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THE WHITE THORN TREE.

A LEGEND OF KILCOLMAN CASTLE.

From Legends of the Wars in Ireland, by Robert Dwyer Joyce, M.D.

CHAPTER I.

They washed the blood, with many a tear,
From dint of dart and arrow,
And laid him near the waters clear
Of the brook of Alpuzarra.

Spanish Ballad

The principal boundary between the counties of Cork and Limerick is that abrupt and boggy range called by Spenser the Mountains of Mole, but in the Irish denominated Sliabh Ballyhoura, or the mountains of the dangerous ballachs, or passes. To the west and south of this range, over many a broad plain and undulating valley, once spread the wild and romantic Forest of Kilmore. In the days of Elizabeth, and for nearly a century after, this forest sent out many offshoots into the neighboring baronies. One of the most considerable of these branches, commencing near Buttevant, swept round the southern declivity of the Ballyhoura, until at length it formed a junction with the great and intricate woody fastness of Aherlow, at the base of the Gaulty Mountains. Through it ran the beautiful Mulla,—now called Auberg,—a short distance from which, on the shore of Lough Ullair, or the Eagle's Lake, rose up the battlements of Kilcolman Castle, once the residence of the immortal Spenser. This castle anciently belonged to the Earls of Desmond; but in July, 1586, it was granted by the crown to Spenser, together with about three thousand acres of the surrounding country. Here Spenser wrote his "Faerie Queen;" here—

"He sat, as was his trade,
Under the foot of Mole, that mountain bear,
Keeping his sheep beneath the coolly shade
Of the green alders by the Mulla's shore,—

when the "Shepherd of the Ocean," Sir Walter Raleigh, visited him; and here he remained until the October of 1598, when the Desmond Insurrection broke out, and the castle was taken and burnt by the exasperated Irish. An infant son of his was burnt to death in the flames; and Spenser himself, together with his wife and two other sons, narrowly escaped sharing the same fate, and fled to England, where, on the 16th of January, 1599, he died at Westminster, London. The castle is now a mere ruin; but from the distance at which it can be seen, and its charming situation on a green knoll above the lake, it still forms a very picturesque and interesting feature in the landscape.

It was a calm autumn evening, during the great insurrection which commenced in the year 1641. The waterfowl were quietly swimming on Lough Ullair; and the rich sunbeams were bathing the castle in their mellow light, and showing distinctly out the black, stern traces of the fire which loosened and disfigured its walls nearly half a century before. Outside the castle all was brightness, life, and beauty; but inside, darkness and decay made their dwelling throughout all the deserted chambers except one, whose gloom was dispelled by a merry little charcoal fire, which burned like a luminous point on the huge fireplace. Two figures sat on a stone bench beside that fire: one, a tall, dark-complexioned woman, advanced in years; the other, a young and handsome girl. The countenance of the latter showed the traces of recent weeping, but seemed beautiful even in its sorrow; and its effect was brightened by the tresses of rich, amber-colored hair which fell in bright masses upon her shoulders, harmonizing sweetly with the graceful folds of her dress, as she sat turned towards her companion, who was in the act of addressing her.

"You'll not have him, you say. You'll never more meet a truer or braver man. If you saw him, as I did, in battle, when he was surrounded near Glanore, an' how gallantly he broke through that press o' men, you'd change your mind soon an' suddint."

"I cannot change my mind," answered the young girl: "my mind an' heart are made up, an' true to another since I was a child; an' death itself cannot break the faith I plight-ed."

"Well, I know him too. But you see by this that you can never be his wife, for you'll never see his face more. Take the man that suffered for you, an' that got himself hunted, like a wild baste, through the mountains for your sake. If you don't you'll have his eternal revenge on you, an' mine too,—an' you know me well by this; an' you must choose between bein' his wife, an' going into the arms o' the Black Captain."

"The Black Captain cannot be worse than your black brother. I'll meet the fate that God will me, an' still be true to the man I love. Death will soon end my misery, if it comes to the worst."

At this moment a step was heard descending the spiral stair that led to the apartments above. The old creaking door opened, and the Black Captain himself stood before them. He was a man past the meridian of life, of an exceedingly dark complexion, and wearing the

high hat, sober-colored cloak, and large, plain, iron-hilted sword, of a Puritan.

"Hast thou told her?" he said, addressing the elder female. "of the blissful life she is to lead with a warrior from among God's chosen? Methinks thou must have a most persuasive tongue: for Reuben Sadface, my trusty man, knows by this the sore persuasion that dwells in thy clinched hands and finger-nails."

"I've told her all," answered the woman, sullenly. "an' she's the same still. Ask herself."

"I may not beatify my soul with such lorn dalliance this eventide. A blessed and holy call, a war-call, has taken possession of my spirit for the moment. Even as Saul was commanded to slay the idolatrous nations, so am I chosen to purge by the agency of fire and steel the western valleys of their heathenish progeny: and I must be gone. When the sword of the Lord shall have fallen upon those children of Baal, I shall return to tell what I have left unsaid to this,—this branch rescued from the burning,—this most fortunate of maidens."

"Alice O'Brien," said the woman bitterly, when the Black Captain had left them. "answer me this. Do you think I coaxed you up, an' thrated you like as if you wor my own sister, to be bate an' baffled by you this way? May be you won't be the show for all Murrough an' Theothawn's army, when the Black Captain has you in his crooks! Maybe then you'll wish to be back with me, and that you had made up your mind to have my brave brother Theige, my fine and cunning damsel!"

"I answer once more," said Alice, "that I'll have neither the Black Captain nor your brother Theige: I'll die first. I put my trust in God; an' perhaps my brother Moran an' his comrade, John MacSheehy, my come soon enough with their horsemen, and set me free."

"Your brother Moran an' your sweetheart John have enough to do to keep their own carriages safe, without mindin' what'll become o' the likes o' you. But never mind. Wait and we'll see what'll come o' this to-morrow."

A few hours after the departure of the Black Captain that evening, the setting sun was darting his red beams through the glades of the scattered forest by the banks of the beautiful Ounanar, a few miles eastward of Kilcolman Castle. The Ounanar is a wild stream, rising far up in the Ballyhoura Mountains, amid the bogs beyond Kilcolman, and flowing into the Mulla a short distance below Doneraile. In one of the most solitary glades beside the stream, the beams were reflected by some not very frequent objects in those dreadful times, namely, the morion and accoutrements of a dead young soldier. He lay upon his back, with his right hand grasping the empty scabbard of his sword, and his left thrown upward threateningly, as if, in his last moments, he had endeavored to menace death or some other unwelcome visitor from his side. His head, clothed by a great wound, lay heavily upon the blood-stained grass; and his morion, also clothed had fallen off, glittering in the sun. As he lay thus, a raven from a neighboring tree perched upon a fragment of rock near him, and for a few moments regarded him with a wary and inquisitive look; then, as if satisfied that there was no danger, it half opened its wings, and, hopping along the grass, alighted again upon the spike of the morion. It was, however, soon scared from its unsteady resting-place by a more rapacious banqueter. A huge wolf rushed forth from the copse, and with a voracious whine, laid its foremost paws upon the iron-clad but pulseless breast of the young man. Its long white teeth ground against the edge of his steel breastplate, its red eyes glared with ferocious satisfaction at the prospect of its savage meal, when it was in its turn also interrupted, but in a more fatal manner. A shot rang up from the river bank; and the wolf, wounded through the heart, fell backward, with claws and teeth tearing in its mortal agony a huge frieze cloak, or cape, which lay over the shoulders of the dead soldier.—Before the echoes of the shot had died along the hollow banks of the stream, a horseman rode swiftly up the glade, and, leaping from his steed, plunged his sword through the body of the expiring wolf.

The horseman was attired like the young soldier, whose body he had thus so opportunely rescued. On his head he wore a helmet, or morion, without a plume, but with a sharp steel spike projecting straight upwards from its crown. Over his shoulders, and reaching beyond his hips, hung a brown frieze cape, fastened at the throat by a silver clasp, and open somewhat in front, showing underneath a bright steel back-and-breast, or corselet. His trousers were colored like the cape and of the same material, the legs falling below into a pair of long, unpolished boots which reached to his knees, with their formidable spurs, giving him the air of one by whom the saddle was very seldom abandoned for a more quiet seat. From a belt around his waist, along with the usual skean, or dagger, hung the scabbard of his sword; and in his right hand he grasped the naked blade, while in his left he held the small musketoon which he had just discharged with so true an aim. He was young, somewhat above

the middle height, and his bronzed, determined face and fearless eye showed that he had seen both hardships and dangers, and was ready to brave them again without concern.

He advanced now, and stooped down, examining the features of the fallen youth. "Ha, Moran!" he exclaimed, suddenly, "great God, how is this?" Then falling on his knees beside the body, he continued, "O Moran! my only friend, and the brother of my lost Alice, little I expected we'd meet thus! Little did I think that 'twas your dead body I was saving from the jaws of the wild dog of the hills! The battles are coming again, and the gallant gathering is by the walls of Castle na Doon: but who will ride beside me like Moran O'Brien?"

He started to his feet as if the thought maddened him, and commenced striding wildly up and down the glade.

"Poor Ellen Roche too, who loved him so well!—little her light heart dreams of this,—the black and woful news I'll have to tell her at the dance to-morrow!"

He once more approached the body, and, examining it more minutely, found a bullet-wound in the throat, which, with the severed helmet and the long gash upon the head, made him suspect that the unfortunate young soldier had come by his death unfairly. Then, as if his suspicious had lighted upon some individual, and that he determined to wreak immediate vengeance, he took the body in his arms, and deposited it in a deep, narrow rent between two rocks near the stream; and covering it with some leafy boughs, and a few long stone flags, in order to preserve it from the wolves, at that period so numerous in the country, he muttered sorrowfully a few prayers, mounted his steed, and departed.

After crossing the river, and riding along its eastern shore somewhat more than a mile, he turned his horse's head towards the southern flank of a steep mountain, strewn with boulders of rock, which, as the twilight now darkened over the hills to help the illusion, rose up from the solitary heath, bare and spectral, like the deserted and melancholy ruins of an ancient city. A number of these lay congregated in an irregular ridge near the summit; and here the young horseman alighted, and, leading his steed noiselessly along the soft turf, stood at length beside a huge, broad rock, so flat and low that it scarcely reached above the brushwood and long heath that grew around. Underneath it, at one side, there was a small entrance, or opening, through which a confused jumble of voices now fell upon the horseman's ear; while a clear stream of light also shot forth, and brightened the scarred and weather-beaten face of a crag that rose hard by. Peering cautiously through another and a smaller chink, he beheld what he indeed sought for, a group inside; the individuals of which corresponded exactly in appearance with the strange place they had chosen for their habitation.

In the corner of a small apartment irregularly formed by a rent in the crag, and having for its roof the lower surface of the flat rock mentioned above, sat before a bright fire of blazing bog-deal three figures, as different in appearance from each other as could be consistent with the fact that each formed a member of the great human family. He who sat between the other two was a man in the prime of life and of gigantic stature; his long matted beard and hair falling almost on his breast and shoulders, and a reddish cap, with a sprig of blossomed white-thorn for a plume, set somewhat cavalierly, but fiercely, on his head.—His prominent, beard-covered chin, and thin, beaked nose, gave to his wild physiognomy a sinister expression which was increased by a pair of gloomy eyes bent sternly on the person at his right, whom he was in the act of addressing. He was enveloped in a soiled scarlet cloak, which lay closely round his upright figure, and fell in folds behind him upon the block of stone on which he sat; showing a pair of long, frieze-clad legs, and feet encased in great brogues, with low heels, made so in order not to impede his progress over the quagmires and bogs of which he was so often a denizen. Such was the figure of Theige Folling Dearg, or Timothy of the Red Cloak,—the dweller by the Fairy Thorn-tree of Glanar. He to the right, to whom Theige of the Red Cloak gave in his conversation the title of Theige Cu Allee, or Theige the Wolf, had full and ample claims, in appearance at least, to that sylvan cognomen. He was of dwarfish height, but, at the same time, so brawny and broad-shouldered as to have, as he sat with his short legs stretched out and hidden among some green heath, the appearance of a giant ogre, sunk to his middle in the earth. His mouth, the most prominent part of his features, was garnished with an irregular set of large teeth, which gave him, when he either laughed or sneered, some resemblance to a snarling wolf. He wore a cap and loose frieze coat, open in front, and showing a broad, hairy chest, not unused, if one could judge from the wild expression of the face, to heave with many a storm of vindictive passion. Their comrade was, in form certainly, a direct opposite to both. His features were regular and handsome; he appeared, as he sat, a little below the middle size, and very slenderly formed; but there was a wiriness

about his whole frame, and something in his dark, sagacious eye, that told him no mean antagonist, with that long skean he wore at his side, in a single encounter or in the confusion of a battle. His clothes fitted better than Cu Allee's, but were of the same material. He answered his companions with the utmost self-complacency, when they addressed him in their discourse by the enviable title of Theige na Meerval, or Timothy of the Wonders,—a name to which he had, at the moment, strong claims, from the miraculous facility with which he had disposed of some large fragments of beef he had boiled upon the bog-deal embers. Various instruments of warfare were strewn around them, demonstrating, that, in all circumstances excepting that of a blockade, the citadel could be held for a long time and against considerable odds. They appeared to be engaged in some very interesting conversation.

"For hursel," said he of the Red Cloak, "hur would rather see the Sassenachs with their spurs in their horses' flanks, an' their swords in their hands, nor to see them slinking behind stone garrisons, like foxes in the crags of Ullair."

"Yes," said Cu Allee, in his native tongue, "wherever the Sassenach goes, there is rich booty; and, for me, there was once sweeter booty,—plenty of revenge."

"Hur often heard Cu Allee whisperin' an' cuggerin' in hur sleep an' in hur wake, about that revenge, but never heard hur 'twas got."

"'Twas got," said the Man of Wonders, pointing to a suspicious-looking bundle of twisted osiers by the side of Cu Allee, "'twas got. I'm sartin, in the ould way, by the gad an' the cross-sticks."

"'Twas got," exclaimed Cu Allee fiercely, "on the day that Murrough an' Theothawn's captain, with his guard about him, gave into my hands Rory Finn, the black and cursed ruiner of my young sister. The clink of the Sassenach's gold was sweet; but far sweeter was Rory's groan to my ears, when he knew his time was come. We placed the cross-sticks beneath the walls of Kilmoran; and I—faced Black Rory towards the darkened home and the churchyard where she slept near, and sent him, for good or for bad, to follow her to his last account. Many is the gad I twisted about the neck of Gael and Sassenach; but the one that finished my mortal foe, Rory Finn,—and I have it here beside me,—was the most precious of all."

"Hursel would take it by the strong hand an' the sharp sword, as hur did last night," rejoined Folling Dearg.

"Or," said the Man of Wonders, holding out his long, bright skean in his hand, "or by manes o' this, as a sartin person did not long ago in Kilkenny. Listen; for it is one o' the charmin' things that brought me into the service of the prayer-centers,—the bloody, timber-faced Parliamenters. I was standin' in a schreet in Kilkenny, before the door of a big forge where the smiths from home an' from furrin parts wor hammerin' an' sledgin' away at swords an' pikes an' armor an' skeans, the dead brother o' this I hold in my hand. I was standin', doin' a few tricks o' sleight-o'-hand, an' givin' a few summersets in the way o' my business; and the smiths, with their black faces an' brawny arms, wor beginnin' to throw away their hammers an' sledges, an' come to the doors an' windows, lookin' at me, when who should come along at the other side o' the street but a grand bishop, or cardinal, with five or six big fellows, like sozers, walkin', some behind him an' some before, with drawn swords in their hands. He looks at the smiths all idle, an' the arms wantin' so much for the war; an' he looks at me playin' my capers in the street. He said somethin' to the men in a furrin language; an' three o' them made over to me, an' laid houl't o' me worse than if I was caught in a big vise in one o' the forges, an' then banged and bate me with their sword handles off o' the street. I said nothin', but followed them for a while, till the man that laid houl't on me first was sent on a message beyond one o' the gates o' the town-wall. I waited in the porch for the bloody villain; an', when he was comin' past me, I gave this sportin' skean o' mine a nate night's lodgin' in his side, an' fled for my life, an' won the race like a man."

One part of this most edifying conversation, namely, Folling Dearg's allusion to his deed of the preceding night, interested the listener outside not a little, wanting, as he did, to find some clue to the death of his comrade; but it seemed, on the present occasion, he had business of even more importance to himself to transact with these worthies; so, making a slight noise as a signal of his approach, he walked round to the large aperture in order to enter. Na Meerval, when they heard the sound inside, crept out with the agility of a weasel, through the small chink; so, when the young horseman entered, he was somewhat surprised at finding only two inside.

"I thought," said he to Folling Dearg, the moment he had entered, "that Na Meerval sat by your side now."

"Na Meerval stands by your side," answered Folling Dearg, eyeing the visitor darkly.

That lively personage, having entered at the large aperture as stealthily as he before made

his exit, stood close at the side of the horseman.

"Theige Na Meerval is here," said he. "When he found the fern-seed by the Robber's Well, the Shee Gecha became his comrade; for he could make himself be seen or not be seen, whenever he took it into his head. Shane na Shrad knew this before, I think."

"Shane na Shrad, or John of the Bridle,—a name, by the way, which the young soldier had got in consequence of his feats of horsemanship,—was too sharp-witted to be deceived so readily."

"Shane na Shrad knows," he said, "that there is a chink, besides the door, in this cavern."

"'Fwath does hur come for now?" queried Folling Dearg, who, although he pretty well knew the purport of the visit, wanted to obtain some information from John of the Bridle. "To-morrow is hur great day by the walls of Caishlean na Doon; but Theige Folling Dearg knows, that like a flock of wild ducks from the springs, the Gael will be scattered soon by Murrough of the Baruings and his brave Sassenachs."

"Murrough and his starved wolves are not likely to do so at present," said John of the Bridle. "You, I know, and your two comrades, are on the scent for news, to be paid for it by the gold of Black Murrough of Inchiquin. We keep it no secret that before long we'll be passing the Bridge of Doneraile; and you and its defenders may dream of what's to follow, while our troopers are dancing with the girls for a day or two beside the green woods of Castle na Doon."

"In my mind," said Na Meerval, "some o' them will caper a quarer dance in a short time, under a kind o' three where they'll have only the wind for a floor, an' Cu Allee's three-lover's knot about their necks."

Cu Allee, although he principally exercised his genius in the enviable profession of a skibbioch, or hangman, never relished a jibe, however, on that score.

(To be Continued.)

EPISTLE ENCYCLICAL OF HIS HOLINESS PIUS IX ON THE USURPATION OF ROME.

Pius IX, by Divine Providence Pope, to all Patriarchs, Primate, Archbishops, and Bishops, and to other Local Ordinaries having favor and communion with the Apostolic See.

Venerable Brethren, Health and Apostolic Benediction.

Having regard to all the proceedings taken for many years past by the Piedmontese Government, with incessant plots aiming at the overthrow of the Civil Principality granted by the singular Providence of God to the Apostolic See, in order that the Successors of Blessed Peter might enjoy full liberty and security in the exercise of their spiritual jurisdiction, it is impossible, Venerable Brethren, but that Our inmost heart should be grieved at such a conspiracy against the Church of God and this Holy See; and at this calamitous period, when the said Government, following the counsels of sects of perdition, has for a long time meditated a sacrilegious invasion of Our beloved City and of the remaining States, of which the dominion was left to Us from the former usurpation, and has now carried that design into effect, by force of arms, against all law and right; whilst We, prostrate before Almighty God, adore His mysterious designs, and say with the Prophet:—*Ego plorans et oculis meis deducens aquas, quia longe factus est a me consulator, concitatus animam meam, facti sunt filii mei perditii quantum inviduit inimicus.* (Jerem., Thren., 1, 16.)

Venerable Brethren, the history of this nefarious war has been sufficiently explained and published long ago to the whole Catholic world. We have done it in Our Encyclical Allocations and Briefs delivered and dated at different times; namely, on the 1st Nov., 1850, on the 22nd Jan. and 26th June, 1855, on the 18th and 25th June, and 25th Sept., 1859, on the 19th Jan., 1860, and in the letters Apostolical, 26th March, 1860. Also in Allocations of 28th Sept., 1860, 18th March and 30th Sept., 1861, 20th Sept., 17th Oct., and 14th Nov., 1867. In this series of documents are viewed and explained the very grievous injuries inflicted by the Piedmontese Government on the Sovereign authority of Us and of this Apostolic See in the years prior to the commencement of the occupation of the Ecclesiastical Dominion, laws being enacted against Natural, against Divine, and against Ecclesiastical rights; the ministers of religion, the religious communities, and even the Bishops themselves being subjected to unworthy vexations; the faith pledged to this Holy See in solemn treaties being forfeited, and the sacred obligation of those treaties being curiously repudiated at the very time when the said Government was signifying its desire to conclude new treaties with Us. In those documents, Venerable Brethren, it is evidenced, and posterity will see, with what arts and by what cunning and unworthy plots the said Government has gone the length of overbearing justice and the sacredness of the rights of this Apostolic See; and at the same time it will be known what exertions We have made to restrain, so far as in Us lay, such lawless conduct, that daily grew worse, and to defend the cause of