

Fionn MacCumhail and the Princess.

From
“ The Shamrock ”

By

Patrick J. McCall (1861—1919).

(In Wexford Folk Speech.)

Wance upon a time, when things was a great'le betther in Ireland than they are at present, when a rale king ruled over the counthry wid four others undher him to look afther the craps an' other indhustries, there lived a young chief called Fan MaCool.

Now, this was long afore we gev up bowin' and scrapin' to the sun an' moon an' sich like raumash (nonsense) ; an' signs an it, there was a powerful lot ov witches an' Druids, an' enchanted min an' wimen goin' about, that med things quare enough betimes for iverywan.

Well, Fan, as I sed afore, was a young man when he kem to the command, an' a purty likely lookin' boy, too — there was nothi" too hot or too heavy for him ; an' so ye needn't be a bit surprised if I tell ye he was the mischief entirely wid the colleens. Nothin' delighted him more than to disguise himself wid an ould coatamore (overcoat) thrown over his showlder, a lump ov a kippeen (stick) in his fist and he mayanderin' about unknownst, rings around the counthry, lookin' for fun an' foosther (diversion) ov all kinds.

Well, one fine mornin', whin he was on the shaughraun, he was waumasin' (strolling) about through Leinster, an' near the royal palace ov Glendalough he seen a mighty throng ov grand lords and ladies, an', my dear, they all dressed up to the nines, wid their jewels shinin' like dewdrops ov a May mornin', and laughin' like the tinkle ov a deeshy (small) mountain strame over the white rocks. So he cocked his beaver, an' stole over to see what was the matther.

Lo an' behould ye, what were they at but houldin' a race-meetin' or faysh (festival) — somethin' like what the quality calls ataleticks now ! There they were, jumpin', and runnin', and coorsin', an' all soorts ov fun, enough to make the trouts — an' they're mighty fine leppers enough — die wid envy in the river benaith them.

The fun wint on fast an' furious, an' Fan, consaled betune the trumauns an' brushna (elder bushes and furze) could hardly keep himself quiet, seein' the thricks they wor at. Peepin' out, he seen, jist forninst him on the other bank, the prencess herself, betune the high-up ladies ov the coort. She was a fine, bouncin' geersha (girl) with gold hair like the furze an' cheeks like an apple blossom, an' she brakin' her heart laughin' an' clappin' her hands an' turnin her head this a-way an' that a-way, jokin' wid this wan an' that wan, an' commiseratin', moryah ! (forsooth) the poor gossoons that failed in their leps. Fan liked the looks ov her well, an' whin the boys had run in undher a bame up to their knees an' jumped up over another wan as high as their chins, the great trial ov all kern on. Maybe you'd guess what that was ? But I'm afeerd you won't if I gev you a hundhred guesses ! It was to lep the strame, forty foot wide !

List'nin' to them whisperin' to wan another, Fan heerd them tellin' that whichever ov them could manage it wud be med a great man intirely ov ; he wud get the Prencess Maynish in marriage, an' ov coorse, would be med king ov Leinster when the ould king, Garry, her father, cocked his toes an' looked up through the butts ov the daisies at the shky. Well, whin

Fan h'ard this, he was put to a nonplush to know what to do ! With his ould duds on him, he was ashamed ov his life to go out into the open, to have the eyes ov the whole wurruld on him, an' his heart wint down to his big toe as he watched the boys makin' their offers at the lep. But no one of them was soople enough for the job, an' they kep on tumblin', wan afther the other, into the strame ; so that the poor prencess began to look sorryful whin her favourite, a big hayro wid a colyeen (curls) a yard long — an' more betoken he was a boy o' the Byrnes from Imayle — jist tipped the bank forninst her wid his right fut, an' then twistin', like a crow in the air scratchin' her head with her claw, he spraddled wide open in the wather, and splashed about like a hake in a mudbank ! Well, me dear. Fan forgot himself, an' gev a screech like an aigle ; an' wid that, the ould king started, the ladies all screamed, an' Fan was surrounded. In less than a minnit an' a half they dragged me bould Fan be the collar ov his coat right straight around to the king himself.

“ What ould geochagh (beggar) have we now ? “ sez the king, lookin' very hard at Fan.

“ I'm Fan MaCool ! ” sez the thief ov the woirruld, as cool as a frog.

“ Well, Fan MaCool or not,” sez the king, mockin' him, “ ye'll have to jump the sthrame yander for freckenin' the lives clane out ov me ladies,” sez ho, “ an' for disturbin' our spoort ginerally,” sez he.

“ An' what'll I get for that same ? ” sez Fan, lettin' on (pretending) he was afeered.

“ Me daughter, Maynish,” sez the king, wid a laugh ; for he thought, ye see, Fan would be drowned.

“ Me hand on the bargain,” sez Fan ; but the owld chap gev him a rap on the knuckles wid his specktre (sceptre) an' to wid him to hurry up, or he'd get the ollaves (judges) to put him in the Black Dog pres'n or the Marshals — I forgets which — it's so long gone by !

Well, Fan peeled off his coatamore, an' threw away his botheen ov a stick, an' the prencess sein' his big body an' his long arums an' legs like an oak tree, could't help remarkin' to her comrade, the craythur —

“ Bedad, Cauth (Kate),” sez she, “ but this beggarman is a fine bit of a bouchal (boy),” sez she ; “ it's in the arumy (army) he ought to be,” sez she, lookin' at him agen, an' admirin' him, like.

“ So, Fan, purtendin' to be fixin' his shoes be the bank, jist pulled two lusmores (fox-gloves) an' put them anunder his heels ; for thim wor the fairies' own flowers that works all soort ov inchantment, an' he, ov coorse, knew all about it ; for he got the wrinkle from an ould lenaun (fairy guardian) named Cleena, that nursed him when he was a little stand-a-loney.

Well, me dear, ye'd think it was on'y over a little creepie (three-legged) stool he was lep-pin' whin he landed like a thrish jist at the fut ov the prencess ; an' his father's son he was, that put his two arums around her, an' gev her a kiss — haith, ye'd hear the smack ov it at the Castle o' Dublin. The ould king groaned like a cornrake, an' pulled out his hair in hatfuls, an' at last he ordhered the bowld beggarman off to be kilt ; but, begorra, when they tuck off weskit an' seen the collar ov goold around Fan's neck the ould chap became delighted, for he knew thin he had the commandher ov Airyun (Erin) for a son-in-law.

“ Hello ! ” sez the king, “ who have we now ? ” sez he, seein’ the collar. “ Begonny’s,” sez he, “ you’re no boccagh (beggar) anyways ! ”

“ I’m Fan MaCool,” sez the other, as impident as a cocksparra’ ; “ have you anything to say agen me ? ” for his name wasn’t up, at that time, like afther.

“ Ay lots to say agen you. How dar’ you be comin round this a- way, dressed like a play-actor, taldn us in ? ” sez the king, lettin’ on to be vexed ; “ an now, ” sez he, “ to annoy you, you’ll have to go an jump back agen afore you gets me daughter for puttin on (deceiving) us in such a manner. ”

“ Your will is my pleasure,” sez Fan ; “ but I must have a word or two with the girl first,” sez he, an’ up he goes an’ commences talkin’ soft to her, an’ the king got as mad as a hatter at the way the two were croo-sheenin’ an’ colloquin’ (whispering and talking), an’ not mindin’ him no more than if he was the man in the moon, when who comes up but the Prence of Imayle, afther dryin’ himself, to put his pike in the hay too.

“ Well, avochal (my boy),” sez Fan, “ are you dry yet ? ” an’ the Prencess laughed like a bell round a cat’s neck.

“ You think yourself a smart lad, I suppose,” sez the other ; “ but there’s one thing you can’t do wid all your prate ! ”

“ What’s that ? ” sez Fan. “ Maybe not ” sez he.

“ You couldn’t whistle and chaw oatenmale,” sez the Prence ov Omayle, in a pucker. “ Are you any good at throwin’ a stone ? ” sez he, then.

“ The best ! ” sez Fan, an’ all the coort gother round like to a cock-fight. “ Where’ll we throw to ? ” sez he.

“ In to’ards Dublin,” sez the Prence ov Imayle ; an’ be all accounts he was a great hand at cruistin (throwing).

“ Here goes pink,” sez he, an’ he ups with a stone, as big as a castle, an’ sends it flyin’ in the air like a cannon ball, and it never stopped till it landed on top ov the Three Rock Mountain.

“ I’m your masther ! ” sez Fan, pickin’ up another clochaun (stone) an’ sendin’ it a few perch beyant the first.

“ That you’re not,” sez the Prence ov Imayle, an’ he done his best, an’ managed to send another finger stone beyant Fan’s throw ; an’ sure, the three stones are to be seen, be all the world, to this very day.

“ ”

“ Well, me lad,” says Fan, stoopin’ for another as big as a hill, “ I’m sorry I have to bate you ; but I can’t help it,” sez he, lookin’ over at the Prencess Maynish, an’ she as mute as a mouse watchin’ the two big men, an’ the ould king showin’ fair play, as delighted as a child, “ Watch this,” sez he, whirlin’ his arm like a windmill, ” and now put on your spectacles,” sez he ; and away he sends the stone, buzzin’ through the air like a peggin’-top, over the other three cloch-auns, and then across Dublin Bay, an’ scrapin’ the nose off ov Howth, it landed with a swish in the say beyant it. That’s the rock they calls Ireland’s Eye now !

“ Be the so an’ so ! ” sez the king, “ I don't know where that went to, at all, at all ! wha direct did you send it ? sez he to Fan. “ I had it in view, till it went over the say,” sez he.

“ I’m bet ! ” sez the Prence ov Imayle. “ I couldn’t pass that, for I can’t see where you put it, even — good- bye to yous,” sez he, turnin’ on his heel an’ makin’ off ; “ an’ may yous two be as happy as I can wish you ! ” An’ back he went to the butt ov Lugnaquilla, an’ took to fret, an I understand shortly afther he died ov a broken heart ; an’ they put a turtle-dove on his tombstone to signify that he died for love ; but I think he overstrained himself, throwin’, though that’s nayther here nor there with me story !

“ Are you goin’ to lep back agen ? ” sez ould King Garry, wantin’ to see more sport ; for he tuk as much delight in seein’ the like as if he was a lad ov twenty.

“ To be shure I will ! ” sez Fan, ready enough, “ but I'll have to take the girl over with me this time ! ” sez he.

“ Oh, no. Fan ! ” sez Maynish, afeered ov her life he might stumble an’ that he’d fall in with her ; an’ then she’d have to fall out with him — “ take me father with you,” sez she ; an’ egonnys, the ould king thought more about himself than any ov them, an’ sed he’d take the will for the deed, like the lawyers. So the weddin’ went on ; an’ maybe that wasn’t the grand blow-out. But I can’t stay to tell yous all the fun they had for a fortnit ; on’y, me dear, they all went into kinks ov laughin’, when the ould king, who tuk more than was good for him, stood up to drink Fan’s health, an’ forgot himself.

“ Here’s to’ards your good health. Fan MaCool ! ” sez he, as grand as you like — “ an’ a long life to you, an’ a happy wife to you — an’ a great many ov them ! ” sez he, like he’d forgot somethin’.

Well, me dear, every one was splittin’ their sides like the p’yates, unless the prencess, an’ she got as red in the face as if she was churnin’ in the winther an’ the frost keepin’ the crame from crackin’ ; but she got over it like the maisles.

But I suppose you can guess the remainder, an’ as the evenin’s gettin’ forrard I’ll stop ; so put down the kittle an’ make tay, an’ if Fan and the Prencess Maynish didn’t live happy together — that we may !

Humours of Irish life (1915)

Author : Graves, Charles L. (Charles Larcom), 1856-1944

Subject : Irish wit and humor

Publisher : London [etc.] T. F. Unwin

Language : English

Digitizing sponsor : MSN

Book contributor : University of California Libraries

Collection : americana; cdl

Scanfactors : 134

Source : Internet Archive

<http://www.archive.org/details/humoursofirishli00gravrich>

Uploaded to www.augty.org March 1 2010