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BRETHREN IN COUNCIL ;

OR

A GLIMPSE OF THE PAST.

BY STANDISH O'GRADY.

The following is an unpublished chapter of "Ulrick the Ready," still a story which is true in the main.

The publishers said it was too historical, that is too true, for publication, and would not let it go into that romance.—ED.

From Kinsale westward to Cape Clear the coast line of Ireland was held by the famous Irish clan of the O'Driscolls. Wherever the much-indented shore embraced a haven, there rose an O'Driscoll castle armed with cannon which commanded the usual landing place and its approaches. Where there was nothing to defend they built their castles on projections of the land or high on the edge of craggy steepes, and there laughed at all foes. In older times they had been half pirates, half traders, and had often waged naval war with Cork, Youghal, or Waterford, before the Tudor princes began to assert over southern Ireland the authority of the Crown. Yet the O'Driscoll was still a power—lord of many galleys, even war galleys. He was admiral of the coast here, and claimed many privileges and regalities. The O'Driscolls were liable to military service at the call of the President, and in response to the last summons they had duly sent a rising-out to Kinsale.

A few miles to the west of Kinsale was a roadstead—one of many owned by this clan. This local lord was a certain Denis or Dionysius O'Driscoll. His castle rose hard by the shore, and gave its name to the haven, viz., Castlehaven or Portucastellum, now Castle-Townsend—a good harbour, but dangerous of access to big ships. In this castle a few weeks since he had entertained the Earl of Thomond and many English officers, the Earl with a thousand soldiers having disembarked here. Denis was a good citizen—a quiet, unenterprising man, and loyal, no doubt for reasons, to the great Queen. He looked to her to protect him against the tyranny of the high chief of all the O'Driscolls, Sir Fineen of Baltimore, a far greater man than Denis.

Denis was the eldest of five brothers. The rest had their younger-brother shares of the estate; three of them lived in the neighbourhood, minor gentry of little account in the clan. They were Con, Teigue, Lary or Larius. There was a fourth brother named Dermot, who had travelled; he was the gentleman and scholar of the family. It is a lovely and a pleasant thing for brethren to dwell together in unity. These five were attached brothers, and now for some time past were in the habit of meeting together in the evenings in the great hall of the eldest to discuss the situation, which had begun to be intensely interesting. Far into the night the brothers would sit round the great turf and bogwood fire. One night, it was that in which the Spaniards had made their great sally at Kinsale, the five brothers were holding their usual evening parliament. Supper was over; the tables and their trestles had been removed and propped against the walls; the outdoor servants had gone home, and the indoor to bed. There was nothing to illuminate the cogitations of the brethren, save the brilliant conversation of Dermot and the light of the fire, which glowed brightly, well fed with resinous bogwood. The wind wheezed and roared in the wide chimney, down which many a drop of rain fell, and hissed itself away in the fire. Outside it was dark as pitch, an "extreme darke" night. One of the brothers, a great, silent, black-bearded man, sucked a long iron pipe. He sat in the ingleside, in order that the smoke might travel straight up the chimney, for tobacco smoke was still highly unpopular.

Dermot, I say, was the gentleman and scholar of the family. He could speak English, Irish, and Latin; his manners were those of a man of the world; he dressed well, and spoke well, with clear-

ness, knowledge, and decision. Unlike the others, he was quite Hispaniolized, and a fervent partizan of King Philip. In him the black eyes of the O'Driscolls glowed with fire, and shone with intelligence and purpose. Unlike his brethren, he had no liquor beside him. He had fire enough of his own to keep him warm.

Hard by stood a bright-looking boy, glibbed and long-haired, who was addressing himself to the parliament in general, and to Dermot in particular. He was plainly an outsider, one of the numerous cousin-hood which always flourished in the vicinity of a castle. On his left arm he carried a soaked mantle from which the water dripped. He was bare-legged and bare-footed. He wore sword and dagger, and in his left hand held two javelins four feet long, made of ash. Above each shoulder glittered the rim of his target, the strap of which crossed his breast. The lad had just drained a strong cup of aqua vitæ and water, and, naturally fluent, was now discoursing with great volubility.

"I told thee before, O Dermot," he said. "Why dost thou not believe me? I saw O'Sullivan on horseback in full battle-dress drilling his soldiers on the big sloping field west of the Monastery at Bantry. I counted 453 men, all of them holding pieces in their hands. It was a grand sight, how they marched this way and that, and got together like a knot, and with the word of his mouth O'Sullivan untied the knot, and they separated again in files, and they made one long line. Oh, it was a great sight! and fired all together, barring one dirty omdaun who fired late, and O'Sullivan's constable struck him, and well he deserved the blow, for his bad shot was like a string gone wrong in a noble harp; it spoiled everything. And I know him, too, O Dermot, and thyself knows him. Dost thou remember Henry, son of Art, son of Rory, son of Randal Ogue O'Hoolahan? And it was his third cousin that—"

"Keep to thy tale, lad. How many horsemen?"

"Twenty-nine—I counted them too—all in battle-dresses, with feathers growing out of their battle-caps. I saw them coming out under the arch of the Monastery gate, and one horse, a sorrel, reared and drove the horseman's head against the crown of the arch. 'Son of God,' I said, 'he's killed,' but he was not. And I know him, too, O Dermot. He is the second son of Turlough of the Wooden Leg MacSweeney, the same that was killed in the duel in the west gate of Cork."

While this long-winded report went forward Dermot turned his black eyes significantly from time to time upon his eldest brother. He now put another question—

"How many men has O'Sullivan in bonaght?" (on wage and stipend.)

Something disagreeable seemed to be here called to the mind of the messenger. He fairly spluttered with excitement.

"I met that little cursed thumb-long cockerel, Ulrick, son of Shane O'Sullivan. He was stepping past me as grand as may be, humming a song, and as he hummed he beat the churles out of the way with a riding-rod."

"God save thee, Ulrick, son of Shane," said I.

"God save thyself, lad, whoever thou art," said he, and he went on beating the churles. When I put that question to him he stopped and looked at me, and seeing the arms of my house here on the left breast (for I threw back the mantle to let him see) he laughed jeeringly, and said—"Enough to eat the O'Driscolls for breakfast, my boy, and feel hungry afterwards." That was what he said, O Dermot, and all the churles heard him, and fell at once to laughing at me, though many of them were sore from his riding-rod. And I told him out loud there that if he met us, the children of Lewy, son of Ith, son of Brogan, on the waste water, we'd soon make drifting kippens of all O'Sullivan's fleet. I spoke to him bold and loud there in the gate of the Monastery."

"And, of course," said Dermot, "Ulrick had nothing to say?"

"Well," replied the lad, stammering, "that couldn't well be, for is he not Ulrick the Ready, and as ready with his tongue as with his bit of steel? I had my answer sure enough."

It was plain that in the encounter of wits the young O'Driscoll kerne had got the worst of it.

"Come, come, lad," said his interrogator, kindly, "leave that fiery little blade alone. What is his impertinence to us? Some one else told thee what it was thy errand to learn."

"By my faith, O Dermot, he told me himself; for after he said that bitter thing, and after he disarmed

me in fair fight, he took me and led me into the refectory, and feasted me there to my heart's content, as friendly and kind as a foster brother. And he told me that O'Sullivan had at bonaght one thousand prime men, barring fifty-five, well equipped for the war under captains and lieutenants, but he called them Alfieros, the same as the Spaniards do; and he came with me a part of the way when I took my leave; and, certain, he is a gallant gentleman, though he did say a bitter thing, a very bitter thing, and I had no answer ready only my sword, and that did not serve me either.

"That will do, lad," said the interrogator. "Now get thee gone. Thou wert a brave lad to have drawn hurt thee."

Whereupon the garrulous youth saluting the head of the house and the rest of the company with much dignity and grace, withdrew into the night, and is out of the saga. Dermot O'Driscoll bolted the door, and, resuming his seat at the fireside, delivered himself as follows:—

"Now, my dear brother, thou hast the truth of the matter reported by this snipe. O'Sullivan stands ready; girt for war. He has no other purpose in these large preparations save to fling his full weight into the Spanish scale once Don Zubiaur were come. You know him prudent, far-reaching, and ambitious. He is not in arms for the Queen; he hath refused to send her a man; nor against Hugh Roe for a few beeves will purchase his peace. The Queen's cause is falling; Mountjoy is beaten at Kinsale; Tyrone is arrived; Don Zubiaur has been seen; the star of King Philip shine clearer and clearer. You must join the Spaniard, and my strong counsel is that you join him early and win favour and credit with him thereby."

"And come again under the tyranny of O'Driscoll of Baltimore, captain of the nation," murmured the lord of the castle looking anything but joyful.

"Believe it not," replied the other. "this tyranny of the captains is a thing belated and out of the course of the times. King Philip in his own interest, for his own credit and reputation, will not suffer the presence of petty kings here in Ireland any more than he doth in Spain. His offices will bear harder upon them than the Queen's have done, and will not be so diverted from policy by bribes and secret influences, for it is well known that the Spanish King is served by great gentlemen and men of honour." As he proceeded he enlarged upon the glory, greatness, and wealth of the Spaniards, and spoke much too about Holy Church and the cause of Religion. While the orator still spoke a loud voice was heard. It was the challenge of the porter at the gate of the court yard, and was succeeded by a noise of creaking hinges and slamming bars. Someone approached the door of the castle and gently tapped. One of the brothers went thither, shot back the heavy timber bolt, and admitted a sea-faring man, who remained a long time at the door scraping his feet before he ventured forward, which he did but a few steps. His speech came from him with difficulty, and as if drawn out by a succession of jerks.

"Spanish ships in the offing, your honour," he said. "Seven of them. They will make the harbour to-morrow; one-hand Dawy (David) saw them."

Nothing more could be made out of the sea-faring man. "One-hand Dawy saw them, and one-hand Dawy was sharp. Dawy was with the Drake in the Spanish main."

"Where is Dawy?"

"Gone on to Kinsale."

Sea-faring man had spoke the Spaniard at midnight outside harbour's mouth. All the brothers had risen from their places and surrounded the varner, pale and excited. Never had such news come to Castlehaven. The King of the world's people would be with them to-morrow. All debating should end now; the moment for action had arrived. To-morrow they should either receive the Spaniard or flee before him. Black-eyed Dermot, the gentleman and scholar, prevailed. That night the five O'Driscolls, of Castlehaven, Denis and Dermot, Teigue, Con, and Darius unanimously agreed that they would take sides with the King of the world and be his men, and next day piloted Don Zubiaur into Castlehaven.

They made an unlucky choice, poor fellows. To-morrow their dust is Spanish earth. Yet at the time their choice seemed not unwise; brother Dermot strongly advised it, a gentleman who had travelled, and could talk three languages, and had a tongue to charm with. The star of Elizabeth was low and dim; the star of Philip was bright and high, and they followed the star that looked brightest.

THE UTILITY OF IRISH.

I read Mr. J. O'Neil Russel's article on the "Utility of Irish" with interest. He makes a good case. But to argue for Irish on the ground of utility is it not, after all, a form of apologising? As J. O'L. would say, who the D—— cares for utility, and who shall say what is useful. There is no utility about the "A.I.R."; what a dull little paper it would be if there were. Yet the "A.I.R." is more to us than all the primers, and good work will be done in field and factory because of the heart and courage it gives.

In these so-called practical days we have lost the idea of education and fail to understand that character is more than knowledge, and goes further in the long run than all the utilities. We busy ourselves with all sorts of schemes for teaching our children things called useful, but the one thing—which is more than all things—self-respect, the courage of truthfulness, shame of dishonour, confidence of race (the inertia of right doing), we teach not at all. Our National Education has no place in it for sentiment! Its business is to teach, not to educate, to put things into the mind, not to bring things out of the mind. A Danish professor, speaking of the progress of his country, said that the foundation of their industries was laid in their primary schools. And what, he added, do you think we teach our children in the schools? We teach them the sagas. It is impossible to travel in the northern countries without feeling the moral power of the old tales. Every place name seems instinct with life and energy. The tales a nation makes for itself is the unconscious moral education of the nation, from which springs great acts and noble living. Religion cannot do this for us. Religion is universal, it is a conscious, pious duty to God and to man as man; it is above all things personal. In Ireland to-day, the greater tales, everything that speaks to us of generous courage, everything that would warm and strengthen the hearts of our children is rejected in our education. We bring up a people sterile in heart and intellect, and then reproach them because they are what we make them. We alone of nations have struck out of our education character. No boy, no man either, can read the story of Cuchullin and not feel that a change has been wrought in him. How it warms the heart and quickens the life. What a new spirit it brings into the work of hand and brain. It may be said that the educational power of our literature can be made as effective through English translations as in the original Irish. This is not so. Every mountain, every stream, every place name, speaks to us in the old tongue. The intimate touches which make the thought one with ourselves are inseparable from the language. We should not be afraid to state the claim for Gaelic fully and openly. If the Irish people are to know only one language it is best for them that it should be Irish. A nation must turn in upon itself if it means to do anything. It must hive its energies within its own borders. We over-rate the value of world-wide speech. If the energies of character are in a man he will win his way wherever he may go, and take to himself what things he needs, language or other, to force his path. When we awaken we shall realise this and understand that the Irish language is not a matter of sentiment, but of science, a department of biology, if our professors had eyes to see it.

G. C.

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