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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.)

The contest had at that time become very sharp near to the body, the conquerors wishing to carry it off, and the others protecting it; and poor M'Ivannan, who had stood by him since the twilight, on seeing his valiant commander fall, roared out his sorrows, and howled the caoine over him, accompanying it with all his praises, his feats of heroism in the field, his generous and beneficent deeds to the distressed; and, last of all, a shower of bad lucks, marafasties and murrains to take off the bad breed of the Baldeargs, and their ill-begotten sliueight, then snatching up a battle-axe, rushed into the tumult, and laid round him like a mad-man.

Dunn made his way to the church, and not finding his mistress there, he crossed the little brook to the place where she sat with her maids, who, on seeing him come forward drooping and crouching down at her feet, knew that all was not well, for she heard a short time before the war-cry echoing through the glen, and knew it was at some important crisis.

She did not, however, remain long in this awful suspense, for, hearing a second shout of victory from her countrymen, she saw them approaching her with Cahir Roe O'Dougherty at their head, and bearing the dead body of a soldier to this place, being the goal of victory. 'Twas the body of Finn M'Quillan; his head was hanging down, his eyes closed, and the white plume, which her own hands had wrought, dragged in the mud. She rose up to meet him with a wild and unsettled look in her eyes, saying, "My dream is fully verified now." Then hanging over him for some minutes, as if more closely examining his features, during which time not a word, nor even a single tear, escaped her; but, with her white hands clenched together, bearing in her countenance despair, pity, and inconsolable woe, she raised her head, and uttering a shriek as soon as her eyes met those of O'Dougherty, frowning from under his steel casque, with head averted, she waved her hand that he and his myrmidons might retire, and did not leave off waving so long as they were in view. Then gently stretching herself by his side, with her cheek to his, and drawing her veil over their faces, she seemed to sink into a profound rest, out of which her attendants did not wish to awake her for a considerable time; but when they ventured silently to withdraw it, alas! the spirit of Laura was fled to meet that of her friend, in a brighter region and more serene atmosphere, where there is unsullied joy for evermore.

At the time of this fatal catastrophe, Garry M'Quillan, with his brother Daniel, had fairly turned the right wing of Baldearg's army, and so hardly were they pressed, that Owen Roe, with the detachment that he commanded, was obliged to seek shelter in the church, and narrowly missed having his head severed from his body as he entered the door, by the back stroke of a broadsword, which, coming in contact with a solid oak frame, was shivered to pieces, leav-

* The veil was worn only by married ladies, but she chose on this melancholy occasion to assume it.

ing a deep gash in the timber. As Garry and his brother were returning from this charge, they heard the war-cry shouted by O'Dougherty's forces near to the Curly, and which ominously informed them that some important point had been gained against their brother, who alone, and insulated from any succour, was contending against numbers since the morning.

Garry M'Quillan knew his brother's high character as a general, and also his excellence in the use of the broadsword, but, at the same time, he feared his coming in contact with the powerful arm of Cahir O'Dougherty, who, like a second Achilles, seemed to court him to an engagement from the commencement. As often as he saw him press upon his brother he was heard groaning, and seen often to revert the eye so long as they were in sight, apparently wishing to exchange places with him; but all in vain. He was a man who, in point of agility or personal strength, feared no man, and often, as is frequently the case with young men, longed to have a bout with the foe, in order to know what he himself could do. In the midst of their doubts and anxiety for their brother, and certainly doubt in such a case, to a feeling mind, is worse than reality; I say, in the midst of their fears on that momentous occasion, a man appeared to them at a distance, running in a disordered dress, and without armour.—"Finn is gone," said Daniel, "for, besides the portentous news approaching in the mouth of this messenger, I see the troops scattered along the side of the wood, and the standard to be seen nowhere."—"The news can be no worse," said the other with a sigh, "than what I have expected since the morning. I saw his death intended in the manoeuvre of O'Dougherty's troops at the beginning of the battle, but it was not in my power to relieve him."

By this time the herald was at hand with them, when they called aloud to him, "Is your commander fallen?"—"Matters are as bad as you can expect," said he.—"Where does he lie?" said the younger, in a louder tone, lashing his helmet on the ground, and after it his outer garment.—"We stood around his body," said he, "until most of our men were cut to pieces; but the enemy, like an overwhelming flood, burst through us, and bore him away. They have taken his body, I believe, to the last cross; but I see O'Dougherty returned, and at the head of a column, prepared for a new attack."

The forces under old Daniel M'Quillan were at the present moment warmly engaged by the two sons of Owen Roe, but the appearance of his son Daniel soon roused their courage, and the enemy began to yield in their turn. As the messenger pronounced the last words, Garry M'Quillan ordered him to lead the way, and, waving to his men to follow, took the path running. As he went down the hill, he was met by the remains of his brother's army, who, rallying under his standard, turned their faces to the enemy a second time. Cahir saw them coming on at a gallop, with fury and determination in their looks; but the massive blade of one particular sword, where it was grasped firmly in the brawny hand, he eyed closely.

M'Quillan, without looking how they engaged the enemy, ran upon O'Dougherty like a lion, and, at the same time, shouting, "The blood of my brother!" An awful pause now reigned through all the lines, to witness the conflict between these two champions. Cahir defended himself with desperation, and made some deadly cuts at his adversary—the fire gleaming at each contact of the two swords, and the blades whistling as they encircled their heads in gleaming steel, until M'Quillan's sword, meeting with the helmet of his adversary, flew out of his hand, across the river. Then, like lightning, seizing him by the throat, he dashed him to the ground, and wrenched the weapon from his hand; when, the troops interposing, O'Dougherty was on his feet in a leap, and the sword in his hand which his enemy lost. This was a fair exchange of armour; but the battle was soon over—Cahir Roe O'Dougherty lay extended on the earth, not far from the spot where, a short time before, he had laid Finn M'Quillan.

But the demon of war sat in grim exultation, A mist-rolling cloud was his dark habitation; And fiercely he smiled from a countenance surly, While crimson with gore ran the streams of the Curly.

Baldearg's forces marched toward the old church, but on reaching this place, they found that the two sons of Owen Roe, I mean the two remaining sons, were fallen among the slain; one of them having guarded the door of the church, until he fell dead over the heaps of slain that had fallen by his sword. O'Donnell's remaining forces were crammed into the cemetery, which they endeavored to defend, until a parley was granted for burying the dead, which was agreed upon soon after. On those conditions being settled, they repaired to the scene of action, in order to bury the dead. The first care of Daniel M'Quillan and his sons was to go in search of the body of Finn, which they found exactly in the place where it was

first laid, with Laura O'Donnell at his side, pale and lifeless. This new scene, of which they had not the most distant idea, awakened their sorrows afresh—tears showered from the eyes of all as they stood around, even the fierce veterans of the enemy could not withhold them on this occasion; but all seemed now to forget their late animosities, and mourned the two lovers, as they lay together, in terms of tender sympathy.

The commanders and soldiers being all collected around the affecting scene, and, what was more distressing, the two parents, seeming to interrogate each other by their looks, in saying—"Have you known anything of this?" Two separate biers being formed of green branches, and decorated with boughs of ivy, they began to prepare the bodies for interment; when the females, on opening the bosom of Laura O'Donnell, found the golden clasp of Finn M'Quillan's military cloak lying next her heart. This was another elucidation on a subject unknown to all, save themselves, and which sunk the surrounding spectators into profound silence.

Having laid them on their biers, they decorated the head of each with a garland formed from the scarlet berries and green leaves of the ivy wrought together; then, raising them from the ground, they marched forward slowly—the pipes performing a plaintive air, the three M'Quillans and Owen Roe walking before, and Laura's maids behind, weeping as they followed.

'Twas a wonderful procession. They who had, some hours before, been engaged in the work of death, saw thronging around them their hostile foes, saw the wounds which they gave, and also them who had inflicted wounds on themselves. There was no appearance of animosity in this motley group; but all, as one man, mourned the fate of these faithful but unfortunate lovers. They carried them down to the spot, on the banks of the Curly, where was a little green, surrounded with alders, and there, having dug a grave, laid them together, and raised over them a little mound, covering it with stones from the brook and afterwards green turf, which place, including the entire field, is called, to this day, Cairn a Finn, or the tomb of Finn M'Quillan.

When the wind from the north through the alders is groaning, A voice oft is heard deeply sighing and moaning; 'Tis the spirit of the mountain at evening returning, Who fills the long glen with a sighing and mourning; While the moon from the zenith does silver them o'er, And green grows the bed of this maid and her lover. The lambskins in spring may be seen feeding nigh them, On primrosy banks where the stream murmurs by them And the pipe of the red-breast proclaims in deep sorrow, That here rests M'Quillan's long side of his Laura.

Three brave sons of Owen Roe O'Donnell were interred opposite their sister's tomb, under a little mound, similar to the other, and close by the bank of the same stream, while the father, childless, must return home to spend the remainder of his days in solitude and woe. Cahir Roe O'Dougherty was borne by his soldiers to the church, and in a corner of the yard, near to the grave of the wounded soldier, was assigned a place of rest. The others were indiscriminately buried in pits for convenience, wherever the heap of ruin lay. And the cattle that evening turned their heads homewards, pursuing the same path which they came, and lowering for the heath-clad hills and foinn vales of Dalriadagh.

The village where Laura O'Donnell sat, as the reluctant prize of the victor, was called, ever after, Cross-n-hean a ghoneil, or the cross of the daughter of O'Donnell, afterwards corrupted into Cross-na-Donnell.

The congregated bards of these two noble clans tuned their instruments over the tomb by the brook, and, being assisted by Laura's maids, and other females of the neighborhood, who came to witness the spectacle, raised the Irish caoine, repeating over them all the human heart could devise of goodness, greatness, and virtue, making the hills and glens echo with claps and howlings. 'Twas as the mourning of the Israelites in the threshing-floor of Atad—a grievous mourning. Knogher O'Brady was present, and knew his venerable guests, whom he at one time supposed to be

* Beside Drumachose church, when they were cutting down the hill to make it passable for the mail-coach that runs between Newtownmavady and Coleraine, they came on another pit of these bones, the earth around which, when raised up, was dark in the color like a fresh opened grave, and when spread upon the road, before the door of a little cabin, whose inhabitants were my authors, annoyed them very much with a disagreeable stench for several days.

† I have heard old men say, that for many years there was an enormous skull lay in this graveyard, and when a funeral would have come here, the first question was, Where is the large skull? around which they would assemble, and comment on the strength of him who bore this huge capital. Whether this belonged to Cahir O'Dougherty I know not.

beings of another world. To him was given the care and preservation of the tombs, and, as a compensation, two of the best milk cows and a couple of good ewes. He was to fence them around, and plant them with ozier; and in the ensuing spring two messengers, one from Dunluce and one from Tyrconnell, were appointed to return and visit them. Owen Roe O'Donnell lamented the warmth of temper that drove him forward to undertake this unfortunate enterprise, which had ended in the destruction of his three valiant sons and amiable daughter; "All," said he, "who were unwilling to come out as enemies to the house of De Borgo. How often have they solicited me, even with tears in their eyes, to leave aside this design? but alas, my dear child, whose gentle disposition and amiable manners were much unfit to witness such scenes, why have I urged you hither, unconscious of the delicate bond which united you to the family of Dunluce; but more, to the brave young man who there lies your partner in death, and who, as well as my three valiant sons, has fallen through me." The lamentation of Daniel M'Quillan and his sons was severe and afflictive; but even in this, they were easy in comparison with the latter, being clear of anything like self-accusation—the sharpest monitor we have. "My son, indeed, is fallen," said the father; "but if he is, he fell in the bed of glory, and has been amply avenged.—But why should I vaunt? No, enough has been said, enough has been done. Farewell, my brave, my valiant son, farewell!"

Saying these words, he turned away with the whole train of his followers, sighing. But turning when he was at a small distance to look back, he saw M'Ivannan leaning over the grave alone, and wringing his hands, as if he had his family lying there. M'Quillan gave orders that he should be brought away; and the same evening they commenced their march for the northern plains of Antrim, and grey towers of Dunluce, leaving many a gallant young man behind them lying low in the lands of O'Gahan.

The clans of Tyrconnell also marched off the same evening, old Owen Roe childless, and the fierce but warlike clan of the O'Dougherties without their commander, leaving many of their friends on the bloody field of Gortmore, the oaks of Dreanagh wood, and the old church of Drumachose, witnesses to a hard contested struggle. The news of this engagement spread terror through the surrounding villages, but was talked of nowhere with more zeal and interest than in the castle of Coony Na Gall.—'Twas here that the merit of each soldier was discussed in its true character, and just honor given to the man to whom it was lawfully due. As the Antrim forces crossed the mountain, M'Ivannan, mounted on the capull bawn, assisted in driving up the cattle; and the next morning, as the sun rose over the mountains of Albany, it beheld them safely across the Bann and the Bush, within the extensive demesne of M'Quillan, and meeting, as they passed along, either a friend or an acquaintance anxiously inquiring after their connections. The brothers and sisters of Finn M'Quillan mourned long for him, but chiefly Aveline, who knew something of the attachment existing between him and her young friend Laura O'Donnell.—The latter never had made an open declaration of her mind to her, but from his character being the general topic of conversation between them, and almost always introduced by Laura, she guessed how her feelings were, and, thinking so, it only riveted their friendship more closely. Many were the nights and days that she sighed for her brother and her school-fellow; but the tender mind loses an impression sooner than we can imagine, notwithstanding such affliction. She saw them continually together during the holidays at Dunluce; but now she knew they reposed tranquilly at each other's side in the land of forgetfulness, unconscious of what was here said, thought, or done regarding them.

At this period in Ireland, if a brave soldier fell in battle he was not so much mourned as we might think, for they considered it sufficient glory if he died in the field of honor, and chiefly if his death had been amply avenged; and so the family of M'Quillan left off grieving on that occasion. The friendly intercourse always continued between the noble family of Clanbuoy and M'Quillan, who prized the alliance so highly that neither the threats nor promises of the most powerful enemy could shake him in his adherence. The only adversary whom they had to oppose at present was the O'Gahans of Limavady, which family, as I said before, was long ere this on the decline. The latter clan had many enemies, and the great and leading reason was, they were open-hearted and unsuspecting, and, therefore, every vagabond and runagate who had disputed with, or abused a higher power, by patching up a plausible story, could easily induce them to espouse his cause, and hence the ruin of that

ancient Milesian sept,* who were prouder of their family† than many sons of kings.

The castle of Dunluce was one night brilliantly illuminated, in consequence of an entertainment given to the numerous friends and alliances of the house of De Borgo, and, among the foremost at this festival, was the family of Clanbuoy, with all other families of distinction in Antrim, besides many others from the neighboring counties. The barrack on the farther side of the drawbridge was also illuminated, and here the sturdy galloglachs, each quaffing to the health of his chieftain, mingled his voice in the general uproar. The castle to a spectator on sea, had the appearance of a fire balloon suspended among the clouds—I mean to a person immediately under it—and the light issuing from the barrack windows, together with the opposite line of dwelling houses, seemed like a long fiery tail adhering to the balloon, and could only be seen in this romantic view by those approaching from the north-east or north-west.

A large globe, well enlightened, was usually suspended every night during the dark of the moon, from the top of that part of the castle directly fronting the North Atlantic, which served not a little to finish the appearance of this grand spectacle. In a storm blowing from the north to the north-west, when the wind rolled into the base of the rock those waves unimpeded through that broad ocean, the effect upon the beholder was awful. The light of the windows, with the suspended globe, cast a flame far into the deep, which seemed, when agitated by the turbulent element, red as claret. The globe was not hung here merely for the use of mariners, as traders were few at that time, and seldom seen on these coasts, although it might sometimes have a good effect in such cases, as fortunately happened that night. It was only for the grandeur and beauty of the scene, which, in my opinion, few, if any, could equal.

Of all nights in the year, this was a happy one to the inmates of Dunluce, being the anniversary, or birth-night, of Aveline M'Quillan, who, in an apartment of her own, was seated with her young friends and acquaintances around her, having on her right hand beautiful Rose O'Neill of Clanbuoy, her sister in all the feminine accomplishments and graces that adorn the sex.

From the openings of the buildings might be heard the festive sound of wassail, mirth, and revelry, in another department, Aveline and her friends were discoursing of their schools, their dresses, books, and birds; after which, leaving them, she ran and brought her cabinet of curiosities, and explaining every one as she produced it, in this manner proceeded to the bottom of the coffer. She had a philosophical mind, much given to research, and scarcely ever saw anything that was in the least degree curious where she would not inquire after the causes, reasons, and everything pertaining to it. The wandering minstrels who stopped at her father's place would often interrogate regarding the old Irish families among which they had been—what was their heraldry? were they hospitable to strangers? and did they support the ancient customs of their forefathers? Such was the only daughter of Daniel M'Quillan, but with a heart altogether susceptible of the cares of others. Having shown the contents of this coffer, she immediately produced a smaller one of very fine workmanship, and from it drawing a diamond necklace, told them that it was worn by Matilda, Queen of England, and wife to William the Conqueror. It had been pre-

* Edward Second, in prosecuting the war which his father left unfinished against the Scots, before the memorable battle of Bannockburn, wrote over to Ireland for the clans of the O'Gahans, the O'Neilles, the O'Donnells, the O'Connors, the O'Dougherties, the O'Sullivans, M'Carthies, and Kavanagh's. Which of them obeyed the royal mandate, I know not, but am certain that the O'Gahans and some others were found on the side of Bruce.

† In the town of Dungiven, founded by their ancestor, I have seen them engaged in one of those family quarrels which so often disgraced our country, when they were overpowered and driven from the main street by superior numbers—a mighty change thought I, from the days of Turlough More, who could have strangled one of these men at arms length with ease; or Coony Na Gall, whose massive sword they could no more wield than a child. They are now scattered, degenerated, and the family line of genealogy altogether lost.

I have just found that the lineal descendant, and only male heir to Coony Na Gall O'Gahan, now holds an honorable military position in the British army. After the imprisonment of O'Gahan, we understand that the Government took his son in charge, and sent him to College.—The history of the family hitherto could be traced no further. 'Tis now known that the son of Daniel O'Gahan, patronized by Government, went a voluntary exile with Charles Second to the Continent, and returned at the Restoration knighted, under the title of Sir Daniel Gahan. His descendants hold a large estate of some thousand acres in county Tipperary. In the physiognomy of this military gentleman, the strongly marked Milesian features show themselves even to a slight observer—dark complexion, high oval forehead, dark penetrating eye, dignity of gait, and determination of step.