

The Story of Ireland

(By A. M. SULLIVAN.)

LXIV.—“BEFORE THE BATTLE.”

his shoulder. But suddenly he pushed her gently away. “And the other, where is he? You know, Nora, the fat one who used to come so often last winter? I was not able to think at that time—my head hurt me so—but I remember that he came almost daily, and although he was very friendly to me, I cannot, of course, imagine that he only came to see a poor old fool like I have grown. Why does he come no longer? Did you send him away, Nora?”

“Let me remain with you, papa,” answered Nora. My only comfort now is to be with you.”

The old man shook his head, and looked displeased.

“I shall probably not remain long with you,” he said. “He was a good man, Nora, with an honest and a true heart. It would be such a comfort to me not to leave you alone.”

“Let it all happen as God wills!” said Nora; “there were difficulties in the way or this too.”

“Yes, you are, and you remain, the circus-rider’s daughter, who can take root nowhere, who is fitted for no place,” he observed bitterly.

“Forgive me,” she said, “there is a place in which one is not asked what one has been, nor what one is, but only what one will do to reach the highest aim of all. Perhaps the Almighty intends me for that place, although I am not perfectly sure of it myself yet.”

“I don’t quite understand,” he answered somewhat peevishly, “but do as you think best, my advice has already done you enough harm. But, listen, before I have gone quite down the hill, I should like you to send for the chaplain. You know the one I mean—the one who stood by my poor wife’s death-bed; he will also make it easier for me to die! The last time I saw him I was rude to him; he came to me as if he wished to warn me, and to remind me of her wishes about you; and that I would not put up with. Yes, I was in a bad frame of mind then, but I think he will forgive me. I must also speak with him about the boy, so that he may tell me what is to be done in order to prevent his falling into those people’s clutches. No! but he shan’t fall into their clutches,” he added, gnashing his teeth. “However, I wish also to part in peace with them; and when I am dead, Nora, you may write to the boy’s mother that I have forgiven her. She was the less to blame in the matter, and Ellen was right; when we once allow light custom to grow up in us, we are safe against no temptation. That you didn’t become like the other, was no merit of mine.”

(To be concluded.)

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Early on the morning of June 30, 1690, William’s army approached the Boyne in three divisions. “Such was his impatience to behold the enemy he was to fight, and the ground they had taken up, that by the time the advanced guard was within view of the Jacobite camp, he was in front of them, having ridden forward from the head of his own division. Then it was that he beheld a sight which, yet unstirred by soldier shout or cannon shot, unstained by blood or death, might well gladden the heart of him who gazed, and warm with its glorious beauties even a colder nature than his! He stood upon a height, and beheld beneath him and beyond him, with the clearness of a map and the gorgeous beauty of a dream, a view as beautiful as the eye can scan. Doubly beautiful it was then; because the colors of a golden harvest were blended with green fields and greener trees, and a sweet river flowing calmly on in winding beauty through a valley whose banks rose gently from its waters, until in lofty hills they touched the opposite horizon, bending and undulating into forms of beauty.” “To the south-east, the steeples and castle of Drogheda, from which floated the flags of James and Louis, appeared in the mid-distance; whilst seaward might be seen the splendid fleet which attended the motions of the Williamite army. But of more interest to the phlegmatic but experienced commander, whose eagle eye now wandered over the enchanting panorama, were the lines of white tents, the waving banners, and moving bodies of troops, which, to the south-west, between the river and Donore Hill, indicated the position of James’s camp.”

Having viewed the ground carefully, William selected the Oldbridge fords for the principal attack, and fixed upon sites for batteries to command the opposite or Jacobite bank. He then rode a short way up the river, and alighted to take some refreshment. On his return he was fired upon by some field pieces at the other side of the river, the first shot striking to the earth one of the group beside the prince. A second shot followed; the ball struck the river bank, glanced upwards, and wounded William slightly. He sank upon his horse’s neck, and a shout of exultation burst from the Irish camp, where it was believed he was killed. He was not much hurt, however, and rode amongst his own lines to assure his troops of his safety; and shouts of triumph and defiance from the Williamite ranks soon apprised the Irish of their error.

That night—that anxious night!—was devoted by William to the most careful planning and arrangement for the morrow’s strife. But ere we notice these plans or approach that struggle, it may be well to describe for young readers with all possible simplicity the battlefield of the Boyne, and the nature of the military operations of which it was the scene.

The Boyne enters the Irish sea a mile or more to the east of Drogheda, but for a mile or two above or to the west of that town, the sea-tides reach and rise and fall in the river. Two miles and a half up the river from Drogheda, on the southern bank, is the little village of Oldbridge. About five miles in a direct line due west of Oldbridge (but considerably more by the curve of the river, which between these points bends deeply southward), stands the town of Slane on the northern bank. The ground rises rather rapidly from the river at Oldbridge, sloping backwards, or southwards, about a mile, to the hill of Donore, on the crest of which stands a little ruined church (it was a ruin even in 1690) and a grave-yard; three miles and a half further southward than Donore, on the road to Dublin from Oldbridge, stands Duleek.

James’s camp was pitched on the northern slopes of Donore, looking down upon this river at Oldbridge. James himself slept and had his headquarters in the little ruined church already mentioned.

Directly opposite to Oldbridge, on the northern side of the river, the ground, as on the south side, rises rather abruptly, sloping backward, forming a hill called Tullyallen. This hill is intersected by a ravine north and south, leading down to the river, its mouth on the northern bank being directly opposite to Oldbridge. The ravine is now called King William’s Glen. On and behind Tullyallen Hill, William’s camp was pitched, looking southwards, towards, but not altogether in sight of James’s, on the other side of the river.

At this time of the year, July, the Boyne was fordable at several places up the river towards Slane. The easiest fords, however, were at Oldbridge, where when the sea-tide was at lowest ebb, the water was not three feet deep.

To force these fords, or some of them, was William’s task. To defend them, was James’s endeavor.

The main difficulty in crossing a ford in the face of an opposing army, is that the enemy almost invariably has batteries to play on the fords with shot and shell, and troops ready at hand to charge the crossing party the instant they attempt to “form” on reaching the bank, if they succeed in reaching it. If the defending party have not batteries to perform this service, and if the assailants have batteries to “cover” the passage of their fording parties by a strong cannonade, i.e., to prevent (by shot and shell fired over their heads at the bank they rush for) the formation there of any troops to charge them on reaching the shore, the ford is, as a general rule, sure to be forced.

James had not a single cannon or howitzer at the fords. From fifty splendid field pieces and mortars William rained shot and shell on the Jacobite bank.

William’s plan of attack was to outflank

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