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THE PROPHET OF THE RUINED ABBEY.

By the Author of "The Cross and Shamrock." CHAPTER X.

During the confinement in jail of the family of the O'Donnells, our friend 'Terry,' the 'enchanted warrior,' was not inactive in his favorite vocation of defeating the designs of the enemy of his country. The female and younger members of the family of 'Fairy Hill Cottage' were liberated after a few days' confinement, through the interference of Lady Barterborough, who was shocked at the innocent wife and children of neighbor O'Donnell should be punished for a violation of law for which their uncle alone was responsible. Thomas O'Donnell, the proprietor of the cottage, had to abscond and go on his 'keeping' to allow the storm that threatened him to pass over his head. With the permission of the family, Terry O'Mara came to reside at 'Fairy Hill,' and had the chief care of the farm intrusted to him during the probable absence of its legitimate owner. Having, therefore, changed his own homestead on the hillside for the cottage, O'Mara disguised himself in the habiliments of 'the man of all work,' and by this means got frequent opportunities of visiting the captain in his cell. Though he was never once allowed to enter the cell-door, and had to endure the presence of a turnkey whose business it was to report the conversation between them, yet he managed, by speaking in a rapid tone, and mixing a few words of Irish with the flat broken English he assumed, to puzzle the Saxon guard, and to give the captain to understand that an attempt would be made for his release. He learned from the captain that offers of pardon were made himself, provided he renounced the French service, and disclosed any important secrets he might possess regarding the policy of the French monarch, who was suspected of secretly aiding the American revolutionists, and on that account had war been declared against him; but that on his contemptuous refusal of these humiliating terms, he was in a few days to be sent to Dublin Castle, to stand his trial for high treason to his majesty George III., as a rebel, and a French spy. It was in vain that he showed his protection from the French king, and his commission as captain of the Chasseurs de Vincennes, or threatened the probable result, namely, the execution of many English prisoners during the impending contest of war, for any illegal detention of his person—all would not do. He was a British subject, and he was entitled to all the privileges of the 'glorious constitution,' which was a yard of hemp rope, or to an ounce of lead, if found guilty of conspiring with the French, 'our natural enemies,' for the freedom of his wretched country. O'Mara was present when an official communicated these final conclusions come to at the 'Castle of Dublin,' and the termination of all further negotiations regarding the disposal of the prisoner.

The lieutenant who delivered this message instructed him, furthermore, to be ready at a moment's notice to start for the metropolis, nothing preventing the setting out immediately of the escort in whose custody he was to go, but an order from the Lord Lieutenant, which was hourly expected, and only delayed by his excellency, who was on his way from England, where he had gone to consult the sovereign regarding the critical state of the country. Upon inquiring what was to be the mode of conveyance to the metropolis, he was informed that he must go on foot, as the commanding officer, received no instructions to that effect. Colonel Clive had left for England the day after the expedition to the mountain, and the command now, in his absence, devolved upon one Captain Kidd, whom we have not yet introduced, because he was absent up to the departure of Colonel Clive. This was the person who acquainted the captain that, since Colonel Clive left no orders, he could not procure him a horse; that there was not one to spare, besides; 'and even if there was,' he said, 'I do not consider you entitled to the accommodation, owing to your having renounced the allegiance of your lawful sovereign, and joined the French service.'

'I renounce allegiance to a lawful sovereign! You are in error, sir, I tell you,' replied the captain. 'I never yet had a lawful sovereign.' 'I never acknowledged your English king as my sovereign, and it was my native love of loyalty that induced me to quit a loved country, where I had no sovereign to serve or uphold, for one where there is indeed a king, who rules over happy subjects.'

'This is adding insult to treason, sir, and I shall note it down,' said Kidd.

'Don't let one word escape. But mind, I am a French naturalized subject, and that I never gave, nor owed allegiance to your monarch of England. If this is treason, I must plead guilty of the charge. But to return to my mode of travelling to Dublin, you may as well murder me at once, in my present state of health, and such weather, as compel me to travel such a distance on foot. This you can yourself understand by my appearance.'

'Well, your honor,' interposed O'Mara, 'won't you allow the captain to use my master, his brother's gray mare, or rather one which Lord Barterborough has in grass with us, to ride on to Dublin? Eh, your honor, General Kidd?'

'Well, let's see,' replied the Saxon captain, reflecting, 'Yaus, I consider you entitled to ride your own 'oss, if you can procure one. I shall consult with Lieutenant Scarcecrow about it, but I guess there will be no trouble on that head.'

'Long life to your honor,' said Terry O'Mara. 'I know we can borrow my Lord Barterborough's gray 'Seagull,' as his lordship was so kind as to interfere to get the ladies out of jail. I'll have the mare ready any minute.'

In order that the reader may learn the cause of Terry O'Mara's fib regarding the 'Seagull,' it will be necessary to state, that at this period, or about it, no Catholic could possess a horse over the value of five pounds sterling, and whenever Catholics owned animals of more than this value, they were held in trust for them by some liberal Protestant of their neighborhood. It was so in the instance of Thomas O'Donnell's 'Seagull,' which young Lord Barterborough consented to own nominally, in order to save the beautiful animal for her proprietor, from the avarice of some low Protestant yeoman or trooper, who could come up any day to the farmer and offer five pounds, which if he refused to accept, the Protestant took forcible possession of his unfortunate Catholic neighbor's horse! Such was one of the enlightened laws by which Protestantism attempted to establish herself in Ireland, and yet she raises her head, and claims herself to be the mother of all the liberality there exists in Christendom, styling herself patroness of learning, liberty, and laws.

But to return to our narrative. After Terry O'Mara had received instructions to have 'Seagull' ready at any time within a week, when she might be required, and having been instructed to go by the mail-coach to Dublin himself, in order to ride the mare back, he started off to the cottage, to set about the requisite arrangements.—Having given Cuddihy, the ordinary ploughman of the farm, a few emphatic instructions about certain preparations unintelligible to him, O'Mara himself set about exercising the gray mare. He drove the mare twice a day up towards the mountain on full gallop, over hedges, ditches and brooks; and at his return to the cottage, he made her leap over a heap of burning wheat straw, which he had caused to be placed in the centre of the avenue. After four or five turns at such strange exercise, 'Seagull' took a particular pride in prancing up towards the blazing barricade, and flying clear over it at a bound, with her rider safe in the saddle.

Dinny Cuddihy was puzzled and alarmed at this extraordinary training, and though forbidden by O'Mara to open his mouth on the subject to anybody, was heard in the kitchen, when the former was out, to mutter to his neighbor Patchee Meer, 'that Terry must be cract, or that the fairies had a houl of him, for he was laid out in either killing the mare, or teaching her tricks as would keep her from sellin' for ever. He was afraid the masthur would be the loser.' This he would speak in the lowest whisper, for fear Terry would catch his meaning; and it that should happen, he looked on himself as lost, for Terry was regarded by most men as 'enchanted,' otherwise, they said, 'how could he sink into the ground when he liked, or have escaped the many shots fired at him by the gamekeepers, who had so often chased him in vain. Shure, he must have a charmed life, and nothing could kill him except a silver bullet shot out of a good rifle, for he was often shot with lead to no purpose.'

O'Mara having learned, on one of his daily visits to the prison, on what day the Captain was to set out for Dublin, and having left 'Seagull' ready saddled at the town hotel, for the latter, on the eve of his setting out, suddenly disappeared himself from the cottage, attended by Cuddihy. Nobody knew of where they had gone to, but it was found that one of the 'staggeens,' or working-horses of the farm was gone too, together with the two donkey jacks of their kind, which were the ordinary carriers of milk-panniers to the town.

The remaining portion of the family were astonished for what use the two famous donkeys were taken away, knowing their irremediable propensities to kick and bite all quadrupeds, and other animals not of their own species, and they had an especial antipathy to horses. In fact, so obstinate were these two jacks (called 'Castor' and 'Pollux' by a classical schoolmaster of the neighborhood) in following and putting in practice their illegal habits of biting and kicking, that they had always to be muzzled when harnessed in straddles. Besides this pair of quadrupeds, the 'staggen horse,' with a dry cart-load of wheat straw, and the valiant Dinny Cuddihy, were all that accompanied O'Mara. They travelled all that remained of the night, since their starting, and all the following day, until about one hour or so before dusk, they arrived at the city

of Kilkenny, where, having prepared feed for their beasts, they intended to put up for the night. They had scarcely grained their animals, and partaken of a slight refreshment themselves, when they were startled by a troop of guards, twenty-five in number, who rode up to the hotel, the 'Ormond Arms,' with poor Captain O'Donnell guarded in the centre of the body.

'Come, Cuddihy, come, you knave,' cried O'Mara, after having heard the commander of the troop, Lieutenant Scarcecrow, cry out that his men had twenty minutes for refreshments, and to guard well the prisoner; 'come, Cuddihy, let us haste, or our stratagem is spoiled—the captain is lost.'

Our force, now consisting of the respectable quadrupeds already described, with two men, all together counting five individuals, made as great haste as they could across the Nore by the stone bridge, to occupy the 'road to Dublin.' Having travelled about two and a half Irish miles outside the 'Faire City,' on the Dublin road, they halted near the gate of what is called a 'gentleman's house,' which lay enclosed amid a plantation of magnificent trees, that hid it from the vulgar eye. At this gate there was an ample semicircular space of a well-gravelled carriage-road, leading to the 'great house,' and wide-spreading breeches, and majestic elms, through their embracing and intermingling branches, formed a graceful arching arbor over the road for a distance of half a mile. This, added to the lateness of the hour, rendered the place almost dark, so that those who passed by must not have observed Terry and his party, or they must have taken them for tinkers, who were preparing to put up for the night in such a sheltered place.—It was then, for the first time, that the plan of O'Mara was communicated to Cuddihy, together with strict orders as to what was to be his share in the affair. The latter, however, did not much relish these plans, nor the commands of his leader, and began to urge his objections.

'Not a word from you Dinny,' he said, 'under pain of instant death;' at the same time drawing a concealed 'skine blade' from under his overcoat. 'See, is that gate open?'

'It is.'

'Very well. Now have your live coal ready, and when I say 'fire,' light this straw rope, and fling more straw on it; and when I cry 'cut,' then slip off the muzzles of the donkeys, cut their girths, and face them towards home.'

Soon the heavy tramp of troopers' horses was heard from the west. 'Draw!' cries O'Mara, and soon the whole cart-load of straw was drawn like a hedge across the road. 'Fire' was next given, and now the whole place smoked and blazed like a wall of fire. Terry then approached the guards, and addressing the Lieutenant, requested him to visit his master, who lived in the 'great house inside,' and who was afraid of attack from rebels. The gate was in the mean time opened by Cuddihy, who after having done so, stood ready to loose his formidable donkeys on the opposing foe.

'Scoundrel,' cried Lieut. Scarcecrow, 'how dare you obstruct the king's highway?'

'Cut!' answered Terry, after stopping the Lieutenant's sentence by a bullet in the head.—'Cut, cut!'

With that, the asses rushed forward on the troop, and braying in high tenor notes, and rearing and kicking in gallant style, they set about biting the horses, some of whom were overset. Terry, in the mean time, struck with his 'skine' at the thongs with which Captain O'Donnell's horse was tied to those of two dragoons, and crying 'Over!' 'Seagull,' as if conscious of the consequences that were dependent on her leap, flew like a bird over both fire and smoke. The dragoons attempted to follow, but their horses became restive, and balked. They fired several shots, but the smoke and the darkness intercepting their aim, the shots took no effect.

The whole troop now rushed in at the gate of Colonel Bruit, for want of a better way, and drawing up before his hall-door, alarmed his whole household. The colonel rushed, sword in hand, attended by his servants and tenants in arms, whom he had to defend his house against apprehended attacks of rebels, and ere he was aware who or what they were, another of the king's men fell lifeless from his horse, by a bullet discharged from one of the king's own muskets.

Thus ended the ambuscade of the Nore, and by this means was another O'Donnell rescued. Terry and his timid companion returned by one route towards home; but the Captain took a rounder but a safer road towards the same locality. The dragoon guards put up at Colonel Bruit's that night; and if they lost their prisoner and one or two of their troop, they gained good lodgings and good cheer to compensate them for their misfortunes.

CHAPTER XI.

The captain, on his way back to the ancestral cottage of 'Fairy Hill,' borne along by the sure-footed 'Seagull,' took the old road by the foot

of 'Slab-na-man,' in order to escape the vigilance of the patrolling detachments of yeomanry which he knew frequented the mail-coach roads, to the great annoyance of the neighboring peasantry and inconvenience of travellers. When within about three miles of the village of Mullinahone, he slackened the flying speed of the 'Seagull' into an easy trot, as well with a view of giving his animal breathing time, as to apply his mind with more attention to the conflicting and confused ideas that agitated his reflecting faculties.

He had just advanced so far on his journey as to place him on a line with the little town above mentioned; and passing by the ruin of an old castle called Holly Mount, which stood on his left, he perceived, by the faint light of a waning moon just rising, that a party of horsemen and a carriage were approaching. They were just on an eminence of the road called Barna-na-Guibe, or Wind-gap, when his keen eye perceived them against the now brightening horizon; and, after having appeared like a vision, they were soon lost in the shadow of the hill. Taking them for a party of yeomanry, he thought it prudent to turn his horse aside; and, having dismounted, he sheltered himself and his faithful animal on one side of the old castle, to avoid being observed by those who approached, whoever they were.—Having hitched his horse to a stump of an alder-tree that grew from a crevice in the old ruin, and drawing out his watch to learn the hour by the feeble light of the moon, his attention was instantly arrested by an angry discussion which, as he imagined, issued from under the ground beneath his feet. He placed his ear close to the earth, to learn what the voices were or what the purport of their confused debate, when there was a sudden pause, and loud laughter seemed to succeed articulate voices. Creeping on his fouralls to the road side, he could perceive that the cavalcade which he had previously observed were now passing by under the very shadow of the old castle, and he was astonished to learn that, tho' their pace was a quick and hurried one, they made no noise, but glided along as if the horses had no feet.

'Is this a fairy land?' he whispered to himself, 'or are my senses imposed upon by some mocking demon of these dreary hills? There are articulate voices issuing from the earth, and laughter, as if to scorn my attempt to catch at their meaning; and here are a carriage and horses gliding rapidly along a hard road, without making the slightest noise.' Creeping closer to the road, however, the mystery was soon solved; for he heard the riders conversing in intelligible tho' whispering tones, and he could see that the horses' hoofs and the carriage wheels were heavily and securely muffled.

Returning back again to where his horse was secured, he not only heard the voices anew, but could hear distinctly what was said; and from the speeches, and toasts, and songs, that issued from the ruins of 'Custawn a Cullen,' 'Holly Castle,' he concluded that, instead of a conclave of fairies, he had fallen in with one of Croppies; and that the pottene was freely used among them, he concluded from the speeches that were made and the toasts that were proposed.

'Fill your glasses,' said one sharp voice; 'fill to the brim. Here's to the memory of Father O'Donnell, God rest him, and confusion to his enemies!'

'Amen!' followed from about twenty voices.

'What's the time o' night, gienral?' said another, who appeared to be the guard or watchman of this troop.

'Just half-past eleven precisely,' answered the general.

'Come, thin, a story, a story. Come, O'Rafferty, you are a new comer. It is your turn now to begin. 'Shule lath.' Come on.'

'Oh, excuse me, gientlemin, excuse me.'

'No excuse, ma boughal, no excuse; the general orders.'

'Well, the only story I have is a throe one.'

'All the better. So much best. Silence, boys, till we hear the story; not a word out of yer mouths.'

As the story would be too long to put into this tale, and as it would require a separate chapter for itself, we may as well finish this by saying that the general of this nightly party of Croppies was a schoolmaster named Walsh, called by the peasantry 'Shawn Kaum,' or 'Crooked Jack,' from the deformity of his body; and that by his pretended knowledge of military tactics, and his recital of the persecutions which he said he suffered in the North of Ireland from the Orangemen, he was chosen by the peasantry as a leader, and all confidence reposed in his patriotism and virtue. A false statement, too, that he was intended for the priesthood, which vocation he was obliged to relinquish in consequence of his sufferings for the 'glorious cause,' as he called it, added to his chance of establishing himself in the confidence of the people. Being somewhat of a classical hedge-school master, he got the sons of the middle and better classes of the peasantry

into his power; but when his low habits of drunkenness and dissipation, repressed for a time, began to be known, he was turned out of the farmers' houses, and afterwards turned spy, betrayed the confidence of the peasantry, took the Government 'bloud money,' and brought desolation and woe into those families to whose charity and hospitality he owed his elevation from poverty and degradation, to a position of comparative comfort and respectability, had he not the abandoned soul of a traitor, and the cursed tongue of a hired perjurer. As we shall have occasion to refer to him more than once in the subsequent part of this tale, we dismiss for the present, with these few remarks, this perjured Sinon, who no doubt deputed by the Government of the day to ingratiate himself into the favor of the people, for the purposes of treachery and betrayal.

O'Rafferty proceeded to narrate one of the legends of the country, and the captain followed with a story by another of the company.

CHAPTER XII.

While Captain O'Donnell remained a listener by the ruins of the 'Old Castle,' partly detained by his curiosity, and partly by his doubts as to whether or not he should seek direction from some of his obstreperous fellow-rebels as to the safest route towards the place of his immediate destination, the cry of 'To arms! to arms!' rang on his ears; and ere he could again reach the back of his 'gallant gray,' a dozen rude hands were on his collar; and the shouts of 'We have him now! here is one of 'em, at any rate!' brought the leader of the band of desperadoes from his cavern to the upper air.

'Yes, captain, we have one of the tyrants, at any rate. Your bread is baked for certain.—Where are the rest of your associates?—come, tell us at once, or you die this minute—speak out instantly.'

All these, and several other abrupt and contradictory questions, commands, and threats, were uttered ere O'Donnell found time or chance to say, 'Be quiet, my friends, and I shall tell you all.'

'Oh, you will indeed; come, follow us.'

He was now ushered into the presence of the captain, after having been forced through a circular hole in the wall of the castle, within about a foot of the ground outside, but as many as 8 or 10 feet from the floor of the cellar, in which the captain and his guards were assembled. The captain of the Croppies, assuming as much dignity as was consistent with his rather tattered habiliments, which were kept from falling off his body by a sort of belt or rather cord of green baize or flannel, which girded him tightly around the middle, under which he wore a case of pistols, and a silver hilted dagger, now commenced a minute scrutiny of his prisoner. His inspection was frequently interrupted by the extinguishing of the 'shobogues,' or pine bog-chips, which served him and his associates in place of candles, and which it took the whole care of his most active attendants to keep snuffed and burning.

After a solemn pause, and before allowing his prisoner leave to speak a word, this midnight Rhadamanthus, leaving a sigh and making a speech on the responsibility that devolved on him in virtue of his office of chosen leader of a trusty band of patriots, at length pronounced his horrid decree, and that sentence is, that you must die within one hour. You killed Father O'Donnell.

'I to have any thing to do with him—'

'Yes, you and your friends, associates and fellow-tyrants; you must therefore die the death.'

'You are under a grievous mistake. I neither consented to his unjust sentence, nor has Father O'Donnell suffered death, as you erroneously imagine.'

'Hold, sir, hold your tongue; have I not seen his head on the accursed spike of the Saxon, in the town of Cloughmore? Did I not witness the thunder, wind, and lightning,—the signs of Heaven's displeasure,—that enveloped the atmosphere and the earth alike in their terrible and wrathful mantle, at the very hour of his execution? The very elements, the inanimate creation, stood in mourning, and gave expression to their loud and wrathful lamentations at the foul murder of England, while you and your associate judges and sheriffs were feasting as if at a wedding, at this your triumph over the poor down-trodden Celt. Death, death, sir, is too mild a punishment for the vile execution of an O'Donnell, by your guilty hands.'

The whole party applauded this cruel speech of a half-crazy and drunken desperado, and the sad reality stared the captain of the Chasseurs de Vincennes in the face, that he had escaped from the meshes of English cruelty and injustice, to become entangled in the snares of a lawless and desperate band of Croppies, in comparison to whose summary and cruel sentence of death, that of English injustice itself would have been preferable. All his protestations of innocence of the crime laid to his charge, of being the judge who sentenced his own brother to death were unavailing. All his arguments, to prove his identity as Charles O'Donnell, only provoked the