

# The True Witness,

AND

## CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

VOL. XXI.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, SEPT. 23, 1870.

NO. 6

### THE IRISH WIDOW'S SON;

OR,

### THE PIKEMEN OF NINETY-EIGHT.

BY CON. O'LEARY.

(From the *Even Post*.)

#### CHAPTER XIII.—(Continued.)

He witnessed the rush of his men to the spot, and saw that his two brave sons had learned all about the danger.

The first words he heard uttered set his blood on fire.

An indiscriminate fight took place, while every moment was heard the fearful doom—

"In with them; bury them in the burning pile!" and two of the leaders were driven into the flames at the point of the pike.

The yells and imprecations were fearful.—Widow Rogan and Brigid O'Hara were tenderly conduced a short distance and laid down on some straw.

The widow never spoke. The scream that startled the men, and set their hearts on fire with vengeance, was the last utterance of the poor widow. Brigid lay beside her in a swoon, and as pale as the corpse of her whose soul had ascended to the judgment-seat of heaven.

"The widow is dead!" shouted one of the men beside her.

A rush was made to where she lay, to attest the truth.

"Oh, heavens, the poor boy, Cormac!" exclaimed Dolan.

"Death to every man of them!" was shouted again and again.

Those who fled were pursued; those who could not fly, engaged in battle for their lives. They were overpowered.

In some instances, their bodies were transfixed with pikes, others were shot through the heart, and, as already related, two of the number were hurled into the fire created by themselves.

Ned Dolan engaged two of those who sought their safety in flight. One he pierced through the body; from the other he received a wound on the head that stretched him on the ground where he stood. A dozen arms were raised in his defence, and his opponent lay a corpse beside his companion.

Death, desolation, and ruin, reigned around. No effort was made, for none could have availed, to stay the ravages of the devouring element.

The corpse of the widow was borne to Dolan's house. Brigid was carried to her father's.

Several of the brave men who accompanied Phil and Ned Dolan were injured. Some were wounded, but none dangerously; six of the yeomanry, including the villain Cameron, were left lifeless on the ground; others were injured, some of them manured for life.

Of the latter no correct account was ever learned.

Ned Dolan, the most recklessly daring and gallant of all he led, sustained a severe scalp-wound, but it was not likely to prove very dangerous.

\* \* \* \* \*

Cormac's mother dead! \*  
Another sacrifice in the cause of Ireland; another name added to the list of martyrs; another soul escaped from its earthly tenement to bear witness before the Throne of the Most High to the persecutions of the Irish race.

To burn the aged and inoffensive woman alive was the object of those who visited her place.

A double incentive to Cameron was the fact which he had learned that day, of Brigid O'Hara being the companion of the widow during the absence of her son.

As Ned Dolan said, the door of the dwelling was indeed nailed, so were the windows; but Ned's impetuous spring had carried all before him, and the latter fact was unobserved.

Oh, what barbarous cruelty! and these scenes were common in the North and South of Ireland—so common that men got used to them; and what at first had shocked them, and filled their minds with horror and dread, became so common as only to cause a momentary expression of wonderment.

The whole country for many miles was completely aroused by the news of this terrible disaster.

In those days the news was carried far and near by "word of mouth," and many and strange were the additions which the people in their terror added. At one time Brigid's person had been violated. The body of Cormac's mother was burned to ashes; the whole of the Dolan's had been massacred. These, and such like additions, found ready listeners and believers; for it is well known, and attested by

history, that crimes like these were but too common in many parts of Ireland, and were generally the concomitants of other outrages, perpetrated by a debased and cowardly soldiery.

No, the body of Widow Rogan was not consumed to ashes. That holy tenement was preserved for Christian burial. In death, as in life, the impress of virtue was stamped on every feature. The rare goodness of her heart, the purity of her soul, were traced by the Divine Hand in visible characters on that face of loveliness.

Behold it now, with the winding-sheet beside it, soon to enwrap it from the gaze of those who fondly loved her in life, and now offer up their prayers for the repose of her soul.

A solitary light burns on the altar of the little chapel. A coffin is laid on a plain deal table at the altar rails. Beside it kneels a girl, with face as pale as marble. The storm of sorrow has passed over the soul, and the calmness of grace supersedes the violence of sorrow.

The girl is Kate O'Neill, who loved the widow as the child loves its mother. For hour after hour she has knelt there, almost afraid to move, lest her sorrows return. One by one the devout worshippers have left.

A gentle hand touches the girl on the shoulder; she understands that touch; it is her uncle. The old man gently takes her by the hand, and kindly leads her into the house.

There are kindly friends there who sympathize with Kate by looks and deeds more than words. The blow is too great for words to express their feelings. Mrs. McQuillan and Mrs. McLeesh are there to attend on Kate.—They anticipate her wishes, and lead the poor heart-broken girl to her little room; she kneels again; and join her, and silently they offer their prayers before that statue of Mary, which Kate had loved so much, and to which she became specially endeared from the night when the chapel was almost miraculously preserved from the hands of the incendiary.

We close the scene, but to withdraw the veil from before another.

Word had reached Cormac of the fate that had befallen him. He returned to the place where his home once stood. In company with Father John—who allowed not one word of sorrow to escape his lips, but whose bitter feelings were none the less for that they were suppressed within—he walked into the chapel.—Cormac approached the coffin, that, like a casket of precious jewels, contained all his treasure on this earth. Slowly and reverently he stooped to kiss those lips, that in the unremembered days of childhood had so often pressed his own, when none were present to behold the outpourings of a mother's love upon her only son. Again he kissed those lips so cold in death, then knelt and prayed, and held sweet converse with his mother's soul in heaven!

O, sweet communion, that even death cannot separate. O, sweet communion, that seems to unite in closer compact the souls of those who loved each other here on earth!

With noiseless footsteps the people had gathered in. It was yet early in the day. Most of them had been there before, when the corpse was brought in the previous evening. After Cormac had retired, the priest had ordered a few friends to replace the coffin lid. With his own hands he laid the winding sheet across the widow's face, and arranged the Cross upon her breast.

Mass commenced, amid the breathless silence of all around. As the last *Requiescat in pace* was pronounced, a little robin perched upon the coffin and sent forth a song of liquid melody: It seemed to break the spell of sorrow.

Reverently the coffin was borne outside, and deposited in the grave where the remains of Cormac's father had been placed.

Father John stands beside the grave, reading the last office for the dead. Glorious old Church! With arms outstretched to receive us at our entrance into the world, the last beside the grave when our ashes commingle with the earth.

The last prayer is breathed, and the people depart. With hushed breath they converse on their homeward way.

"Who will be the next?" "God strengthen poor Cormac under this heavy blow."—"Be thou a mother to him, O Mother of Heaven!" "Amen!" Such were the ejaculations of those kind-hearted people, on behalf of him thus suddenly and terribly bereaved.

#### CHAPTER XIV.—FREE QUARTERING OF ENGLISH SOLDIERS—A SINGULAR DEATH—MIKE GLINTY AND THE SCOTCHMAN.

"For ages rapine railed our plains,  
And slaughter raised his red right hand;  
And virgins shriek'd—and roof-trees blaz'd—  
And desolation swept the land."

The report of the burning of Cormac Rogan's dwelling the death of his mother, and the injuries sustained by Brigid O'Hara, formed the sole topic of conversation among the peasantry of those places in which the deeds took place.

The death of Cameron, the supposed murder of Fleming, were eagerly discussed by the Orangemen and the Government party, who, powerful in means and position, although vastly

inferior in numbers, induced the military authorities at Belfast to send out two military companies of soldiers extra, to be quartered on the inhabitants of Feenagh, Ballygooby, Magheralane, and Magheragh. Nothing could exceed the terror with which the inhabitants of these districts received the intelligence of this additional burden.

Pat Dolan found it necessary to leave his home in care of his wife and daughter Peggy. He and his sons retired to a place called Tamaghmore, where, by instructions from headquarters, he continued his work of pike-making as before.

Brigid O'Hara's house was one of the first selected in the country for soldiers to be quartered on. Her father, by the advice of Kate O'Neill, and with the consent of Father MacAuley, had Bridgid removed to the care of Kate. The poor girl was still suffering from the effects of the shock she sustained at the death of Widow Rogan, as well as from the injuries she received during the noble and daring act of Ned Dolan at the time of her rescue from the flames.

Many and anxious were the inquiries she made after Ned; and thought, as the father and sons had left their place, that something fatal had occurred to the brave fellow. Such was not the case. Ned continued to rally, day after day, and was soon afterwards in the enjoyment of his usual health and strength.

Bridgid's father and family were easy-going people, and neither felt nor took much interest in the affairs that were then distracting the country.

After Bridgid's removal, a party of soldiers were sent round the country in search of arms. Sometimes they went in pairs, and sometimes singly, to prosecute their work.

One of this party entered the house of Bridgid's father, and proceeded to make the usual search. Behind the door leading into the kitchen stood a step-ladder, by means of which a "loft" was reached. This "loft" was the usual receptacle for lumber and things of that nature, not immediately required for use. Sometimes the "loft" was used as a sleeping-place for farm-servants; and, as the latter were well known to be actively employed in the "united business," those "lofts" received special attention at the hands of those employed to search for arms. A soldier entered O'Hara's house for this purpose, and immediately proceeded up the step-ladder, at the foot of which he left his gun and bayonet.

The step-ladder was a narrow one, stood nearly upright in its dark corner, and consequently was difficult to ascend.

After being engaged at the work of exploring for arms, the soldier descended. In doing so his foot slipped, and he fell, transfixed with the bayonet of his gun. He died on the instant, and O'Hara was immediately suspected of foul play. In consequence of this he was taken to Antrim, and after a preliminary examination, was thrown into prison. At the trial he was acquitted of the charge of murdering the soldier, and was accordingly released. His readiness in permitting two soldiers to be billeted on him, and the fact of his never being known to have joined with the United Irishmen, served his cause better than the attempt which he made to establish his innocence.

Such was the easy-going character of this man O'Hara, who was neither liked nor disliked by his neighbors. His family would have passed by unnoticed had it not been for the warm-hearted virtues of Bridgid, who was respected and loved for her generous disposition.

One of the soldiers stationed at O'Hara's was an Englishman, who took little pains to conceal his dislike for the unmannerly and rebellious Irish. The other soldier was our friend Sandy, the Scotchman, who took such a sudden liking to the Reverend Mr. Porter's servant-maid.

Although Sandy did not relish "the mad harum-scarum who were aye kicking up sic inferna' squabbles in the hale kintra," yet it must be confessed that he bore a very small amount of love for his companion-in-arms.

Whatever authority existed in their case was vested in the Englishman, and this was another source of irritation to Sandy, who did not by any means relish the order to go out of nights after supper-time, especially when the nights were cold and dark, and the comforts of a large kitchen, with its great blazing turf-fire, were so invitingly at hand. The Englishman knew Sandy's repugnance to night travel, and often imposed disagreeable duties on himself in order to annoy the Scotchman.

Mike Glinty used to visit the O'Haras only occasionally. Since the advent of the red-coats he seldom missed a day without paying one or more visits, and sometimes stopped over night.

Both soldiers enjoyed Mike's company very much, as he offered a good subject for their banter. Mike was not displeased in the least at this mark of their attention towards him.—He rather enjoyed it; and, fool as he was, managed to learn something which subsequently proved to be matters of no small importance to Pat Dolan, and others of Mike's friends.

"Who killed Duncan Cameron, Mike?" said

Sandy, one day, as he sat at the fireside enjoying his pipe after dinner.

"Do-do-don't know who kic-kic-killed him, nin-nin-nor don't care, sis-sis-so I don't."

"The people a say 'twas you, Mike."

"Pip-pip-people do-do-don't say anything of the kic-kic-kind," retorted Mike; "all that they say is, th-th-that I wouldn't pray for him."

"There's no muckle use in prayin' for folk when they're dead," said Sandy.

"Th-th-there will bib-bib-be little use in-n-n prayin' for you, wh-when you're dead, tiff-tiff-for the devil won't bil-lil-let you gig-gig-go, once he kic-kic-catches you," replied Mike, laughing at the thought of Sandy and the devil being engaged in a pugilistic encounter, in which, according to Mike's notions of such things, every red-coat was to come off second-best.

"Depend on't, Mike, auld Nick will thrapple you yet for your misdoins, and ken he'll clap you in a hot neck, once he lays hauns on you."

"He-he don't like Irish; they would kic-kic-kick up such rows, sis-sis-so they would," said Mike, as he retired, leaving Sandy to enjoy his pipe and his discomfiture at his leisure.

It is easier to fancy than to realize the feelings of honest John Mullan, when he learned the disasters that had overtaken Cormac. He and his brother had lived like members of the family, and had experienced all the care of a mother at the hands of the widow. Their sorrow was consequently very great, and they longed to see poor Cormac, and to try to comfort him in the sad hour of his affliction.

Israel Milliken also lamented the misfortune that had overtaken his young friend.

On all sides, Cormac met with unbounded sympathy, so warmly and so heartily tendered, that a few weeks after the sad occurrence of his mother's death saw him engaged devotedly in his work of organization.

Many young men who held aloof before, were now only too willing to enroll themselves under Cormac's leadership. His manly bearing under his sufferings, together with the innate worth of his character, rendered him the beloved of all who knew him, and the heads of the movement in which he was engaged, found in him one worthy of their confidence. He soon found out the full value of Mike Glinty, who, since the death of Cameron, had not so much to occupy his mind as before, and who believed that he owed a large debt of gratitude to Cormac and Pat Dolan; to Cormac for the loss he had sustained at the hands of Cameron, and to Pat Dolan for ridding the earth of a villain who ruined the Dorrians.

Mike was consequently employed by Cormac in visiting those houses like the O'Haras, where the soldiers were quartered, and reporting regularly everything he heard or saw.

#### CHAPTER XV.—FESTIVITIES AT SHANE'S CASTLE—MIKE'S INTELLIGENCE FURTHER DISPLAYED—DANGER AT HAND—MEANS TAKEN TO ARREST IT.

"When Saint Patrick our order created,  
And called us the Monks of the Sirew,  
Good rules he revealed to our Abbot,  
To guide us in what we should do."

If what was true of the state of Ireland in 1735, when Swift described its sufferings to Pope, the evils of that state became intensified in '97-98. "This kingdom," said Swift, "is now absolutely starving, by the means of every oppression that can be inflicted on mankind.—Shall I not visit for those things, saith the Lord. We are slaves, knaves, and fools,—and all, but bishops and people in employment, beggars. The people of Lapland, or the Hottentots, are not so miserable a people as we; for, oppression supported by power will infallibly introduce slavish principles."

Thus said Swift, over sixty years before the horrors of '98 had driven the people into premature rebellion. In Ireland as in France, a few years previous, those of the aristocracy who chose to remain in the country were solely engaged in the pursuit of pleasures, careless of the suffering condition of the people over whom they reigned, with all the power and oppression which the feudalism of bygone centuries enabled them to exercise.

Shane's Castle, once famous as the residence of the descendants of the great chiefs of Ulster was, at the time of our story, occupied by John O'Neill, who was elevated to the peerage in 1793, in consequence of the part he took in offering the unrestricted regency to the Prince of Wales. This Baron O'Neill, in whose blood there was not the slightest tincture of those whose name he inherited, was a type of the ruling landlords at that period, so far as his castle presented scenes of luxury and revelry; but in other respects he was a moderately good landlord, and his tenants enjoyed many privileges which others of their class were not permitted to enjoy.

For a period of fifteen years, the festivities at Shane's Castle were known to be carried on without any regard to expense, and the people around Randalstown could not be blind to the fact, that the money which their toil and sweat had gathered from the fruits of the earth, was thus spent in debauchery and pleasure, and for

the gratification of that English-Irish nobility who hated the people if they dared to lift their heads on their own lands.

Some idea of these matters will be gathered from the rules which Lord Mountjoy drew up for the regulation of festivities at Shane's Castle, and to promote regularity at the meeting for the representation of *Cymbeline*, in the performance of which, the famous Mrs. Siddons took a part. The style is supposed to be after the ironical manner of Dean Swift. "1. That no noise be made during the forenoon, for fear of awaking the company. 2. That there shall be no breakfast made after four o'clock in the afternoon, nor tea after one in the morning. 3. To inform any stranger who may come in at breakfast, that we are not at dinner. 4. That no person be permitted to go out driving till the moon gets up, for fear of being overturned in the dark. 5. That the respective grooms may put up their horses after four hours' parading before the hall-door of the Castle. 6. That there shall be one complete hour between each meal. 7. That all the company must assemble at dinner before the cloth is removed. 8. That supper may not be called for till five minutes after the last glass of claret. 9. That no gentleman be permitted to drink more than three bottles of hock at, or after, supper. 10. That all M.P.'s shall assemble on post-days, in the coffee-room at four o'clock, to frank letters."

Although evidently drawn up in a humorous vein, the above indicate but too clearly the manner of life in which the Irish landlords and their satellites enjoyed themselves at the expense of their rack-rented tenantry.

It was during a carnival of dissipation that the splendid structure, Shane's Castle, was burned almost to the ground. The ruins to this day attest the magnificence of the building.

Among the many suites of rooms in the Castle was an apartment called the Banshee's room. This place contained a bed, and as regularly as these rooms were heated for the comfort of visitors, the Banshee's apartment received like attention.

It was during such preparations that the Castle was destroyed.

Around the Castle are many subterranean passages, believed to have been wine-vaults at one time; but the probability is, they were used as a refuge for the O'Neills' retainers in time of war.

In one of these passages, in which there were several ways of exit and entry, Cormac had given instructions to have consigned about eighteen hundred pikes, the majority of which had been brought from Newry.

Owing to the vigilance of the soldiers and yeomanry, it became a matter of difficulty to find a secure place for the storage of arms and ammunition. The latter being much less in quantity was easier managed than the former, and did not require so much expertness to secrete them.

At nightly drills, those who were to use the pike were put through their exercise as readily without that weapon, as with it; so that a place of safety for those articles was looked upon by Cormac and his companions as highly essential for the forthcoming day of their special use.

Pat Dolan had the charge of six forges, in different parts of the country, from which about one hundred and fifty were turned out daily.

Parties were regularly counted off twice a week to procure the handles and necessary fittings; and at a meeting of Provincial delegates, held at Belfast, on St. Patrick's Eve, the highest praise was awarded to Cormac Rogan for the well-dressed and efficiently-armed condition of his men.

Reports of the most encouraging character were coming in daily from all quarters. Nothing could daunt the spirit that had been aroused. The treacheries of Newell, of Hughes, and Magin, in the North, of Major Styr, Reynolds, and O'Brien, in Leinster, all failed to quench the fire of enthusiasm. But it soon became evident, from the action of the authorities, that the death of Cameron, and others of Mackenzie's yeomanry, would, if possible, be avenged.

Many difficulties existed in carrying out the intention of the Government. Those who were guilty of setting the widow's house on fire were afraid to acknowledge their complicity, and thereby prove their presence at the place. If they had known better, they would have been only too glad to have given all the evidence required. Others of them got afraid of being visited by the vengeance of the people, and so for these reasons the authorities were compelled to forego their intended prosecutions. Cameron's death, therefore, was simply a nine days' wonder, after which he was regretted by none, not even those who were his chief companions. Brigid O'Hara, for one, did not shed many tears at his end, neither did Kate O'Neill.

Pat Dolan was busily engaged at work, when Mike came to him with some news.

"Scotchman a-a-and Englishman bib-bib-oth gig-gig-go-going out-at-t-t-in-nin-night to trap Mim-Mim-Mr. Milliken, an-an-and Mike thinks

\* Correspondence of the Marquis of Cornwallis.