

## After The Battle Of Aughrim

“ Night closed around the conqueror’s way,  
And lightning shewed the distant hill,  
Where those who lost that dreadful day  
Stood, few and faint—but fearless still.

Forget not the field where they perished—  
The truest, the last of the brave ;  
All gone—and the bright hopes we cherished  
Gone with them, and quenched in the grave.”

—MOORE

## The Irish chieftains ; or, A struggle for the crown

(1872)

Charles ffrench Blake-Forster

### *The Retreat Under The Earl Of Lucan.*

When the main body of the cavalry, under the command of the Earl of Lucan, retreated from their post on Kilcomedan Hill, they marched on in regular order by the road to Loughrea. All the other detached parties of cavalry shortly after joined them, and his Lordship assisted the officers to put them in order, so as to conduct their retreat properly. The Williamite horse pursued, but did not come to close quarters with them. After having marched about three miles, it became very dark. and Lord Lucan resolved to wait for the approach of the advanced portion of Baron de Ginckell’s cavalry. Accordingly, he drew up near Ballydonnellan, in view of the large and ancient castle erected in 1412, and which was the principal residence of the Chiefs of Clan Bresal, one of the most powerful Milesian septs of Connaught. Here his Lordship, at the head of a regiment of horse, made a brisk and determined charge, killing several of the enemy. The remainder fell back in haste, taking care not to close again with the Irish, who rapidly pushed on in the direction of Loughrea.

During the charge at Ballydonnellan, The O’Donnellan, who held a colonel’s commission in the Irish army, and was wounded at Aughrim, took leave of Captain Forster and his other friends, and returned home, resolved to follow the army as soon as he recovered.

Donal Bran and his band, who led the way during the retreat, were most useful, from their perfect knowledge of the country.

About midnight the Irish army reached Loughrea, and found that many of the inhabitants were flying to the adjacent mountains. Here the body of Lieutenant-General the Sieur de St. Ruth was interred by torchlight, in the old convent of the Blessed Virgin Mary ; after which Lieutenant-General d’Usson and other officers, with some men, resolved to secure Galway from the grasp of the enemy.

Lord Lucan resolved to proceed, without delay, to Limerick, and therefore quickly left Loughrea. They had a very weary march all that cold, sad night to Gortinsiguara, but could not rest on the way, lest the whole of the Williamite cavalry might overtake and intercept them. When they reached Gortinsiguara, it was still dark, and Lord Lucan consulted with Captain Forster, as he knew all that part of the country well, and resolved not to proceed by the direct road to Tubberindony, but to take a rougher route near the mountains of Burren, in

the county of Clare. Leaving Gortinsiguara behind him, he turned to the right, and reached Kilmacduach Abbey just at daybreak. Here he held another consultation with his officers, and Captain Forster gave his opinion that they ought to march to Rathorpe, where plenty of cattle could be procured for the use of the men. But his Lordship still maintained his resolution of marching on without delay, lest any further attempt might be made to intercept him. The cavalry had suffered severely, being under arms since six o'clock on the previous morning, during which time they had neither food nor rest.

Donal Bran, Conor O'Shaughnessy, and Kelly were directed to disperse, and return to their homes, where they were to procure means of disguising themselves, and afterwards return to Loughrea for the purpose of endeavouring to obtain information relative to the enemy's movements which they were to convey as soon as possible to Lord Lucan.

Again the fatigued cavalry mounted, and, travelling by the rere of Bunnacippaun Wood, passed down by Derryowen Castle, to Tubberindony.

Captain Forster, although quite convenient to Rathorpe, did not leave his troop, but went on with the others to Limerick, resolved to make another stand in the cause of his country.

Sergeant Power, though wounded, still held on, and many of the soldiers followed his example.

Having passed through Tubberindony, the Irish cavalry entered the county of Clare, and at Crusheen, near the ancient ruins of Inchicronan Abbey, halted, and rested for some time, and then slowly moved on towards Limerick.

Donal Bran sorrowfully looked after the troops as they left Kilmacduach, and, after bidding farewell to his friend Michael Fahy, who resided close to the venerable Round Tower, followed by his unbroken band, he proceeded to Clooneene.

The sun was appearing above the horizon when the Rapparee arrived at the height of Crushnabawn, and soon after he was passing through its dark wood, with his wearied and faithful followers, and at length reached the demesne of Clooneene. He then went direct to the gate of the outer courtyard. Outside the arched gateway he met some of the Chiefs tenants and followers, who kept watch every night during those troubled times. Before Donal Bran spoke a single word, they instinctively knew he was the bearer of sorrowful tidings, and exclaimed—

“ Have we lost the battle ?”

“ Yes, yes,” said Donal, “ De St. Ruth is dead, and we are beaten.”

With unutterable grief they heard those dreadful words, and would have loudly given expression to their sorrow ; but Donal sternly desired them to remain silent, and not disturb the Chieftain and his family.

“ Is the young gentleman up ?” he inquired.

“ Yes,” replied Hanrahan, the Stockmaster, “ and so is Mr. Fenwick. They have not slept much this week back, waiting from day to day to hear news of our array ; but you have not told us if the young Captain has escaped through the battle uninjured.”

“ That is the only good news I am the bearer of, to comfort the family,” responded Donal.

“ Thanks, Donal, at all events for this pleasant intelligence, but you must feel tired, so I will call Costellan, who is in the mansion.”

The Rapparee and his men then dismounted, and their horses were taken the best care of by their friends.

In a short time, John Forster, Cuthbert Fenwick, and Costellan appeared. They successively warmly shook the honest Donal by the hand, and he, in a few words, conveyed to them the sad tidings of their defeat, and told them that young Captain Forster had accompanied the Earl of Lucan to Limerick, but that he had desired him say he was in excellent health and only troubled by the late defeat of the army.

John now perceiving that several of the Rapparees were wounded brought them into the retainers' hall, and despatched a horseman to Gortinsiguara for Doctor Egan, his grand-father's physician, and refreshments were prepared for the whole band.

John next proceeded to the Chieftain's room, and knocked gently at the door. The Chief of Clooneene was already dressed and bade him enter. John then said—

“ Grandfather, prepare to hear the worst news.”

“ After the loss of Athlone,” said the Chief, “ I am prepared to hear anything ; therefore, tell me without hesitation is the battle lost.”

“ Lost !” replied John. “ Our brave army is defeated. Donal Bran has just arrived with the sad tidings.”

“ Call him here,” said the Chief, “ I am anxious to speak to him.”

Donal soon entered, hat in hand. His clothes were torn in many places, and besmeared with dust and blood, and his blackened visage, added much to his melancholy appearance.

“ Sit down on that chair, Donal, my man,” said the Chieftain, “ and tell me all about the battle.”

The Rapparee, being exhausted, at once obeyed, and with tears in his eyes commenced to narrate the various incidents of the obstinate fight. While he described the successful charges made by the Irish troops during the day, the Chiefs eyes beamed with pleasure, and he exclaimed —

“ I knew they would fight as Irishmen ought if only properly led on to the charge by their officers.”

When Donal related the danger his grandson, young Captain Forster, had escaped in the battle, the old Chieftain was much affected.

“ Be not uneasy, sir,” said Donal, “ he is now quite safe in company with the brave General Sarsfield, for I, like the other Rapparees, prefer calling the Earl of Lucan by the fine old name he bore when he blew up the English cannon and saved Limerick.”

Donal then told him how Lieutenant-General de St. Ruth, seeing some of the English cavalry pass at Aughrim Castle, left his post at the Hill of Kilcomedan, to head a charge against them ; of his sudden fall ; of the many struggles made by the Irish afterwards, and their final retreat, some to Galway, and others to Limerick.

“ Can you inform me, Donal,” said the Chieftain, “ who amongst my friends are safe ? for I am certain, from their patriotism, that many have fallen.”

“ After the battle,” returned the Rapparee, “ I saw the Chiefs of Cratloe, Moyriesk, and Ennistymon, The O’Donnellan of Ballydonnellan and Captain O’Brien, the two last of whom are badly wounded, but I missed The O’Kelly of Mullaghmore, Lord Galway, and the Stacpooles, and fear very much they are slain.”

Donal Bran was now desired to retire to bed for some time, and Costellan ordered cattle and sheep to be immediately slaughtered for food for the soldiers who were likely to pass by Clooneene on their way to limerick.

Doctor Egan had by this time arrived, and was now busily engaged attending to the wounded men.

Towards noon several bodies of Irish infantry began to arrive, but merely waited a short time to refresh themselves, as they feared they might be intercepted and cut to pieces by parties of Williamites.

In the evening one of the tenants from Ballinascagh brought some handsome bridles to Clooneene, which he found near a large rock on the lands of Cahirbroder. A few of the Irish cavalry having taken their way, while on their retreat, through the lands of Cahirbroder, and their horses being unable to proceed farther from fatigue, they took off the bridles and turned them loose.

All this day and the ensuing night parties of Irish soldiers continually passed by Clooneene, and were provided with food by its hospitable Chief.

By mid-day the loss of the battle of Aughrim had spread far and wide, and both the gentry and peasantry were in the greatest alarm for the safety of their families and property. Some drove their stock to the mountains of Clare, and even fled themselves and hid in caves. The families of Clooneene, Rathorpe, Ardemilevan, Ballygegan, Bunahow, Tillyra and Lissine, had all their jewellery and plate secreted. The infamous character of Baron de Ginckell’s foreign troops, as pillagers and murderers, was by this time well known, and during the day and night about Clooneene and Gortinsiguara great anxiety prevailed, as the people did not know what moment parties of De Ginckell’s troops would appear in their neighbourhood. A long consultation took place in the course of the day, between the Chief of Clooneene, his son Major Forster, Dermot Oge Cloran, and Conor O’Shaughnessy, and it was unanimously resolved to send some active and intelligent scouts towards Loughrea, to endeavour to obtain the latest news relative to the Williamite army. Early next day one of the retainers who had acted as a scout returned, and informed his Chief that the English were still encamped on the field of Aughrim, and that Baron de Ginckell had given Protections to the nobility and gentry in that neighbourhood, and, amongst others, to the sept of O’Donnellan. On hearing this, another consultation was held, and it was proposed by Dermot Oge that the Chief of Clooneene ought also to apply for a Protection, as if he did not obtain one like the rest of the aristocracy, the families of his retainers and tenantry would be murdered, their houses burned, and their cattle seized by the victorious Williamites, but the Chieftain and his son resolved to wait for further intelligence. Late in the evening a second scout returned, with information that Baron de Ginckell was still at Aughrim resting his men, and that many other gentlemen had received Protections from him ; and, also, that he had interred his dead, but that all the Irish who were slain were left unburied where they fell. After a long debate, the Chief resolved to allow his eldest son to apply for a Protection, as there was no other way of securing their tenantry, particularly the females, from the grossest insult. Accordingly, early next morning a messen-

ger was despatched to Aughrim, where he found many of the Protestants of the county, who now threw up the Protections they had received from King James, and a few of the lower and more bigoted class, unmindful of the clemency they had experienced from the Catholics, trying to prevent the Dutch General from giving Protections to some of them, in the hope of obtaining grants of their estates and goods. The Commander-in-chief, up to this time, had not refused any of the Catholics for Protections, as he was most anxious to terminate the war speedily, and return with his army to assist the Prince of Orange in maintaining the Dutch power on the Continent. Therefore, he had numerous copies of Protections printed, with blanks for the names and addresses of the various persons who would apply for them, and for the name of the camp where the English army might happen to be stationed at the time. Amongst those who now made application for one of these was Ffrench of Rahasane, a highly respectable Catholic gentleman, of large property and ancient descent. On being admitted to the presence of De Ginckell, he requested a Protection, which he had previously expected as a matter of course ; but, to his astonishment, the Commander-in-chief refused to grant it on hearing his name, and desired him to retire. Ffrench left the tent in great grief, knowing well the danger his family and property would be exposed to. Outside he met one of his Protestant neighbours, Major Charles Morgan, of Kilcolgan Castle, who asked him why he looked so dejected?

The Chief of Rahasane replied that he was just after speaking to Baron de Ginckell, who refused to give him a Protection. Morgan, who had great influence with the Baron, having known him intimately on the Continent, heard this with surprise and told Ffrench that he would at once go to his friend De Ginckell's tent, and ask him why he refused a Ffrench so reasonable a request. Having walked to the door of the tent, he sent in his card by one of the soldiers, and was immediately admitted to the Baron's presence. Major Morgan then asked De Ginckell why he refused to protect Ffrench of Rahasane ? Baron de Ginokell replied, that he had received a very bad character of him, and was privately advised on no account to give him, or any of his family, a Protection. Morgan said it was utterly impossible that any man could give a bad character of his friend, who was an honourable man, and one who had acted with great prudence and humanity all through the war, and he would therefore be glad to know who it was that dared to speak so falsely and uncharitably of his friend Mr. Ffrench.

“ I have no objection whatever to tell you,” said De Ginckell : “ my informant is a person named Walter Taylor, and resides at Ballymacraith.”

“ What !” exclaimed Morgan indignantly, “ the base scoundrel has told you an untruth of Ffrench, for the purpose of obtaining an opportunity to plunder his estates and goods.”

On hearing this, Baron de Ginckell said he sincerely regretted having taken any notice of Taylor's information in regard to Mr. Ffrench, and that he was now fully satisfied that gentleman's character had been altogether misrepresented to him. The Baron then directed Mr. Ffrench to be recalled, and at once presented him with the desired Protection.

Major Forster of Rathorpe was also supported in the application he made for a Protection, by a gentleman in the English army, who was acquainted with his relatives in Northumberland, and who laid before Baron de Ginckell his honourable conduct as High Sheriff of the County of Galway during the two previous years, and the disinterested and gentlemanly manner in which he had acted during the war. The Protection given him included his family and tenantry, with their stock and goods, provided they returned all such stock, goods, or other things which they might have taken from, or received of, any Protestant during the war.

All this day, Wednesday, 15th of July, numerous bodies of the Irish soldiery passed by Gortinsiguara, Crushnahawn, and Clooneene. After the battle they assembled on the mountains over Loughrea and its vicinity, and were now wending their way to Limerick, to

make another stand, with the main body of their army, against the Dutchman. They were supplied with food by the gentry and people, on the way, and the Chief of Clooneene took care to have the large boilers well supplied with meat, and also plenty of bread baked for their use. Indeed, during these three days, between uneasiness of mind and grief for the loss of many of their relatives and friends, most of the people throughout the province of Connaught were in deep affliction, and loud lamentations were heard in all parts of the country.

The industrious Dermot Oge was much perplexed in endeavouring to protect the Gortinsiguara property, but took good care to secure the family papers, plate, and other valuables, as he did of old, in places of safety. Lady Helena O'Shaughnessy still resided at Fidane Castle, and in the afternoon of this day, Dermot Oge went to Clooneene, to consult the Chief on matters of business. After dinner, Shane O'Halloran entered the parlour, and presented his Chief with a letter which he had just received from a courier who arrived from Galway. The Chieftain broke the large seal of red wax, opened the packet, and having looked over it, said — “Dermot Oge, this is from my friend, the Mayor of Galway, so you may read it.” He then handed the missive to Dermot Oge, who read as follows—

“For

“Captain Francis Forster, *of Clooneene*,

“These.

“Dear Captain Forster,

“Ye Lieutenant-General, the Baron de Ginckell, Commander-in-chief of the English army, is now expected at the Citie of Athnery, with his soulders, and will be comyng on us very soon, I expect. Any that would give up to him here, were soon prevented by Monsieur the Lieutenant-General d'Ussou, who confined y<sup>m</sup>. We have only abt 2,500 men, and they want arms, which is ye first and chiefest thing. If you can spare some of yer retainers and tenants, send y<sup>m</sup> to us at once, with a good leader-man. The loosing of ye battle of Aughrim was, I think, the last greate blow to K. James, his cause—ye sounde of the cannon was heard at our gates.

“Y<sup>r</sup> Faithfull Friende,

“Arthur Ffrench,

“Mayor.

“Done at Galvey, this ye 15<sup>th</sup> day of July, 1691.”

It was then agreed that Houloughan the steward at Crushnahawn, should have the men assembled at Clooneene, at six o'clock on the following morning.

“Captain,” said Dermot Oge, “who will you entrust with their command?”

“My grandson John,” replied the Chief, “is at present unwell, and Kelly of Loughcutra, Donal Bran, and Conor O'Shaughnessy intend starting for Limerick to-morrow, or after, so I am really at a loss to know who to appoint. As you are aware, Dermot, it requires a person well versed in military tactics, as there is every probability of their meeting with, and being attacked by, parties of the Williamite army.”

“Captain,” said Cuthbert Fenwick, “if you have no objection, it will give me great pleasure to take the command. I have been long enough inactive, in consequence of the mistake made about the commission I was promised, while in Dublin, by the Duke of Tyrconnell; but by your placing me in charge of your men, I will be permitted by Lord

Dillon to take part in the resistance the townspeople are about making against Baron de Ginkell.”

“ There is no doubt,” said Dermot Oge, “ if Brigadier Balldearg O’Donnell, with his forces, marches from Iar-Connaught to assist the citizens in defending the town, the efforts of De Ginkell will prove fruitless. But, to tell the truth, I have no great faith in him.”

“ Well,” said the Chief, “ as you feel inclined, you can have the command of my tenantry, Cuthbert, and I have no doubt, but you will distinguish yourself in the siege, and prove yourself worthy of the name you bear, while in command of the Clooneene Foresters.”

“ I will do my utmost,” replied Fenwick, “ and trust Balldearg O’Donnell will come to assist the people of Galway. It would be a matter of great importance, as at present their garrison consists of only a few troops of horse and seven regiments of foot. If he had been at Aughrim, with his 1,000 men, it is my firm conviction that our army would have been victorious ; and it would not at all surprise me to hear, after the way in which he was snubbed by Tyrconnell, who has usurped the title of his House, that Balldearg joined the English army.”

“ After his treachery in absenting himself from the battle of Aughrim,” said the Chief, “ I am convinced he will prove false to our cause ; but, on the other hand, if he comes to assist the people of Galway, it will undoubtedly discourage the Baron de Ginkell ; but after the disgraceful manner in which O’Donnell was treated, both by Tyrconnell and Colonel Gordon O’Neill, it is difficult to say what he will do. However, though the garrison is small, I am sure the town will make a gallant resistance, for the citizens of Galway are well known to be courageous in time of danger.”

After some further conversation, Dermot Oge returned to Lissine, and shortly after the whole household retired to rest.

#### THE CLOONEENE FORESTERS—GALWAY IN 1691.

At break of day next morning, a considerable number of men were collected before the hall-door of Clooneene. Long before six o’clock Cuthbert Fenwick had breakfasted, and, walking from the parlour into the hall, took from off the wall a green flag, on which was embroidered the armorial bearings of the Clan Forster. At this moment the Chief descended the principal stairs, and, observing Fenwick, said—

“ Cuthbert, you are not the first of your family who fought under that flag.”

“ I am aware of that. Captain,” replied Fenwick, “ and I recollect, when very young, while on a visit with my uncle at Wallington, having read, with great delight, of how my clan fought for Sir John Forster, Lord of Blanchland, in the Raid of the Reidswire”.

Shane O’Halloran, who had been actively engaged distributing guns, spears, and pistols amongst the Clooneene Foresters, now entered the hall, and told Cuthbert that all was prepared for his journey. Fenwick then took leave of the Chief, mounted his horse, and rode off at the head of his party in high spirits. No event of any import occurred until they arrived within four miles of Galway. Here the road slightly curved, and the quick eye of Cuthbert observed, at some distance from Oranmore Castle, a party of over sixty men, partially concealed behind a large heap of stones, about one hundred yards in advance. He immediately gave the order to halt, but as his men had loaded before leaving Glooneene, his only delay was to form them into line. The party of Williamites, for such they were, knowing by this movement that they were observed, rushed forward, shouting at the same time—

“ Long live King William the Third.” Cuthbert Fenwick's party answered with—“ Ireland for ever,” and received the enemy with a heavy fire. The Williamites being worsted, and imagining from the dress worn by the Clooneene Foresters, whose only distinguishing marks were green boughs in their hats, that they were surrounded by the Rapparees, turned and fled ; and Cuthbert, fearing they were only the skirmishers of a larger force, merely waited until his men had collected the arms the enemy left behind them, before continuing his march, which he then did with all speed.

On approaching the ancient city of Galway, Cuthbert was astonished to observe the numerous changes which had taken place in its suburbs since he was there last, by the removal of all the houses, walls, bushes, and everything else calculated to afford shelter to an enemy. These preparations for the coming siege, together with the removal of the strong forts in the east liberties, were carried out by the Earl of Clanricarde, who was empowered to do so by the Common Council of the town. From the desolate aspect of the suburbs, the fortifications looked larger than they actually were. On his left stood Shoemaker's Tower, from the top of which rose a narrow, square turret ; next, on the same side, was Penrice's Tower, which was square, and smaller than the former, both in height and circumference ; then the tower surmounting the great gate, in which was placed the town clock, and from a staff, which was in the form of a cross over it, floated a large flag, on which was embroidered the arms of Galway—*azure* a chevron ; *or*, between three castles, triple-towered, and masoned *argent*, under which were the letters S. P. Q. R. To the right stood Middle Tower, which was similar to Penrice's in form and size ; and beyond it was visible Tor an Leoin, which was the largest and strongest of the fourteen towers on the walls of Galway. Fenwick was challenged at the gate, but having produced the Mayor's letter to the Chief of Clooneene, he was admitted by the officer in command of the guard without further delay. After seeing the Clooneene Foresters provided for, he proceeded to the Mayoralty House, in Great Gate-street.

This commodious and handsome mansion was erected by Sir Valentine Blake, of Menlough Castle, while Mayor of Galway, in 1630, and was generally known as Sir Valentine's Castle. Over the Gothic arch which led to the spacious courtyard the armorial ensigns of the Blake and Caddell families were sculptured in relief, surrounded by a wreath of shamrocks, beneath which was a cornucopia, supported by an angel.

Here he met Captain Arthur Ffrench, of Tyrone, the then Mayor of Galway ; Lord Dillon, the Military Governor of the town ; the Earl of Clanricarde, Lord Lieutenant and Custos Rotulorum of the county of Galway ; Lord Enniskillen, Lieutenant-General d'Usson, late Governor of Athlone, Colonel Burke, of Tyaquin ; Colonel Oliver O'Gara, who was wounded at the last siege of Athlone ; Lieutenants-Colonel Burke, Browne, Bodkin, and O'Reilly ; Major Dillon, Captains Valentine Blake, Jasper Ffrench, George Morris, Marcus Lynch, and Stephen Kirwan ; together with the Sheriffs, Oliver Ffrench, and William Clear, who had assembled to discuss the best measures to adopt for defending the town against Baron de Ginckell. They were all delighted to see Cuthbert Fenwick, who gave Colonel Burke of Tyaquin and the Mayor letters from the Chief of Clooneene. After inquiring for their friends in the country, Colonel Burke informed Cuthbert that Lord Galway, The O'Kelly of Mullaghmore, and the Stacpooles, were not only missing, but that nothing was heard of them since the battle of Aughrim, and that he feared they were slain in that fearful engagement.

After a while the consultation, which was interrupted by the entrance of Cuthbert, was resumed.

“ Monsieur d'Usson,” said the Governor, “ what is your opinion of the strength of our fortifications ? Do you think they will be able to bear a long siege ?”

“ They are strong, indeed. Monsieur le Gouverneur,” replied D’Usson, “ but I regret exceedingly that we have not more men and arms at our command. However, gentlemen, I have every reason to believe that my great Sovereign, King Louis, will send us valuable assistance in a very short time, to carry on the war against the heretics of all nations who maintain the unjust cause of the ambitious Prince of Orange.”

“ The brave citizens,” said Colonel Burke of Tyaquin, “ will be able to hold out successfully against De Ginckell and his large army for a week at least, but unless the promised assistance which we have been so long expecting from France arrives within that time, I fear they will have to surrender, as I think our provisions will not last much longer.”

“ We have enough for a week, at all events,” said the Mayor, “ and I think for a longer period, but we are certain not to run short until Balldearg O’Donnell, who is now, I believe, in Iar-Connaught, arrives here, which will be at the farthest, in three days, if I have been correctly informed.”

The Earl of Clanricarde then asked if the town walls had been lately repaired ?

The Mayor replied —

“ There is not much to be done to them my Lord, as last year the fortifications of the town were examined by the commissioners, who ordered Barachalla to be fortified, and to have the town walls repaired. These improvements cost £800, and orders were made by the corporation, on the 3rd and 11th of July, for this sum to be levied on the citizens, which they unanimously and cheerfully paid.”

Lieutenant-General d’Usson said —

“ The cannon are planted in the best possible position. I have eight guns on the Upper Citadel, near which is a strong platform, on which are six good pieces ; ten are placed at the south-east corner, five on the river side, and three on the Turret that commands the bay. Some of our guns are almost useless from age, and more of them are wretchedly mounted.”

“ It is a great pity,” said Major Dillon, “ that so many of the brass guns scattered through town are altogether useless, for in their day they were very good.”

“ Oh ! indeed,” exclaimed Colonel Burke of Tyaquin, “ we have plenty of guns if we could only use them ; but there are a great many ancient iron ones planted on the bank of Lough Corrib, at Menlough Castle, and if you think they are required, you had better apply in time to Sir Walter Blake.”

Several matters of great importance having been arranged, the council broke up, and each retired to his appointed post, except Lord Dillon, Lieutenant-General d’Usson, Colonel Burke, and Captain Jasper Ffrench, who remained to dine with the Mayor of Galway.

Cuthbert Fenwick was not very familiar with Galway, though so long a resident in the county. He had only been there on one other occasion, and even then had but a bad opportunity of seeing the town ; so now, in order to satisfy his curiosity, he strolled out until dinner hour would have arrived. He first walked in the direction of Faheibeg, and was much struck with the beautiful scenery of the expansive bay, which is one of the finest in Ireland. Due west were dimly visible in the distance the Islands of Arran, so famous in olden time for their monasteries and learned men, who went forth to preach the Gospel to pagan nations, and gained for them the enviable name of the Isles of the Blessed. Before him stood Mutton Island, with its romantic old castle, reflected in the blue waters of the vast Atlantic ; and in

the distance the gigantic mountains of Thomond, whose dark peaks rose high above the level of the sea, lending to the scene an air of picturesque grandeur, which was considerably heightened by the gentle rays of the brilliant noonday sun. Beyond Lough Atalia, the earthworks of Cromwell's Fort were visible, and between Hare Island and Mutton Island, in the distance, could be seen the extensive wood of Ardfiry, the beautiful residence of one of the leading branches of the House of Blake, and the birth-place of Sir Richard Blake, Speaker of the Supreme Council of the Confederate Catholics of Ireland assembled at Kilkenny in 1648. He was a Privy Councillor in the reign of King Charles I., Mayor of Galway in 1627, and Knight of the Shire for the county of Galway in 1639. Along the shore were several of the hardy sea-faring inhabitants of the Claddagh, dressed in comfortable white flannel jackets, blue trousers, and round woollen caps of a green colour, mending their nets. Cuthbert, addressing one of them, bade him good day, but the fisherman only shook his head, mysteriously muttering at the same time a few words which were quite unintelligible to Fenwick, who, surprised that a person residing so near the town could not speak the English language, walked on to view the Church and cemetery of St. Mary of the Hill. This ancient Dominican Friary is situated on a slight elevation near the sea shore, and is erected on the site of the older Convent of St. Mary of the Hill, a daughter of the Holy Trinity, of the Premonstratenses of Tuam, which was founded by a chieftain of the sept of O'Halloran at an early period in the history of Galway, but the exact year is now unknown. On being deserted by the nuns, the secular clergy took possession of it, and resided there for many years ; but the inhabitants of the town having petitioned Pope Innocent VIII., it was granted in 1488 to the Dominican Friars of Athenry. From the commencement, this Friary was liberally supported by the rich and enterprising merchants. James Fitz-Stephen Lynch, who was Mayor of Galway in 1493, erected the choir at considerable expense. On the 9th of March, 1570, Queen Elizabeth granted part of the possessions of this house, which was then lately dissolved, to the Corporation of Galway. In 1642, Lord Forbes landed here, and having taken possession of the monastery, converted it into a barrack. Having failed in his attempt to take the town, he ruined the church, tore open the graves, and burned all the bones and coffins ; after which he took shipping, and sailed from Galway. In 1652, the patriotic friars surrendered their church and monastery to the corporation, who soon after razed them to the ground, in order that they might not be converted by Cromwell's soldiers into a fortification during the long siege. There was an understanding, however, between the friars and the corporation, that on the restoration of peace the whole should be restored at the expense of the inhabitants.

Cuthbert shortly after returned, and, entering the town by the gate called In-Sparra-Heir, proceeded over the West Bridge, which was built of stone, and erected in the year 1342. Having reached its centre, he passed under the Middle Gate, with its heavy winding leaves, and then through Bridge Gate ; entered Bridge Gate-street, and having admired the quaint architecture of the Castle of the Blakes of Ardfry, turned to the left into Lumbard-street, in which was situated the College of Priests and Pastors, proceeded up North-street by Athy's Castle, and the fine old mansion, with its heavy, arched entrance and bow windows, which was, in the reign of Charles II., the residence of Sir Peter Ffrench. He then turned to his right into Little Gate-street at the end of which, on the right-hand corner, stood the Convent of the Society of Jesus ; and, turning to his left, walked up North Gate-street, to Sir Valentine's Castle, which he passed by, and, leaving the town by the North Gate, walked across the Green, where many of the towns-people were playing at the game of bowls, though in view of the gallows on which the ghastly skull of some unfortunate criminal was spiked. The sickening sight caused Cuthbert to meditate on the nothingness of life, as he walked through Bohermore, in the centre of which was a lake, and it was, therefore, with a feeling of relief that he beheld Laght More ni hien, the emblem of man's redemption. After examining this ancient monument, he returned to the Mayoralty House, where he arrived just in time for dinner. In the course of the evening, he remarked to the host how surprised he was to find that a fisherman quite convenient to the town could not speak a word of English to him.

“ You are not the only person who has expressed surprise at the backward condition of these people, Cuthbert,” replied the Mayor; “ but their manners and customs are peculiarly their own. They elect a king and an admiral from among their own people. The king, who holds office for life, assisted by the Circle of Wise Men, settles all disputes and differences that arise between them, and they never trouble our courts of law. The admiral, who is annually elected, on St. Nicholas’s Day, manages all the affairs relating to the sea during the fishing seasons. When on shore, this official, though shown great respect by these strange people, bears no mark of distinction, but when at sea his boat carries a white sail, and always has a flag flying from the mast-head. They consider it a disgrace to know English, or to send their children to school ; and even the Celtic dialect spoken by them differs very much from that of the peasantry of Iar-Connaught. Though the offices of king and admiral are not hereditary, still those who fill them must be chosen from a particular family.”

It was now half-past eight o’clock, and Lord Dillon arose, apologised for not being able to remain longer, and said his duties as Governor called him away. Lieutenant-General d’Usson also arose to depart, pleading that he would have to meet the Earl of Clanricarde and Lord Enniskillen in council at nine o’clock, at the house of Oliver Ffrench, in Crosse-street.

The next day was spent in making great preparations for the defence, and the hospitable Mayor invited the principal officers of the garrison to dine with him. As it was Friday, and the company Catholic, the dishes consisted entirely of fish—the principal of which was composed of the delicious salmon, for which the celebrated Weir of Inchora More, on Galway river, was so famous from olden time. On the following morning, which was the 18th of July, the Mayor was informed that a Protestant merchant, named Shaw, and some others of the same persuasion, had escaped from the town, and that it was generally believed they were gone to the English camp at Athenry, to give information to the Commander-in-chief of what was going on in the town, and to let him know the real strength of the garrison. After breakfast, Cuthbert again walked through Galway. In several places he found the French very busy repairing the fortifications. They had already thrown up several strong works near the East Gate, and many of the citizens were engaged on the fort, at the south-east corner of the wall. Arriving in Plud-street, he examined carefully, and with interest, the strong fortification known as The Rampire, and then ascended the battlements by the stairs called Steire Naguinagh. Here several of the garrison were employed in arranging the guns along the walls, and after spending some time in conversing merrily with the soldiers, Cuthbert proceeded to the Governor’s quarters, where he procured a map of the city, and then returned to the Mayoralty House, where he spent the remainder of the day in studying it, and making himself through this medium familiar with the different streets and buildings.

The Irish chieftains; or, A struggle for the crown (1872)

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