

A PATRIOT IN EMBRYO.

[CONCLUDED.]

"I think, of all his chosen heroes, this one is the best beloved. Hugh Roe O'Donnell! He was lured into a vessel, taken to Dublin and imprisoned when he was a young boy. He was a prisoner for five years, but when he did escape he made the men who imprisoned him mind their p's and q's," and he nodded his head gravely. "He was only twenty-three years of age when he led the tribes to the battle-field, and until he died, six years later, he was O'Neill's dearest friend and companion in arms. This book," referring to a volume he held in his hand, "says that he was the sword, while O'Neill was the brain of the Confederacy. It was a sad day for the O'Donnells when their idolized young Hugh left them. And he was so young, only twenty-nine years old, and worn out with fighting and grief."

"We passed over his memory in silence, for Brian really appeared too much affected to say anything further. After a few moments of quiet, during which I had drummed softly on the desk with my fingers, Brian resumed his story-telling, and soon regained his usual animation. "The great Hugh had a nephew, who became as illustrious as himself. Owen Roe O'Neill was the nephew, and he is one of our grandest heroes. A pure knight of chivalry, sans peur et sans reproche, the darling of his people—that is what he was. Without any certain aid he kept up an army for years where few men could organize one. He was the best general in Ireland, or England either, and besides, his men loved him so ardently that, with him as their leader, they fought with almost more than human endurance. Imagine the depth and wildness of their grief, when Owen Roe died, poisoned by some enemy, just at the most critical point in all his warrior life—when he was advancing to meet Cromwell. He must have had a strong heart and wonderful ability to bear up for years against superior forces and the lack of spirit shown by the greater number of the Anglo-Irish peers who had joined the Confederacy. His generalship won the battle of Benbulbin for the Irish against the strong English forces. Ah, that was a bright, happy day for Ireland; she felt freedom to be so near. And the men who had wrecked thousands of homes gave their lives in return that day. But it wasn't a voluntary expedition; it would not have very great merit."

"I think not," I replied. "I wish I had time to tell you a great deal about Sarsfield, who defended Limerick so gallantly against King William. He kept possession of it for more than a year, and showed the victor of Boyne of what stuff his brave Irish troops were made. They had not been successful that day, but it was on account of their small numbers and because they weren't properly equipped, not because they lacked courage. They proved that one time when King William's men had battered down a gap in the Limerick walls, and poured into the city. They drove them out pell-mell, and had revenge on a small scale for the Boyne. King William left for England four days after; I guess he was commencing to realize that the garrison meant to stay there for some time. He was a courageous soldier himself, and knew courage when he met it in others."

After a moment's pause, he said: "Of course, uncle, you have heard a great deal of Daniel O'Connell, who labored so patiently and faithfully for his race; the hero of Christendom," as Pope Pius IX. called him—I think every body has."

"Yes, I once heard a very able lecture given on his career and character. I have forgotten much of it, but it impressed me at the time. By the way, Brian, I think your favorite heroes are very numerous. Seriously, does not your list include nearly all of them?" "He had been regarding me steadfastly, while I was speaking, his eyes filled with a look of astonishment mixed with compassion, evidently for my pitifully limited acquaintance with history and its makers; then, with deepest stress on each word, he said: "Why, uncle, you can not imagine I have told you of all our grand men! I have not spoken of one-tenth of them; there are scores more, but these are the ones I admire particularly. There is just one more I would like to tell you about."

"I looked inquiringly at him. "Robert Emmet," he said in answer to my glance, "Ireland's young martyr. The first time I came into this room, that picture attracted me." He pointed to a large painting of Emmet, which hung on the opposite wall. The last mellow light of day fell on the stern, young, pictured face, with its lines that came from agony endured. We could dimly see his form, as he stood with folded arms before a crucifix. He might have been uttering that perfect dying speech; those solemn words of impeachment of the tyranny that was to be his murderer, or his sublime farewell to country and friends. "My country was my idol. To it I sacrificed every selfish, every endearing sentiment; and for it now I offer up my life. I am going to my old grave; my lump of life is nearly extinguished; my race is run." Brian repeated these words in a soft, half-whisper, but the very air appeared to take them up and make them ring through the fine old room, in sweet, yet strong and passionate cadences, full of anguish, yet of triumph, as we gazed on the white face.

"It was a sad ending for the talented, high-spirited young Emmet," Brian said, "then added reflectively: "But no, it was glorious. He died on a gibbet, it is true, but he died for us, and he still lives in our hearts. His manner of death brought him immortality. Moore's 'O, Breathe his name' was written of him. Byron said three of Moore's poems were worth all the epics ever written, and this is one of them. It is exquisite, indeed. Wait, I shall bring it to you," and he jumped lightly down from his elevated seat. He crossed over to a shelf, from which he took a volume of Moore's poems, and in an instant's time, gave me the book, opened at the poem of which he had spoken. His familiarity with the position of the books and their contents strikes me with fresh surprise each time I observe it: in some way it makes me feel myself the inferior of this small lad with his store of knowledge. I read the few lines, and perhaps it was some spark of Brian's appreciative nature that had kindled mine; but certainly I had never before properly felt their great beauty."

"O, breathe not his name—let it sleep in the shade. Where cold and unhonored his relics are laid; Sad, silent and dark be the tears that we shed. As the night-dew that falls on the grass or his head! But the night-dew that falls, tho' in silence it weeps, Shall brighten with verdure the grave where he sleeps. And the tear that we shed, tho' in secret it falls, Shall long keep his memory green in our souls."

"And he is the last of your heroes?" I asked. "This a magnificent ending." "There are a great many more, and perhaps we shall talk of them some other time, that is, if you do not read up the history yourself. It would be a splendid way to pass some of your 'lazy' hours."

"You little rascal! my 'lazy' hours. What an accusation! I, the saint of activity!" "O, how well Uncle Roger?" he said, "smiling, when it will feel your active mind. You really ought to read it," and, in this wise, Brian laid down the law for me, as I believe he has always done since he came to this quiet old noose, and began his reign over the quiet master. "An Irishman and an O'Donnell, not to know the name of Ireland, not to know of the ancientness of our race; that, one thousand years before Julius Caesar landed among the rude, un-civilized Britons, we had our own Milesian monarchs on the Irish throne, surrounded by their courts of champion knights and chieftains, lords and nobles; that there were four other races of kings before them; not to know that those wonderful old Round Towers had been erected, and King Cromthach had led forces out of Ireland, against the Romans, before ever Caesar came to Britain—it is too bad, uncle, is it not?"

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it is put in for 'filling up' when the editor's supplies of murders, harrowing accidents, and the wonders performed by Citizen Smith's laying hens, have been exhausted."

"Perhaps so," he shook his head doubtfully. "I wish it were so. But wait—where have I seen something of the kind lately? Ah, yes, I know. In a very nice magazine at Aunt Marian's house. A clever writer is contributing a series of up-to-date articles, and, in the one I saw, he made the mistake of giving the thiefing servant-maid the name of Bridget, and making her speak that rough jargon. The accompanying illustration was of the most disgustingly ugly bundle of humanity I've ever seen. Her nose had an exaggerated turn-up; her short hair was all tousled and her dress was most slovenly. She was meant for a representative Irish servant."

"The poor man did not mean to hurt anyone's feelings. He probably never once thought that such sensitive people would read it," I remarked. "Then I am sure there were many. At any rate, he might have called her Minnie, or Annie, or some other name used by all sorts of people, and he might have made her speak ordinary English. But there's the dinner-bell!" "I rose and prepared to leave the room, while Brian remained to replace the histories on their shelf. As I walked across the room he said something, but I did not hear it distinctly. "Bannaght lath, asthore," he repeated. "And what does that mean," I asked. "Why, a blessing be with you, darling. At least, yesterday I asked O'Reilly, Aunt Marian's coachman, you know what it meant, and that is what he told me. It was so funny, uncle. When I asked him, he was just in the act of throwing away a very dilapidated old shoe; however, it found its way into O'Reilly's speck and span domain, and it had barely left his hand, when he turned around, and said solemnly, 'A blessing be with you, darling.' To be sure, I laughed at what seemed like a parting salute to the old shoe, and he joined me. He has the merriest, heartiest laugh I have ever heard, and his face becomes really wreathed in smiles, for the deep wrinkles go all around it. He's a bit of a character, uncle; I enjoy a chat with him."

"Thank you for the blessing, Brian, I really believe you are becoming patriarchal."

"As I passed down the hall, I heard his fresh, young voice raised into song as he busily occupied himself with the arrangement of the books. He sang: "She is a rich and rare land; O, she's a fresh and fair land; She is a dear and rare land— This native land of mine!"

The passionate tone, to which he sang the words, floated through the rooms; and the lofty walls echoed it, as though, both to lose the sweet notes. He sang on in his clear, boyish voice: "No men's hands hers are heavier— Her woman's hours never waver; Ye bravely die to save her, And think my lot divine!"

And I believe he meant it; some of the spirit of his beloved Hugh Roe has come down to him.

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