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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.)

As the day was near a close, they had a warm invitation to stop to the next day, which request the three thought proper, in their present state, to avail themselves of, there being abundance of good soil for the horses, and provision, such as it was for themselves.

After such a tranquil rest, they arose the next morning much refreshed, and all confessed since the scenes of yesterday, that they felt easier in mind. The sun was the first messenger that entered Aveline's chamber, scattering his golden rays over her face, and kissing those lips which scarcely ever kissed another.

Having breakfasted, M'Donnell dropped his purse into O'Brady's hand, not wishing that any person should know it; but he was not to be silenced in an easy manner.

"Arrah, by sheelah na guira, master," said he, "I neither shall take it, nor am I at all in need of it. Do you not see the house is full of everything that a poor man can stand in need of, jewel? and sure I have a good lump laid up in an ould stocking for the sore foot; and that darling of a jewel, the blessing of the clergy light upon her purty face, maybe, as I was saying just now, she might take her ould sickness again, and then you know she is only re-cavering."

The donor assured him that he had money besides this, and if he would not receive it, he never would call with him again.

"If that is the business," said Knogher, "I must take hold of it, though, by-the-by, I would rather not, honey."

The ceremony of parting with their host was no easy one, and when they did leave the cottage, he prepared to accompany them a small distance on their way, pointing out the proper direction for them to proceed on their journey, and, carrying his hat in one hand, he wheeled suddenly round, calling to the family to reach him out his shillelah.

For Knogher to travel without his cudgel was the same as a ship to sail without her ballast, and, besides assisting him in springing over the bogs or inequalities, it served him for all the purposes of an index, a truncheon, and shield, &c., for with the end of it, he indicated every object within a mile, not forgetting to add a lengthened comment, in his own way, of oratory at the conclusion.

They intended on their return to come by the shore of Magilligan, so that they might have a view of that lofty ledge of rocks that stands retired from the ocean, overlooking the old abbey of Duncrun, where lie the remains of Saint Eadan, and with him, no doubt, rests many a legendary tale, lamentably lost to us for ever.

I am of opinion my countrymen will, with me, deplore the irreparable loss which Ireland has sustained in antiquities, histories, biography, and even animated nature, by her being robbed of that which gold could not compensate—I mean her manuscripts. The harpies placed over our island saw that this was her talisman, her beacon star, and, therefore, by

extinguishing such, they plunged her in eternal darkness. Some of those valuable papers have been taken to France, some to Germany and Italy, but most to London.

In returning to the northern shores of Dalriadagh, they travelled along the beach of the great Atlantic for a few miles, having on their right hand a towering range of mountains, called Magilligan, but the high foreland of which is named Benn Evenney, from causes already explained. A number of torrents were to be seen tumbling down the precipices, and breaking in whitened foam on masses of the basalt rock that filled their channels, being worn into troughs by the continual grinding of rubble and mountain pebbles, driven over them in the time of floods.

The beauty of this scenery served greatly to efface in Aveline's mind the impressions of yesterday's woe, for she, by continual interrogations, kept them both pretty busy, and in this manner they arrived at the castle.

At Dunluce the time passed away smoothly with M'Donnell, being the sole protector now, as might be said, of the family, and having a multiplicity of business to transact in regard of the lands and tenantry, he devoted the remainder of his leisure hours to the company of Aveline, whether in walking, reading, or music, and, indeed, it was now evident that she could not spend a day without him, unless absorbed in melancholy.

M'Donnell was walking one night along the beach where the shore was level and flat nearly as the water, and seating himself on a stone, he thought he perceived some object in motion near the shore, and waited whatever it was, until it would come to him. Of this there did not now seem the least appearance, as it always kept floating at the same distance from land. Rising from his seat he was proceeding to another point where he might have a better view of it, when he felt his feet entangled in a rope, then laying hold of it he found the rope attached to the object on the water, and pulling it to him with all his might, he found that it was one of these small boats called currachs, which I have before described.

As he was endeavoring to examine what the vessel was, he saw two men approach from the land, each with his hat slouched over his face, and apparently armed. They accosted him in rather a sharp manner, asking him what was his business here, or why he concerned himself with the boat?

"I should rather," said he, "put the question to you, what is your business here, or for what purpose have you this boat?" "You are an audacious young fellow," said one of them, drawing a huge claymore from the sheath with such a jerk that the steel rung along the shore, and calling to him to defend himself, made a bang at him from a powerful right arm.

M'Donnell was as quick on the other hand in unsheathing a long sheep's head, which he usually wore, and defended himself with great bravery, parrying the blows of his adversary, and making some desperate cuts at him, one of which, taking him along the ear, brought him to the ground. At that moment he was set upon by the other, armed in the same manner, and as this attack was rather unexpected, he received a wound in the sword arm, which rendered him unfit to continue the combat.

They were both now bleeding profusely when the first assailant addressing him, "My friend," said he, "I confess that I was rather warm with you in the beginning, but if you will enter this boat and trust yourself to us, I promise you that in a short space of time we shall both get our wounds bound up. I know we are strangers to you, but from the manner in which you and I have introduced ourselves to each other, I think the acquaintance ought to be pretty durable."

M'Donnell stepped into the boat, and the two strangers, seizing the oars, pushed her off; and, in half an hour's rowing, they were in front of the cavern out of which the light proceeded, and over which stood threatening those below a tremendous hanging wall of rugged rock, the top of which, as they lay on their oars, they could not perceive; but, altogether, with the flame that proceeded from the cavern, had a most imposing effect on the beholders.

Having come close to the base of the promontory and pulled a little cord, they heard a bell ring, and, shortly after, a step ladder of ropes was lowered to the surface of the water, by the assistance of which all three ascended, the last having the boat's halser in his hand, bound it to an iron ring at the entrance of the cavern.

At the further end of this place was burning a large fire of timber, the smoke of which, entering into a crevice, was omitted at an outlet some perches from the place where they entered, but rather in a lower direction. Here were tables, chairs, knives, and forks, with abundance of food and drink, all ready prepared, and six other stout fellows making way for them, welcomed the stranger, and asked

their comrades was this a prisoner whom they brought?

"He is no prisoner," said they, "he comes of his own free will. But haste and bind up our wounds, for you see they are bleeding profusely."

A styptic was immediately procured, and they being bound up and washed, sat down to a good repast, plentifully supplied with libations of the strongest liquor.

It may not be surprising to inform the reader that these were M'Donnell's own countrymen, and two of them personally known to him as men of good character. It appeared, however, that they had infringed upon the laws by hunting, and also killing the gamekeeper, for which they were obliged to flee their country, and, having an intention of stopping a few months in some of the islands, they were supplied with all necessaries, both of food and household furniture. A storm, however, arising, they were driven to the Irish shore, and hearing before they left home of a detachment of English stationed in the castle of Dunluce, and as there was a peace existing between the sovereigns of England and Scotland at that time, they thought it unsafe to trust themselves abroad in the day-time, and, therefore, having sought out this recess, they took up their abode in it till such time as their friends could get matters finally arranged for them at home.

So little intercourse was carried on between nations at the period of which I am speaking, that the garrison had been reduced, and the castle taken many years previous to their coming to the Irish shore.

At the sight of Sir Coll M'Donnell, their countryman, and also the son of their chieftain, they were all overjoyed, and testified their enthusiasm by blowing up their bagpipes in the air of M'Donnell's march, with a huzza for the laird of the isles. Sir Coll told them the English had been dispossessed of that castle many years back, and, on that account, they had nothing to fear.

He could not, however, leave them that night, and his absence at Dunluce created no little inquietude; for, from what Aveline had seen on a former night, her dreams were haunted with robbers, banditti, &c., and she thought of nothing less than that her friend had either been carried off or murdered by them.

The next morning, however, relieved her fears by the appearance of Sir Coll in good spirits, who spent the greater part of that day in relating to her and her father the strange adventure that befell him the night before, and of his intentions to procure, if possible, the pardon of the inhabitants of the cave, which, in honor to this generous young man, it must be confessed he accomplished.

At this time Aveline's fair correspondents now began to imagine that she appeared more melancholy than ever, which change some were pleased to attribute to grief for the loss of her two brothers, others that she was deeply in love with the young Islander.

Daniel M'Quillan, though much weakened in intellect and judgment, began to perceive that his daughter was sunk in spirits, and had lost all that cheerfulness of which she was formerly possessed, and also seeing that she now kept her chamber closely, entered into a serious conference with her, the result of which agitated him in such an extraordinary manner that he, summoning up the energy of former years, sought out M'Donnell, and, in a fury, demanded satisfaction for the injury done his family.

"If my brave sons were present," said he, "with what confidence could you stand before them? No, your guilty soul must shrink into nothing. I say you, whom I unsuspectingly took into my bosom, have, like the adder—"

"Before you say any more against me," said M'Donnell, "since I am condemned both in your eyes and my own, allow me to speak a few words—if not in extenuation of my fault, at least in explanation.

"Either good or evil fortune cast me upon your hospitable shore—a title which, I think, I may very well use."

At this M'Quillan turned away his head, as if unwilling to hear that part of it.

"I saw," said he, "your lovely daughter, and, seeing her, she caused me to forget my dangers, my parents, kinsmen, and almost my country; if, therefore, a mistake has happened, and if the honor of my family, which I am certain you will admit, can make amends for it, I am at your will, and you have ought to do but command me. No, I say, that is not even necessary, for I maun confess that the attachment which has been formed with Aveline M'Quillan has rendered me more happy than if I were seated in Holyrood, having the royal diadem of Scotland placed on my brow; 'tis herself alone, and no other object, I am fond of. But I entreat you, in the name of my ancestors, say nothing severe against me, or anything that would wound my feelings, for language of

this kind I am not able to bear, and, on the other hand, to be angry with you is more than I ever can; so, otherwise, you may talk to me as you like."

Such an open avowal softened the heart of M'Quillan, and he did not say anything more, save some little to them for misconduct, and M'Donnell, with the consent of both, appointed the following week for repeating the ceremony of their nuptials.

On this important day the clans were all invited to the castle, and in front of the barrack were casks of liquor set forth for the use of the garrison and tenantry, or any other that came to Dunluce during that week. The noble family of Clanbuoy were also invited, and all their friends, as far as a messenger could ride in one day, so that such a bustle and throng scarcely ever was witnessed on the shores of Dalriadagh before.

The Highlanders were not hindmost to dip deep in the strong Falernian, and after an immersion in this fluid, it seemed to have the power of the waters of Styx, rendering them invulnerable all over. The bagpipes, both Irish and Scottish, were all blown up, and the dance on the green before the barrack-door never ceased, sometimes two different sets performing at the same time. 'Twas here that the peasantry, with their sons and daughters, from sincere hearts, showed their attachment to the family of De Borgo, and every young Hibernian vied with another in leading out, whether to the dance or rustic sport, his callien dhas, decked in all the finery that either the season or the village shop could bestow; and it is not to be doubted that the fire of bright eyes that week subdued more hearts than Sir Coll M'Donnell's.

The marriage was celebrated in the great hall, in presence of all the friends of the house of De Borgo, who acknowledged that Aveline on the occasion shone with more than ordinary beauty, being arrayed in nearly the same dress which she wore the first night Sir Coll M'Donnell had the happiness of seeing her; and one part of it, that is, the royal necklace, she did not forget to assume on that day.

The venerable chaplain belonging to the family, with all that solemnity which was truly characteristic of his holy function, united them; and imploring a blessing on them and their posterity, with many injunctions regarding their future conduct, and chiefly in bringing up and educating their children, he departed, leaving them to all the hilarity usually attendant on like occasions.

As marriages, whether of high or low order, are seldom celebrated without murmuring on one side or the other, there was a family living at a small distance who were nearly allied to the house of De Borgo, and as they expected to become inheritors of the estates of Dunluce, should the brothers not return, which was doubtful, they showed much envy and uneasiness at this alliance, not deigning to attend on the day of invitation with other friends and acquaintances who were asked.

Old Daniel M'Quillan showed himself remarkably happy on the night of his daughter's nuptials, drunk to former cronies, and often renewed the stories of his boyish days, till at length a retrospective view brought the idea of his scattered children to his mind, and, admitting this sensation, he returned to himself with a sigh.

In Ireland, wherever a marriage was heard of, and in such a family as M'Quillan's, the minstrels and wandering bards came from all quarters in search of it, as here an unbounded scope was given to revelling and Irish conviviality, and although there was an open door to every stranger, none were so acceptable to them as the minstrels; nor, indeed, had the affair of a marriage been even unpublished in the country, was it possible that a traveller could pass Dunluce ignorant of the scenes that were going forward within, for a person was stationed at the outer gate to proclaim the event to every passenger, and also to bring all in, even to the poorest mendicant, so that it is no wonder if in other countries the name of an Irish wedding has been proverbial.

The marriage festivities being concluded, and the different friends having retired to their places of abode, M'Donnell now began to find himself among the happiest of mankind, possessed as he was of the only treasure that ever gave him the least uneasiness—he had nothing to concern his thoughts farther than to make her happy; and as to Aveline, her heart never

Dancing on the green was formerly customary in Ireland, but chiefly on May eve, when a branch was cut down, whether of the thorn or birch, the one that was more clothed in verdure they usually chose, and this, being pretty tall, was planted in the centre of the village green. A rural queen was then chosen, and always the prettiest girl in the assembly; having decked her out with such flowers as the season produced, they left it to her own option to choose a king, and this being done, the others, taking hands around the May pole, danced about with the royal pair in the middle. In my opinion this was the only way of thanking providence for a return of the seasons.

received an impression before she saw Sir Coll M'Donnell.

Like most ladies of that age, she thought she could entertain a tender affection for no other man breathing; and in regard of a husband, we must suppose she was at the end of her wishes.

The Highlanders who came over with Sir Coll M'Donnell, were quartered through M'Quillan's tenantry, one in every house, in which were also quartered his own gallow-glasses, a measure which, we are willing to say, was well concerted, for in this situation the one was a kind of check or guard upon the other, and this manner of quartering troops upon the tenantry was formerly practised by the Irish kings, being called by them coshery; but in cases of necessity the king himself as well as his troops had to be entertained.

'Twas customary with M'Quillan, besides the regular pay of his troops, to give a mether of milk to each man, which was in the highest degree acceptable, chiefly to those who had families, saving them the trouble of purchase; but in place of one mether of milk, I believe there were two given to each man. To the Highlander, besides his pay, there was also one given, and whether this was from the beneficence of his own chieftain, or M'Quillan, I will not take upon me to determine.

It was some time afterward that the welcome tidings were announced to Sir Coll, of a son born to him, and also an heir-apparent to the wide domains of Dunluce; notwithstanding that the bounds of these estates, in comparison with the possessions which his forefathers held in Scotland, were much limited, yet such was the infatuation cast over him from the time of his landing on the shores of Inisfalla, that of all places in the world his heart insinuated to him here was his home.

And what was the cause of this indissoluble attachment? Was it of a mercenary nature? No, a secondary cause was the hospitable and open-hearted disposition of his friend M'Quillan; but the strong and powerful charm which riveted his affections was Aveline M'Quillan; 'twas in this lovely Irish girl, shooting among the wild cliffs of Dalriadagh like a flower in the desert, that all the witchery was concealed.

If, at the consummation of his daughter's nuptials, M'Quillan; but wished to have his friends and alliances, at the baptism of his grandson he was still willing to have a greater number, and for this reason preparations were made to receive an unusual assemblage at the castle on the following week.

'Twas at the conclusion of the baptismal ceremony, after the child's name had been pronounced Archibald M'Donnell, by Father Owen, and after he had given them a suitable admonition regarding the instructions, nurture, and seeds of virtue requisite to be implanted in the infant's mind; I say, these injunctions had been just finished, and the company were rising from their knees, in which position they had received a solemn prayer from the good old father, that a wandering minstrel with hoary locks came to the gate, and, as I have said before, although the solid oaken door of M'Quillan's mansion never shut out a stranger, yet on the present occasion he was doubly welcome.

There were several reasons why the bards were everywhere so gladly received by almost every class in Ireland. Their music, their tales, both of the present and of other times, their facetious company, their antiquities, and last of all the reverence held time immemorial for them by their countrymen. As he entered all turned their eyes towards the sage, and were anxious in accommodating him with victuals and every other necessary fitting to restore a weary traveller. Upon inquiry, he informed them that his name was Cairbre O'Halloran, that he had lived long with the family of O'Kelly, had resided some time in O'Iligh na Riah;* but the chief place of his residence

* O'Iligh na Riah, which I have mentioned before in my notes, now Elagh, near Londonderry, was one of the three principal places of royalty in Ireland.

Aodh, or Hugh, King of Ireland, summoned a parliament at Drimccat, in order to settle three important matters. The first was to levy a tribute on the noble clan of Dalriadh in Scotland; the second to banish the fleas, or bards, that had then become a burthen to the people; the third was to lengthen the imprisonment of Scanlon More, King of Ossery, at that time weightily ironed in the royal palace of O'Iligh na Riah. The only person capable of interceding was Saint Columb Kil, a red-hot patriot, who, on account of some broil that he raised, was ordered by St. Molaise, a powerful man and abbot of a priory in one of the islands of Lough Erne, never to see Ireland again with his eyes; however, having bandaged them over, he set out for his own country, attended by twenty bishops, thirty priests, fifty deacons, thirty students, besides many more. Although but an abbot himself, and from the island of Hy, the place of his banishment, accompanied by this retinue, he arrived at Drimccat, and by his strong arguments obtained a mitigation both for the bards and the Dalriadh; but in regard of the King of Ossery he could not succeed. However, in a prophetic manner he told the King of Ireland that Scanlon More's chains would fall off that night, and as the manuscript says, coming to Eaglis Dubh in Inis Eogaine, which is the same place as Elagh in Inishone,