, for an hour or so, to your men and horses—and leave me to arrange the business of to-morrow. Your orders shall be with you by two o'clock to-night. Adieu."

"Marquis of St. Ruth," retorted Sarsfield, bluntly, while the blood mounted to his face; "I seek not to be consulted by you—though, perchance, wiser men have asked and followed my advice." Of this much, however, he assured—but that the king's service demands forbearance, spite of your command and your commission, I would, on the spot, teach you to respect an Irish gentleman."

St. Ruth changed color, and made a menacing movement of his hand toward his sword-hilt;—he mastered the impulse, however,—and with a shrug, and an ominous smile, he said, briefly—

"You can explain this language hereafter and elsewhere, my lord."

He then bowed very low, pointing at the same time toward the door. Thus ended O'Brien's introduction—and thus concluded a conference which had well-nigh ended in bloodshed.

"Ah, my good friend, honest Caillard," exclaimed St. Ruth, with a profound and anxious sigh, as he threw himself into his chair; "woe worth the day that ever I accepted this command." For some seconds he remained silent and abstracted. "What say you, Caillard—a bad affair?" he abruptly added, glancing at the trim old soldier.

"My good lord," answered he, kindly and respectfully, "I have often heard you say as much, when we were serving in Savoy. It is, after all, but fatigue; half an hour's sleep, or a cup of coffee, and all is bright again."

St. Ruth smiled, but shook his head, and then almost sadly added—

"No, no, Caillard—this is a very different business; this appointment has made me enemies at home—powerful enemies; and here, you see how it is. Louvois is my enemy—this Irish command has made him so; he continued, in gloomy abstraction: "Louvois—Louvois, a dangerous, dangerous gentleman—specially dangerous in absence; and this Lord Lucan, and his Lutterels, factious, insubordinate truly—among them all, I hold my honors on a fragile tenure; by my faith, a miscarriage here were a grave matter for me—ruin, ruin, nothing short of ruin."

He relapsed into silence, and resumed his writing, which occupied him for nearly half an hour longer.

"Eh, bien, my friend—so far it is well done," said he, briskly, rising and throwing the pen upon the table; orders and despatches—all done, and the plan complete; to-morrow's battle here—all here, and he touched his forehead. "So, by my faith, I've earned my biscuit and my glass of wine, for this night, at least, methinks; what say you, my trusty Caillard? Come, bring the flask—and bring a glass, too, for yourself," he added, gaily and kindly; "drink, drink to your master's success—drink to his Irish laurels; for, by St. Denis, I'm resolved to gather them, tho' it be but to plant them on my grave."

The memorable 12th of July, 1691, rose over the destined field of battle in one of those heavy fogs which portend unusual heat. Before seven o'clock, scouts came spurring in with the exciting intelligence, that the whole English force was rapidly crossing the river Suck, at Bailinastoe, and the fords adjacent, just three miles distant from the field of Aughrim.

At eight o'clock the columns of Irish infantry were formed all along the front of the camp;—and with colors displayed, and drums beating, began to march down the slope of the hill, and get into position. The cavalry destined for the outposts moved forward, and the artillery, with all its lumbering appliances, advanced to occupy the several batteries whence its fire was to play upon the assailing army.

A few words must here be said in explanation of the Irish position. The hill of Kilcomedan is in no part very steep—it forms a gradual slope, extending almost due north and south, from end to end, a distance of about a mile and a half;—and at the time of which we speak, it was perfectly open and covered with beath. Along the crest of this hill was pitched the Irish camp; and the position in which St. Ruth was resolved

to await the enemy extended along its base.

The foremost line of the Irish, composed entirely of musketeers, occupied a series of small enclosures, and was covered in front throughout its entire extent by a morass, throughout which flows a little stream; and this swamp, with difficulty passable by infantry, was wholly so for cavalry. Through two passes only was the Irish position, thus covered, assailable upon firm ground, the one at the extreme right, much the more open of the two, and called the pass of Urrachree, from an old house and demesne which lay close to it; and the other, at the extreme left, by the long, straight road leading into the town of Aughrim. This road was broken, and so narrow that some analysts state that two horses could not pass it abreast; in addition to which it was commanded by the Castle of Aughrim, then as now, it is true, but a ruin, but whose walls and enclosures nevertheless afforded effectual cover, and a position such as ought to have rendered the pass impregnable. Beyond these passes, at either side, were extensive bogs; and dividing them, the interposing morass. The enclosures in which the advanced musketeers were posted afforded excellent cover, and from one to the other communications had been cut, and at certain intervals their whole length was also traversed by broad passages intended to admit the flanking charge of the Irish cavalry, in case the enemy's infantry should succeed in forcing their way thus far.

The main line extended in a double row of columns, parallel to the advanced position of the musketeers, and the reserve of the cavalry was drawn up upon a small plain, a little behind the Castle of Aughrim, which was occupied by a force of about two thousand men.

The Irish army numbered in all, perhaps about twenty thousand men, and the position which they held extended more than an English mile, and was indeed as powerful a one as could possibly have been selected.

Many of our readers are no doubt aware that the field of Aughrim was fought upon a Sunday, a circumstance which added one to the many thrilling incidents of the martial scene. The army had hardly moved into the position which was that day to be so sternly and devotedly maintained, when the solemn service of High Mass was commenced at the head of every regiment by its respective chaplain; and during the solemn ceremonial, at every moment were arriving fresh messengers from the outposts, their horses covered with dust and foam, with the stern intelligence that the enemy were steadily approaching; and amid all this excitement and suspense, in silence, and bare-headed, knelt the devoted thousands, in the ranks in which they were to receive the foe, and on the very ground for which they were, in a few hours, so desperately to contend.

This solemn and striking ceremonial, under circumstances which even the bravest admit to be full of awe, and amid the tramp and neighing of horses, and the jingling of accoutrements, and the distant trumpet signals from the outposts, invested the scene with a wildness and sublimity of grandeur which blanched many a cheek, and fluttered many a heart with feelings very different from those of fear.

And now from the extreme left, resting upon the Castle of Aughrim, High Mass being ended, arose a wild shouting—the deep, stern acclamation of thousands of human voices swelling over the heathy sweep of Kilcomedan, and wildly pealing onward, and gathering as it came; while foremost among a brilliant staff, with his chief officers about him, dressed in a uniform which actually blazed with gold, and with a snow white plume (which tradition still records) tossing in the three-cocked hat, which he raised as he greeted each regiment in succession, rode the man who carried in his head alone the plan of that day's battle—the Marquis de St. Ruth. A word or two he spoke at the head of every regiment, and though his language, which was French, was not of course understood, except by the officers, his stern and animated voice, the splendor of his appearance, and the emphatic gesture with which he pointed with his plumed hat in the direction in which the enemy, shrouded in the intervening mist, were known to be advancing, these were appeals sufficient for hearts charged with the wild and stern excitement of impending battle.

At every brief stern sentence, from the Irish ranks, in the irrepressible enthusiasm of that grand and terrible hour, broke rapturous gratulations and responses, in the wild and passionate Celtic dialect, which swelled and gathered as he passed on, in one long cheer of high and pealing incense, far more thrilling and glorious than all the clangor of the martial music that rose along the line.

CHAPTER LIII.—THE BATTLE.

Deeper and exciting every moment grew the suspense—all the outposts from the opposite hills; only a mile distant, had been driven in, and upon their misty outlines every eye was turned to dis-

cern, if possible, the columns of the enemy, whose presence was already indicated by the sharp roll of drums, and the other signals which accompany military movements. At length, however, at twelve o'clock, under the blaze of the noon day sun, the interposing mist rolled slowly away like a solemn curtain, and disclosed to each army the stern military spectacle which confronted it.

"Jesu guard us!" said Father O'Gara, addressing Turloch O'Brien, who, at the head of his regiment, occupied the right of the line at the pass of Urrachree, "it is a powerful army. I fear we are much outnumbered; and his dilated eye wandered over the low undulating hills which confronted him, upon which were slowly moving the compact masses of the enemy."

"These are Cunningham's dragoons, methinks," said Turloch O'Brien, lowering the glass through which he had been scrutinizing the foremost regiment of the immensely preponderating force which threatened the pass of Urrachree. "We shall have a brush with them presently. See there to the left; they are getting their great guns into battery. Yonder are the Danes, and look there, the Huguenot foot; there again are the white Dutch, and there the blue."

As Turloch O'Brien thus pointed in detail, as far as he distinctly could, the various regiments which formed the opposing army, the sight over which the eye of the young priest wandered, was, in truth, a stern and splendid one. There were masses of cavalry—some in bull jerkins, others in steel breast-plates—wide seas of tossing plumes and manes—huge columns of pikemen, reflecting from their burnished head-pieces, cuirasses, and greaves the blaze of the meridian sun; there were the musketeers, too, in their bright cloth uniforms, varying according to the national equipment of every country in that wondrous confluence of nations assembled there; and every regiment, headed by its colonel, trailing in his own right hand a variable pike, according to the then military usage, as stiff with gold lace, with flowing periwig and lawn neckcloth, he marched in the van of his men.

"See," added Turloch, abruptly, "an aide-de-camp from Ginkle's staff is now speaking with the commander of Cunningham's regiment; take my advice, Father O'Gara, and ride back towards the camp; for, unless I'm mistaken, the action will begin presently."

He had hardly said thus much, when a single troop of dragoons filed off from the regiment, to which their attention was directed, and began to trot down the opposite slope, into the plain which interposed between the armies, followed by the main body at a walk; and now, indeed, many a heart beat thick, and all was hushed and silent as the grave,—for the threatened attack upon the pass of Urrachree was actually about to open, and with it the momentous battle on which the destinies of the kingdom were suspended. At the same moment the Irish battery commanding the pass of Urrachree opened its fire upon the advancing troops; and the opposing hills pealed back the successive explosions; while the British detachment from a trot broke into a charge, and with cuirasses and swords flashing through the clouds of dust that rose around them from the parched soil, came thundering down upon the outposts which guarded the entrance to the pass.

"I pray you, ride a little back," said Turloch, addressing the priest a second time, as the smoke of the cannon, driving slowly over the light breeze, darkened their faces in its shadow. "The battle has commenced. My men may be engaged ere many minutes more."

Reluctantly, the priest obeyed; and just as he did so, St. Ruth and his staff galloped up to the spot. Every glass was now raised to watch the issue.

"Right, right!—well done!" exclaimed St. Ruth, in his native tongue, as he watched intently the movements of the opposing parties; "our men give ground, as I directed." Good!—the English cross the rivulet!—and now the whole regiment are about to follow! Colonel O'Brien," he continued, addressing that officer, who was instantly at his side, "as soon as they are all across, charge them in flank."

Turlough bowed, and rode back to the head of his regiment; and in a few seconds more, the splendid cavalry he commanded were following him at a gallop down the slope. The intervening distance was cleared in less than a minute, and, with a wild cheer, the splendid corps dashed into the English cavalry, ere they had well time to form, and bore them back in utter confusion, pursuing them beyond the stream they had already crossed, hurling men and horses over in the tremendous rush, and sabering the riders in spite of their cuirasses and steel-cased hats. When the dust cleared off, it disclosed O'Brien's regiment halted in line, beyond the stream, and the English cavalry retiring in confusion; on the ground lay strewn many a steed and rider, and many a horse, with empty saddle, scampered wildly over the plain.

"By my faith, a beautiful charge!" said St. Ruth, in irrepressible exultation. "These Irish will immortalize themselves to-day. We must take some care of the brave fellows, however. Desire my Lord Galway to move his horse a little forward," he added, addressing one of his aides-de-camp; and then to another he said—"Tell O'Brien to draw his men again behind the brook."

The officers spurred off upon their respective missions, and the orders were duly attended to. These movements were followed by repeated skirmishes between the Irish and English cavalry at the same flank, but with a like result; and after two hours' combat, the latter had not made an inch of ground. Meanwhile, the remainder of the British force was halted much in the position they had occupied when the attack upon the pass of Urrachree was commenced; and the cavalry which had been engaged was now withdrawn. An anxious interval followed, and up to five o'clock, it was undecided whether the attack should be renewed or not; at that hour, however, the enemy were once more put in motion—and now, indeed, it became evident that a general action was about to commence. The Danish cavalry moved forward upon the same point, and under cover of their advance—the Danish and Huguenot infantry marched up to the enclosures occupied by the Irish musketeers, and commenced the attack in earnest, upon the extreme right. Now rose the roar of musketry, sharp and sustained—and hedges, fields, and plain, were speedily shrouded in one white mass of smoke, through which were seen the dense columns of the assailants, and the rapid and ceaseless blazing of the guns.

Other columns of English infantry marching along the edge of the morass, in front of the line, soon began to move upon various points of the Irish centre, across the intervening swamp; and thus, in little more than an hour, the whole line, with the exception of the extreme left, at the pass of Aughrim, was hotly engaged. The English artillery, planted at the verge of the morass, played upon the Irish centre, and was answered from the Irish batteries; while, throughout the whole length of the line, in one continuous roar, the musketry poured on, enveloping all beyond it in an impenetrable cloud. The Irish, in accordance with the order of their general, retired in perfect order, from one enclosure to another, wherever they were pressed, and thus drew the impetuous assailants onward. The Huguenots, upon the right, were thus surrounded, and at last forced to give ground under tremendous slaughter. Precisely a similar manoeuvre was practiced with a like success upon the centre—three times were the enemy driven headlong through the morass, which they had crossed, and forced, with dreadful loss, back to the very muzzles of their cannon. The Irish line, throughout the entire extent, was unshaken; its centre was victorious, and its left untouched.

The evening was already far spent, and the issue of the struggle, whatever it might be, could not now be remote. St. Ruth, seeing the British centre thus repeatedly beaten back, could not restrain his exultation and rapture at the heroism of the Irish infantry, of whom before he had thought so meanly, when he beheld them for the third time, drive their assailants pell mell through the bog, and pursue them to their very batteries. Tradition says he threw his hat up into the air, and cried, "Now, then, I will beat them back to the gates of Dublin."

Meanwhile, the right wing of the English, consisting of several regiments of their best cavalry and infantry, together with a party of artillery, began to advance along the narrow road to Aughrim; this approach, as we have already said, was greatly the most difficult, and was, moreover, entirely commanded by the castle and its enclosures, in which were posted nearly two thousand men; it was, moreover, swept by one of the Irish batteries; and was so very narrow that two men could with difficulty, if at all, ride abreast along it; no wonder, then, if St. Ruth considered this pass altogether impracticable.

This force marched down the long and narrow causeway, which we have described as forming the only pass by which the left of the Irish line was approachable upon solid ground; and having reached a point some three or four hundred yards in advance of the castle of Aughrim (whose ruined walls and ditches closely overlooked the road), they began rapidly to form into column, upon a small esplanade of firm soil, which there expanded to an extent of a few acres. The artillery unyoked their guns, and the infantry, quitting the road, began to march, or rather to wade and scramble through the swamp, keeping their ranks, as best they might, under a continued fire from the Irish batteries; at the same time, the English cavalry began to file along the road towards the castle, and their cannon, over the heads of the advancing columns, returned the pealing fire of the Irish guns.

St. Ruth rode a little up the hill of Kilcomedan, whence he might command a view of the