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THE IRISH LEGEND OF
M'DONNELL,
AND
THE NORMAN DE BORGOS.
A BIOGRAPHICAL TALE.
BY ARCHIBALD M'SPARRAN.

CHAPTER III.—(Continued.)
They afterwards proceeded to ask the Minstral concerning the air called Finvola the gem of the Roe.
"I suppose," said Cairbre, "there are not many individuals of any research in Ireland who can be unacquainted with the history of Finvola O'ahan; but since it appears to me that you are strangers to an event which took place, I may say almost in your own neighborhood, I shall, as nearly as I recollect, rehearse the account which I got from a manuscript in the old abbey of Dooneven.
"Dermot O'ahan, an Irish prince, possessing broad and extensive domains, bounded by the Bann, the Foyle, and the Northern Ocean, resided on a rock overhanging the river Roe, and nearly adjoining the abbey above-mentioned. This nobleman was father to Finvola, and twelve sons, for whom he built twelve castles in different parts of his lands; he had frequent intercourse with the kings and princes of the neighboring nations, and often carried his daughter Finvola and her brothers with him when he visited the courts of Caledonia or Britain. 'Twas returning from the former in the winter season, that Dermot O'ahan, with his son Shane and Finvola his daughter, was overtaken by one of those storms which are frequently known to burst forth among the island of Caledonia, and as their vessel was badly manned, they narrowly escaped with life, being driven by the tempest on the rugged shores of Islay in the dead of night.
"Under one of those thunder-rifted towers of natural rock which hang frowning over the deep, they were forced to remain during the night, drenched by the rain and benumbed in their joints, until the beams of a watery winter sun, rising from behind the eastern mountains, began to re-animate nature, and assist the genial current in resuming its wonted functions. In this forlorn and pitiable situation they remained till far in the morning, not knowing the name of the island on which they were cast, nor whether it was inhabited by a human being; but at this juncture the plashing of oars was heard turning round a high projecting reef that in some measure had sheltered them from the fury of the tempest, and shortly after they saw a fishing-boat with five stout young men approaching them. Four of these were Norwegians, clothed in a kind of oiled frocks made of skin, with a hood of the same materials that fell over the shoulders, and rendered them proof against all weathers; the fifth, who was the only one that could address them in a known tongue, was a tall, swarthy Highlander, of a bold military carriage, and this corrected, if I may be allowed to use the expression, by an easy politeness.
"In rowing up to the strangers, he scarcely waited either to ask their country, or the cause of their disaster, but speaking to his companions in the Norse dialect, bid them assist the strangers in mooring their vessel, and afterward direct them across the island to the mansion; then turning to prince O'ahan and his daughter, he begged of them that they would

allow him to conduct them to a gentleman's residence which stood at no great distance, and where, he was certain, there was a good wish as well as capability to supply them with everything of which they stood in need.
"The Hibernian bowed acceptance, and supporting his daughter Finvola, the three walked toward a magnificent castle which stood rather at the farther verge of the island. In a few words he explained to them how he had been on business in Norway, and had felt the severity of the night as well as they, only that his mariners were better skilled in the navigation of those dangerous seas so thickly interspersed with shoals and islands.
"And on which of the Scottish islands," said O'ahan, "are we now?"
"You are now," said the stranger, "upon that one called Islay."—"And, also," said O'ahan, interrupting him, "the castle to which you are escorting us is the residence of M'Donnell, Lord of the Isles."
"The same," said the stranger.
"I fear," said O'ahan, "we are not in good trim to enter the court of our friend M'Donnell to-day; however, as it is not the character of an Irishman to stand upon punctilios, we shall use no other apology than that which a boisterous sea and tempestuous night have supplied us with."
"Be assured," said the stranger, "as far as I can inform you, there is no apology necessary; a person in distress has always found access to the halls of our ruler, and I have no doubt, Sir, but you have more and weightier claims than that which is common to mankind in general. I presume, from certain reasons of my own, that your name is O'ahan, and am willing to pledge myself that your arrival will be hailed with joy; but may I ask who the gentleman is whom you left with the sailors?"
"He is my son," said O'ahan, "and our name is the same which you conjecture, and, if I may flatter myself, a name not unknown to the Lord of the Isles, but to visit the court at this time was not our intention."
"As they were discoursing of these matters, and drawing near to the castle, they were met by a party of the clan of M'Donnell, arrayed in the full military costume of their country, and surrounded by these was approaching them a portly old man, dressed in a superb garment, and seemingly frank and robust under a green old age. He soon knew the strangers to be Hibernians, and nearly as soon recognised the person of Prince O'ahan, whom, with his two children, he welcomed in the Scottish manner to the court of M'Donnell.
"When I say in the Scottish manner, I presume all will understand my meaning, which is a welcome as hearty as a welcome could be.
"At this period O'ahan's daughter, Finvola, or as she was more frequently called, Flora, was often talked of, not only at the court of M'Donnell, but also in Holyrood, whence she was returning, and not altogether was she unknown at the royal residence of Britain; although here in Islay she was unattended, save by one maid, and she, on account of indisposition, had been left in the vessel till such times as they could procure females to take charge of her.
"The Lord of the Isles, for such was the person whom I have described as meeting them, surrounded by his guards, returned with his noble guests, often and often again inquiring how were his friends in the land of Inis-Ealga? how were the O'ahans of the Roe, "where I myself," said he, "was fostered, and along the romantic streams of which I have spent many a pleasant day." The majestic young Islander who first came to their succour was here introduced to them as son to the Lord of the Isles, and who received part of his name from their own family, Angus O'ahan M'Donnell.
"Prince O'ahan with his daughter, the princess Finvola, and his son, were now prevailed upon to spend a few weeks in this watery region, where so much variety was to be had in every season of the year, and where he that was fond of enterprise could not fail of finding achievements worthy his most daring ambition.
"Among these islands ran many dangerous currents, to navigate which none but a native could with safety attempt; but with all the difficulties and hazards of the Hebrides, Orkneys and Shetlands, with the different creeks, harbors and inlets, young M'Donnell was perfectly acquainted; and as many of which as their time would permit he carried his guests to see, not omitting among others the terrific whirlpool, Corry Vreckan, &c., &c.; but the time at length arrived that O'ahan with his children must seek the shamrock vales and oaken forests of the Green Island; and when Finvola, princess of northern Inisfalga, bade farewell to the royal mansion of Islay, she carried with her the hopes and the happiness of Angus M'Donnell, leaving him to breathe his sighs among the beetling steep and rude ridges of the stony Hebrides, and only re-

sponded by the screaming of sea-fowl and plaintive sound of the north wind.
Now far from the Isles, on Ierne's coast.
The breezes have wafted them over.
And quick beats the pulse of a hopeless swain,
The Flora's disconsolate lover.
For the noble maid was of tender years,
Nor knew of the graces around her,
Nor thought she her eyes had inflicted a pang,
To the youth when first he found her.
But she longed for the pleasant banks of Roe,
Where the wild deer oft are feeding,
Or high Benbradragh's hoary peak,
Where the fawn by the eyrie lies bleeding.
The chiming bells from the abbey grey,
Proclaim that O'ahan is coming;
And the sister nuns at break of day,
A sonnet of thanks are humming.
The hollow horn from Knoek na Ghian,
Has blown O'ahan hollow,
And galloghags from Faure and Finn
Are forth prepared to follow.
Bring forth three steeds of fairest form,
And fleet as the sorrel ranger,
Let gilded trappings these adorn
As should in the island of strangers.
For yonder comes Dooneven's lord,
He blows a blast of thunder,
Which from his lair has roused the stag,
And filled the forest with wonder.
Now dark-browed Rover has shaken his ears,
And away is merrily bounding,
While the hooded hawk from the castle top
Pursues the well-known sounding.
On Dermot O'ahan's departure for the court of Caledonia, he had ordered the twelve castles above-mentioned to be built for his twelve sons, and now on his return, after receiving the congratulations of a widely extended and loving people, he began to inquire concerning these buildings—if the workmen had them nearly finished; for in undertakings of the like nature, particularly the castles belonging to their chief, the clansmen were obligated in their oath of allegiance to assist both in procuring materials and in the workmanship, so that in a very short time they could erect a large edifice, and indeed there were few princes in Ireland better beloved by their vassals than the family of which I am speaking. The nursery of Dooneven was built by the ancestors of O'ahan, and patronized by every succeeding proprietor with the most princely liberality.
"For the support of this seminary there was given what we would call rather a whimsical allowance. Two men blindfolded started at the nursery, and as far as they could travel without falling was religiously set apart for the above purpose; one of the men taking his course north-westerly, and having made the space of nearly two miles and a half, fell and dislocated his foot, at a spring since called Tober-na-coiss, or the foot well. The other made nearly five miles, taking rather a westerly course, until he reached a place called Corn-Arg, where he also fell, this being the extremity of Dooneven parish, where it meets with that of Cumber.
"To the seminary of Dooneven were sent the youth of both sexes, from the most respectable families in Ireland, for education, for among the many others with which our nation abounded, it had acquired a high character, as well for the purity of its learning as the beneficence of the family that patronized it.
"The first abbot that presided here was Paul O'Murray, a man deeply read in the learning of the times, and well acquainted with the fathers. Under him were educated many of the Scottish M'Donnells, which was the principal cause of establishing a lasting friendship between them and the O'ahans. The students here were daily instructed in the use of the broadsword and targe, besides all other kinds of manual exercise which could brace the nerves or render the body robust and active.
"On the day preceding the one on which O'ahan designed to hunt, he caused the great horn to be sounded three times on Donald's hill, twice on Benbradragh, and once on Knoek-na-Ginn, being in the vicinity of the castle, that his tenantry and kinsmen might be apprised of the event that was about to take place on the succeeding day, and also that they might have both horses and dogs in full readiness the moment the stag was roused.
"Of all the favorite haunts for the stag in the country of O'ahan, he chose the deep thickets overhanging the streams of the Roe, in the translucent current of which, after a long hunt, he was wont to bathe his dappled sides, and springing thence, frequently scaled the rugged heights of Ben Evenney, wheeling round on the summit, and frowning down upon his hundred foes weakly clambering beneath him, but none daring to urge the dangerous pass.
"The universal pastime of our ever restless countrymen in those days was pursuing the hare, stag, or fox, and often the boar, a more dangerous exercise; for we have good authority that among the many wild inhabitants of the forests of Ireland, the boar was one, and

one also sought out by the most celebrated warriors.
"In following the chase they were often presented with difficulties and hazards well calculated to prepare them for the field of battle, both in bracing their nerves and practising their courage, nor was he who could not shine in the exercise of hunting, or who was not foremost in attempting danger wheresoever it occurred, capable of keeping company with men ever after; and if he was despised by his own sex, he had little cause to seek shelter among the other; for they who never thought a husband merited their hand, unless he had performed some hairbreadth escape or neckbreak achievement, could badly subsist with the attention of a poltroon.
"In the course of two or three months after O'ahan returned from visiting the court of Caledonia, being anxious to learn if his horses had lost sight of their mettle, or his dogs of their speed, he caused the great ox horn, blown by seven generations of his forefathers, to be sounded from the hills which I have mentioned, and they lying almost in a line with the Roe, where were the chief residences of the family, could not fail in being heard.
"It was then customary, when the sound of the chieftain's horn, whether for chase or for war, reached a certain length, and still more of the territory over which it was intended to extend lay beyond, that a sub-chieftain took up the blast, and filling the same notes and the same number of breaths, sent it to another, and so forward. This, when preceding the chase, was called winding the horn, and was equal to the quickest telegraph.
"Twas common for the ladies of Ireland to mingle in the chase, and they not unfrequently bore away the palm; for, in a narrow pass, or where a contention in horsemanship happened between the gentlemen, they had too much gallantry not to give the precedence to a female, and often assisted her when occasion required.
"The horn being sounded from the top of these hills, the highest of which is old Benbradragh, there was nought to be heard in the plains below but the sound of other chieftains' horns through the widely extended plains of O'ahan, mingled with the howling of dogs and neighing of horses, for both the dog and horse are well-known to anticipate the diversion of their master from the signal of the chase.
"In the midst of this general clamour, we are not to suppose that the stag, although deeply entrenched in the bosom of dark forests, lay unconcerned. No! every gale of wind brought sounds no less appalling to his ear than the death-knell to a criminal; and the effects of this were, that wheresoever he appeared he was seen stretching himself, snuffing the breeze, and bounding on the plain as if preparing himself against the approaching danger.
"The horsemen had lain off a good part of the morning, and allowed the dogs to beat through the thickets, betimes surprising them with a roar, and again falling quiet as if they were aware that their game lay hard by. They had proceeded much about the space of a mile toward the mountain, up a small stream, called Owen Reagh, which empties itself into the Roe, on the western side, when all on a sudden the pack opened with full mouth, and a kind of retreating battle commenced among the underwood, the dogs at times piping most hideously, as if having received the grip of some powerful enemy, and at intervals a more surly growl was heard, but still in a stifled tone, and much below the natural pitch of such a voice; however, it might well be compared to the voice of some plunderer, who, lest he might draw all his foes on himself at once, was willing to take and give a few hard bites half in silence, emitting now and then a flash of anger as he received a snap from his adversaries.—But all was to no purpose, the clamorous din thickening round his retreat, and an open mouth assailing him from every point of the compass, he was obliged to fight a sideways battle through his enemies, exhibiting to them a set of tusks, which, if they were even in the head of a dead animal, were sufficient to intimidate them.
"The dogs separated to right and left, some not without the loss of both ears and tail, and with a bound from the wood, he discovered himself in the midst of his pursuers to be a large brown wolf, long an inhabitant of these forests. It was to no use that a stag appeared to them in another place, both men and dogs were resolved to pursue the plunderer with keen resentment; and as to the latter, many of them did it in revenge for the scars which they had received both from his fangs and claws.
"The contest which had been continued in the bosom of the wood before that the wolf was driven from his covert, had drawn all the sportsmen at the very place where he first made his appearance, and through these as well as the dogs, he was obliged to fight his way.
"Having cleared himself of his many and

inveterate foes, by dint of good heels, and sometimes a backward snap at the most audacious pursuers, he slung himself with the utmost ease over all oppositions that presented themselves to him, directing his career for the inaccessible cliffs of Ben Evenney, where he knew he could rest in perfect safety, regardless of his enemies.
"It was not until late in the evening, however, that he reached the place which he sought with all his powers from the morning, and this being attained, was to him a city of refuge, beneath which his enemy might show his impotence in whatsoever manner he pleased; for, when the fugitive had entrenched himself in a stronghold that stands at least 1200 or 1300 feet above the level of the sea, all danger seemed to vanish like darkness before the lamp of Apollo.
"As the huntsmen saw themselves disappointed in their game, and night beginning to spread her cloak of sombre around them, Ben Evenney skirted with wood on the one hand, on the other, the booming Atlantic rolling his giant waves up the mouth of the Foyle, they concluded that it was better for them to take some refreshment before they began to retrace the steps which they had passed over with rapidity during the day, thoughtless of the hunger or fatigue that must ensue, and on this O'ahan ordered the horn of requiem to be blown, as well informed then that the chase was over, as to collect the scattered horsemen if there were any who had not come forward to the scene of preparation, and many of the most expert hands were employed in cutting down and collecting that timber which would make the best and speediest fire.
"Having piled a heap of dry combustibles at the foot of the rock, they laid the green timber above, slanting upward, and by the assistance of a steel and flint, soon had a fire that sent up a volume of flame and smoke approaching the top, and dying the grey surface of stone as far as it went.
"The huntsmen seated themselves at each side and in front of the fire, on temporary seats formed of the boughs, chatting over the transactions of the day and making remarks on the agility and hairbreadth escapes of the freebooter that lay scoured above them, and perhaps from his retreat eying all that had passed below, while now and then they were surprised by the swoop of one of those birds which harbor in the rock, being disturbed by the flame and smoke, leaving their place of retirement and seeking a shelter elsewhere.
"The few herdsmen who resided in the neighborhood, being either employed by O'ahan or some of his liegemen, failed not to bring provisions into the place where they knew their chieftain had halted.
"I need say nothing on the hospitality of the Irish; but certainly great O'ahan and his followers could not be at a loss in the country where he ruled as supreme lord, and in many places of which his only annual tribute was a deer, a fat sheep, or a creel of salmon, and these at any other time, save the present, could be of little use to him, having more four-footed animals of every kind than he could use; but still such marks of beneficence showed the zeal and unshaken attachment of his vassals, and although they came almost gratuitously, yet it was satisfactory in the highest degree to a chieftain, who so often required a proof of the fidelity of his adherents.
"As they sat here bountifully feasting on the provisions which they had received, in the manner above described, the horses were turned at large to feed wherever the impulse of nature directed them, and the dogs in part partook with their masters. The blaze which shot in a pillar of flame up the front of the rock cast a reflection over the smooth waters of the Foyle, as they silently crept towards the ocean, and the wild heath-clad brow of northern Inis Eogan was faintly illumed from the same cause.
"Each began now in his own mind to look back to the actions of the day, and recollect whether in the pursuit he had by means injured the wolf, and finding himself clear, returned thanks with great sincerity. "But," said he, as a kind of explanation on the matter in question, "it is more than probable, that hearing the well-known sound of the family horn preceding the chase, for it has a particular echo along this shore, that he knew we were prepared for sport, and therefore assumed his late form to give us some amusement, and lead us home to his very door, and when he has brought us here, you see he has not left our green table uncovered."
"It was then proposed by O'ahan, and unanimously agreed to by the company, that a toast should be drunk to Evenney and his train, who had treated them so hospitably, and whose favorable interposition they gratefully acknowledged. The chieftain having filled his cup and rising to his feet, called to his men were they ready? who all answering him in the affirmative, the bowls were drained to the