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## TURLOGH O'BRIEN; OR, THE FORTUNES OF AN IRISH SOLDIER. (Chapter XXI. continued.)

Jeremiah Tisdall, meanwhile, continued to smoke his pipe of tobacco in sour and solemn taciturnity, and a full hour elapsed ere he called for his reckoning, and prepared to depart. As the inn-keeper received the shot and assisted Tisdall to adjust his cloak, he addressed him in a cautious tone—

'Sir,' he said, 'from your address, I take it, you are from the north country; and if you be a Whig I counsel you to avoid the crowd before the door; if my guess be a right one, and that you know best, follow me, and I will let you forth by a private way.'

Tisdall gruffly nodded his assent to the proposal, and his host led the way through several chambers and corridors, and at last undid a rusty bar, opened a narrow door, and pointing into the dark, drew back, and suffered Tisdall to pass forth. He did so, and in the dark stumbled down two steep steps, and found himself in a narrow lane, totally unlighted save by the dusky gleam from an occasional window high in the dark old walls. As Tisdall stumbled on, the inn-keeper stooping forward through the door, whistled shrilly, and then precipitately closed it again. This signal awakened the suspicions of the Puritan, but the grating sound of the rusty bolt returning to its socket, reminded him that he had now no course but to proceed.

'A pretty place to cut a fellow's throat in,' muttered he, as he looked with a scowl into the impenetrable gloom, and then up into the dim glare of the distant casements, while at the same time he pressed down his hat and braced himself in the instinctive anticipation of a coming struggle.

He was about to proceed, when a chance light, gleaming through a lower window, illuminated a patch of the opposite wall, within a few yards of the spot where he then stood. In the full light of this sudden gleam he was a little startled to see a human form—it was that of the young, pale faced man in black, whose persevering scrutiny in the inn-room had some time since so much disconcerted him. He was standing near the wall, leaning upon a cane, and slightly inclined forward in the attitude of one who attentively listens.

'I would stake my life on it,' muttered Tisdall, 'that same lean fellow in black is watching for me. I don't know what to make of him—he does not look like a thief, nor altogether like a madman. I'll accost him whatever he be; and in pursuance of this resolution he exclaimed—'You're observed, sir, whatever be your purpose; if it be honest, you will scarce refuse to lead the way out of this dark alley, and oblige a stranger who knows it not; but, if otherwise,' he added, more sternly, and, after a pause, observing that the figure seemed no otherwise affected by this address than in so far as he altered his attitude to one of perfect perpendicularity, and advanced a step or two towards the speaker—'if otherwise I warn you to think twice ere you run yourself into danger; I am prepared and resolved.'

'I carry no weapon, sir, and mean you no hurt,' replied the stranger, in a gentle tone. 'I have expected you here for the better part of an hour.'

'It was preconcerted then between you and the landlord that I should leave his house this way?' said Tisdall, with surprise, still qualified with suspicion.

'Yes,' replied the other, calmly; 'I wish to speak a few words with you, and cared not to be remarked: your name is Tisdall—Jeremiah Tisdall?'

'Well—and what then?' urged the master of Drumquinnol, with renewed surprise.

'I know the purpose of your visit to this city,' pursued the young man, in the same gentle tone. 'You have accompanied Sir Hugh Willoughby and his daughter.'

'And if you know all about me, what need is there to question me?' said Tisdall, gruffly.

'I desire to know where Sir Hugh lodges—I ask no more than that you should convey me to his presence. It nearly concerns his safety that I should see him,' replied the gentleman in black, with tranquil earnestness. As they thus spoke they were, side by side, slowly pursuing their way—the strange a little in advance—through the dark and winding lane.

'You know Sir Hugh Willoughby?' asked Tisdall, sharply.

'No,' answered the young man, quietly. 'Your request is then, to say the least of it, a strange one,' observed the Puritan. 'What can I tell of you or your designs; you may mean well, or you mean mischief; 'tis easier to work harm than good; and he that would escape the serpent's bite, now-a-days, must exercise the serpent's wisdom.'

'You are suspicious—unreasonably suspicious,' Mr. Tisdall, answered the young man, in a melancholy tone: 'yet I can scarcely blame you, nor have I any right to resent your injurious doubts. Bethink you, however, and say, were I an enemy of Sir Hugh's, and sought his ruin, could I not ascertain with ease, from other enemies, where he is now lodged? I need not seek this knowledge from his friends, least of all need I seek thus secretly a private interview. You wrong me, Mr. Tisdall.'

'Well, then, what do you purpose—what have you to disclose?' pursued the elder man.

'For my purpose,' said his companion, 'it is to place Sir Hugh upon his guard; for the disclosures I may make, you must pardon me when I say, they are for Sir Hugh Willoughby's ear, and for no other.'

They had now nearly reached the end of the narrow lane, and the lights and the noise of the open street were close at hand; the young man stopped short, and said, with gravity—

'I have told you frankly my reason for wishing an interview with Sir Hugh Willoughby;—you can conduct me if you will to his lodging; if you refuse to do so, the consequences be upon your own head. To-night, my information may be important, to-morrow it may be too late. If you please to lead me to his presence, now, I allow you—if not, we part here, and this minute.'

Tisdall looked in the young man's face, for the light from the frequented and still busy street fell full upon him, as he stood, with one hand buried in his vest, and the other resting upon his silver-mounted cane, and in the expression of his features, as well as in his attitude, there was something at once tranquil and melancholy, which almost assured the Puritan that his original apprehensions were unfounded.

'Priest, madman, or astrologer,' thought Tisdall, 'he looks harmless; and even were he disposed for mischief, I see not what evil he can do.'

'Follow me,' he added, gruffly, as he turned abruptly in the direction of the Carbrie, and gliding cautiously along, so as to avoid observation or interruption, they soon found themselves within the door of that section of the old building in which Sir Hugh and his fair daughter were now lodged.

The young man, in silence, followed Tisdall up the stairs, and he having knocked at the door, led the way into the chamber. The old knight was sitting at the table, with a book before him, and close beside him sat his beautiful child, with her hand locked in his.

'Ha, my trusty Tisdall,' said he, while for a moment, his countenance lightened with a smile, 'and—gad's my life—a priest, too,' he added, with a changed look, and in a tone of surprise; for the young man in black had now uncovered his head, and as he bowed, the tonsure was plainly discernible.

'Sir Hugh Willoughby,' said the priest, turning his full dark eyes upon the old knight, 'I have sought an interview with you, owing to some information touching your personal safety, which I this day accidentally learned; this interview must be private—quite private; and if you desire to know how it comes to pass, that I, a stranger, should feel, as I do, an interest in your fortunes, look at this ring—see in it a token of sincerity, and a plea for my excuse; for the sake of the person who gave me this, I have come here, and though a stranger, have presumed to intrude upon your privacy.'

Sir Hugh turned deadly pale as he looked upon this token; his fingers trembled so violently that he was fain to place it on the table again; he raised his hand slowly to his head, and twice essayed to speak, but in vain; so he but motioned to the young man to be seated, and rising hastily, left the room.

His daughter sat for a few moments glancing fearfully from Tisdall to the stranger, and from him to the old Puritan again; but at last, overcome with uneasiness for her father, she hurried after him, and reached his chamber door. She heard his voice in broken sentences from within, and his heavy and hurried tread, as with agitated step he crossed and re-crossed the room. She knocked, but her summons was unheard; she tried to open the door, but it was secured within; so she went down the stairs and waited upon the lobby for some minutes. On returning to knock once more at his door, she heard, she thought, the old man sobbing bitterly, but the sound speedily ceased, and he came forth, and kissing her fondly, he took her by the hand and descending the stairs in silence, he entered the chamber where Tisdall and the young priest stood.

'You will pardon me, sir,' he said, addressing the young man in a subdued tone, 'and it may be you know enough to do so readily, when I tell you that some remembrances connected with that token, for a time unmanned me. I am now composed, and prepared to hear you. You desire to be private; we can be so in the next room. Will you accompany me?'

The priest bowed gravely, and followed Sir Hugh, who, when they had entered the chamber,

closed the door, and placing the candle upon the table, after an agitated pause, and in a voice so broken as to be scarcely audible, he asked—'Is she well, sir? is she happy? does she need help?'

'The lady whose token this was, stands not in need of any aid; she is, I trust, well,' answered the young man; 'and for happiness I believe her chief hopes are fixed in futurity.'

'I will not ask where she is,' said Sir Hugh, hurriedly; 'I suppose the question were vain.'

'Vain, indeed, sir—I may not answer it—my promise has been given,' answered the young man.

'Well, sir, proceed we to the purpose of your visit,' said the old knight, with a heavy sigh, and after a long pause.

'I have come, sir, it is right to say, with no message or intimation from her, the lady of whom we have spoken,' said the stranger; 'but simply to carry to you a caution, grounded upon information, of which mere accident this day put me in possession. You are prosecuted for high treason. Know you the motives of that prosecution?'

'The motives—why, faction, I should say;—with, perhaps, some leaven of personal malice,' replied Sir Hugh.

'There may be, for aught I know, something of those mixed up in it,' answered his visitor;—'but the true and sustaining motive, the purpose and object of the whole proceeding is the possession of your property; it matters not for whom your property is the real aim of this indictment. This knowledge may help to guide you hereafter. The other matter is of more immediate concernment. You are to be examined before the privy council, within a few days at furthest.'

'True, sir; what then?' replied he.

'No pains will be spared to entrap you into perilous admissions; and, mark me well, your words will be written down by a clerk in the adjoining room, and if they can serve against you, will be brought in evidence upon your trial; so, once for all, be upon your guard. You now comprehend the motives which originated this prosecution. If you be innocent, fear not—avarice may be bribed.'

'But not by me. I will hold no terms with it,' said the old man, vehemently. 'I stand on my innocency and on my rights; and whoever they be, who would reach at any possessions through my life—I care not how great or how many—I defy them all. I have done no wrong—I have done my duty—I have guarded my house, and my family, and my child's life, as the laws of man, and God, and nature allow me;—and if for this the king will take my life, let him have it—the innocent blood needs no ransom. They may make a traitor and a corpse of me, but I will hold no compromise with villainy.'

The young man's kindling eye told plainly how his own nature sympathised with the words of the old knight; but he shook his head sadly, and taking his hat, he added—

'Do nothing hastily, sir; consider every act, weigh every word; for, be your cause what it may, you will need the coolest caution, the calmest judgment, as well as the promptest energy, and the keenest sagacity to boot, if you would baffle or escape the schemes of that cabal.'

These were the concluding words of the young man; and, as he spoke them, he passed slowly forth. He paused, however, in the outer room, and added—

'I am attached, as assistant almoner, to a regiment of horse, whose head-quarters are at present in your house of Glendarragh. My duty will take me there in a few days. Should you desire any message thither, you may trust its safety to my charge. I shall see you ere I depart.'

Thus speaking, he bowed lowly and gravely to the young lady, and then to the knight, and so withdrew.

'Alas! alas! said the young man, bitterly and sadly within himself, as he once more found himself alone, and in the chill night air—'alas! for the country in whose name such deeds are done, such passions cherished. Woe's me for the truth, when the children of darkness are foremost in her cause. Was ever country so loyal to her faith and king, so full of virtues, so schooled in afflictions, so willing to suffer and to bleed—were ever poor people filled with holier devotion and loftier enthusiasm, if their leaders would but guide them on with singleness of purpose, and show them honestly what they ought to do. But, alas, instead of wisdom and virtue, I see but craft and avarice, violence and chicane—with scandal and weakness, and, alas, I fear me, with disaster and ruin behind.'

The priest now turned up a narrow and deserted street, and, walking at a brisker pace, after two or three turns, he came into a kind of dreary opening, which extended from the termination of the street which he had now reached into the scattered suburbs. The only object discernible against the deep blue starlit sky was the outline of a large house with a steep gable, and

surrounded by several tall, desolate-looking trees. A garden of some extent, filled with straggling bushes, drearily occupied the side of this mansion. Into this inclosure, the young man admitted himself by a latch-key; and as he approached the narrow portal which opened from the house into the garden, his ear was attracted by the snorting and clamping of a horse close by. On looking through the pailing, he perceived with tolerable distinctness, a carriage and horses drawn under the front of the old house, and opposite to the hall-door. For many reasons this disposition struck him as a strange and somewhat unaccountable one.

'God grant that the poor lady may not have been disturbed,' he exclaimed, uneasily, as he raised his eyes upward to a window upon the first floor, through whose red curtains a light was dusky visible.

At this moment the light was suddenly moved, and a shadow passed between him and the curtain. At the same time he heard two voices raised in strong excitement. The one was that of a man who seemed to be reiterating some command with growing sternness—the other were the accents of a female, pleading, as it seemed, with him, and that under the urgency of fear and anguish, and something of indignation, too.

In the midst of this, the casement was on a sudden pushed open; but it was instantly shut again with violence, and the vehement debate continued as before.

At the same moment a window in the front of the house was thrown open, and a female voice, in loud accents of alarm, called shrilly for the watch.

Not knowing what to think or fear, the young man stumbled and scrambled through bushes and over earth mounds, in the dark—speeding through the old garden with all the haste his limbs could command.

To turn the key, spring into the dark house, along the passage, and up the staircase—every moment hearing the angry debate of human voices rise louder and more distinct upon his ear—was but the work of a moment. Without hesitating for a second, either for preparation or ceremony, the young priest pushed open the door, and entered the chamber.

CHAPTER XXII.—THE FAMILIAR—THE CASTLE—AN OLD FRIEND IN A NEW COAT.

Two figures occupied the room—one was the pale, wasted and melancholy form of the lady whom we have already seen in the antique chamber in the castle of Lisnamoe—the same, too, we may as well observe in passing, whose presence supplied the only female figure who, muffled and weeping, appeared in the saloon in London, to which, in our first chapter, we introduced the reader.

She stood with her hands raised and clasped together in anguish—one foot advanced, as if she had but just stamped it upon the floor in passion; her face, however, spite of her excitement, showed no hue of life through its apparent whiteness, but her dark eyes streamed fire upon the tall, athletic, malignant form before her—it was that of Miles Garrett.

As the door opened, each glanced to see what its revolution might disclose.

'Ha, O'Gara!' exclaimed Garrett, with bitter emphasis, the moment he beheld him; 'then you are the mover in all this precious mischief.'

'I understand you not, sir,' replied the young man, with dignity; 'I have taken no part in any mischief; I have done no wrong; and if I can prevent it, shall permit none,' he added, glancing at the melancholy wreck of pride and beauty, who now sank (the momentary strength of terror and anger fled) pale, helpless and death-like, into a chair.

'I will not go—I will not go,' she muttered, fearfully glancing from the young priest to Garrett; 'do not let him force me away; I will not go.'

'Look you,' said Garrett, striking the table with his clenched fist; 'no more debate: walk by my side down stairs, or I'll lift you to the coach in my arms.'

'Sir, Mr. Garrett—' said the ecclesiastic, earnestly.

'Silence, meddling fanatic idiot,' cried Garrett, forgetting his habitual self-command and stamping furiously on the floor.

'Oh, save me, good sir,' said the lady, rising again, and tottered backward.

'You shall not touch this unhappy lady, sir; you shall not,' said the priest, his generous indignation overcoming every other feeling.

'Out of my way, ungrateful dog!' cried Garrett, with concentrated ire; 'out of my way, or your black weeds and Spanish diploma shall not protect you.'

'I will not leave this spot,' answered the young man, firmly; 'I interpose myself—my life—between this unprotected lady and your violence; unarmed as I am, you shall find me resolute; I will not give way; I entreat, I implore of you, think well what it is you do.'

'I tell thee, blockhead, thou knowest, nothing

of this matter,' said Garrett, through his set teeth; 'this lady is in my charge; for her safety I am responsible; thy audacious intrusion I will not tolerate; be advised—be warned.'

'Miles Garrett,' cried the lady, in extreme agitation; you have, and can have, no authority over me.'

'We'll see that,' retorted Garrett, with an epithet too coarsely insulting for these pages.

'Stand back, sir,' said the priest, in a tone of stern and fearless reproach; 'how can you break a bruised reed? In the name of manhood I charge you again—stand back.'

'I tell you what, young sir,' said Garrett, with a sudden accession of calmness more deadly and ominous far than his preceding excitement had been; 'I desire no violence; but if you persist in your knight errantry, you may chance to rue it. Leave me and this lady to settle our own affairs, and depart from the house as you came into it.'

'I will leave the room at this lady's bidding, and at no other,' said the young man, firmly, still interposing calmly between Garrett and the feeble object of his peremptory visit.

As the slight form of the priest confronted the gaunt and powerful figure of the intruder, it were hard to conceive a contrast more striking and affecting.

Garrett stood blazing in the finery of his rich gala suit—his full wig resting on his shoulder in a black cloud of horsehair, itself as well as his face, and all his rich attire, disordered by the hurry and violence of his gestures—while his marked and swarthy features scowled with the blackest storm of gathering fury upon the pale, bright-eyed young man, who, with a calm look, half of defiance, half of reproach, serenely fearless, stood in the composed attitude of peace, one hand thrown a little back, as if to check the advance of the lady whom he sought to defend, the other resting upon his silver-headed cane;—and the paleness of his noble features, and the tranquil dignity of his attitude, alike relieved and enhanced by the sable dye and simple fashion of his not ungraceful dress.

The young priest had hardly uttered the sentence we have last written, when Garrett, with a muttered curse or threat, doubling his huge fist, strode towards him. At the same moment, however, the chamber door, which was nearly closed, was pushed partly open, and a mean-looking, prying countenance, grinning and puckered, and apparently belonging to a person who had passed the meridian of his days, peered sharply and inquisitively, with a pair of small glittering eyes, into the apartment.

'Hey-day, Mr. Garrett, stay your hand, sir; pray do, Mr. Garrett,' cried the apparition, in a squeaking voice, and with a good deal of energy.

'Well, what now? come in; come in, rascal,' replied Garrett, half impatiently and half irresolutely, as he turned quickly toward the speaker. Edgeways, and with a look of cringing complacency which contrasted odiously with the fierce and diabolic passions which he well knew had but just started the echoes of the old house, the stranger entered; he was meanly dressed, and in his sycophantic smile there was a lurking villainy which combined to render his appearance indefinitely formidable as well as repulsive, he bowed round with a low and servile inclination.

'What do you want; in the devil's name, what is it?' pursued Garrett.

'I crave your pardon, Mr. Garrett, and yours, madam,' he replied, again bowing humbly; 'but having come hither upon this business, and in the same carriage, I thought I might be excused if I came up stairs, and just hinted that this discussion has been carried on in so high a tone, that with the noise of the dispute, and the old woman in the attic calling for the watch, if I had not known that this was a mere visit, as I may say, of friendly persuasion, I should myself have almost believed I overheard a riot.'

The old man placed his emphasis so pointedly that were it not for his cringing smile and attitude, and his humble tone, this speech must have been construed as a piece of mere impertinence; as it was, Garrett did not seem clearly to know in what way to take it; he felt, perhaps, that the rebuke which, it conveyed, had come seasonably; he therefore paused, a good deal disconcerted.

'Since the lady prefers the society of her new protector,' continued the stranger, with a covert sneer, as he glanced at the young ecclesiastic, 'surely, Mr. Garrett, you need not fret yourself if that preference leads her into new difficulties, and, perhaps, disgraces—all of her own making. You have acquitted yourself, Mr. Garrett—you wash your hands of the whole business—once and for ever; you have done your duty, and need trouble yourself no further.'

Garrett glanced darkly and irresolutely once or twice in the face of the speaker, and the little ill-favored man returned his glance with one silent look of such diabolical rebuke as Me-phistopheles himself might have shot at his rash familiar.