

**SILKEN THOMAS: AN
IRISH HISTORICAL
DRAMA; PERIOD: 1535-37**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649764709

Silken Thomas: An Irish Historical Drama; Period: 1535-37 by Samuel Byrne

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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SILKEN THOMAS

An Irish Historical Drama.

Period: 1535-37

By SAMUEL BYRNE.

Ye Geraldines! Ye Geraldines!
When Silken Thomas flung
King Henry's sword on council board
The English Thanes among;
You never ceased to battle brave
Against the English sway
Till axe and brand and treachery
Your proudest cut away.

THOMAS DAVIS.

PERSONS REPRESENTED.

SILKEN THOMAS, who at the age of twenty-one was appointed by his father, the Earl of Kildare, and Lord Deputy of Ireland, to fill the latter office during the Earl's absence in England, whither he has been summoned by King Henry VIII to answer political charges which had been made against him by his enemies in Dublin.

MONSIGNOR MACHUGH, an Irish prelate, who has returned from Spain.

THE O'BYRNE, an Irish Chieftain in Wicklow.

O'DONNELL, an Irish Chieftain in Tyrconnell.

SIR JAMES DE LA HIDE, member of the Council of State in Dublin; a friend of Lord Kildare.

LORD RADLEY, aged about fifty, a titled Englishman, charged with a secret mission.

ALLEN, Secretary to the Council of State, Dublin, and nephew to Archbishop Allen, who was formerly Lord Chancellor of Ireland.

TAUNTON, Governor of Newgate Jail, Dublin.

GERARD, a jailor in the secret pay of Radley.

TWO ENGLISH WORKMEN. English Soldiers who escort SILKEN THOMAS to the gallows.

MOIRA, bride of The O'Byrne, and sister of O'Donnell.

COUNCILLORS OF STATE, courtiers, soldiers, O'Donnell's Clansmen, armed with muskets, swords and pikes.

JERRY, BARNEY, AND MIKE, Strolling Minstrels.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—Rural landscape, the grounds adjoining the Castle of The O'Byrne in Imail, in the County of Wicklow.

[*Enter two of O'DONNELL'S SOLDIERS.*]

FIRST SOLDIER (looking around him): I felt sure it was Larry O'Donovan who was coming this way. It looked very like him, anyhow.

SECOND SOLDIER: It was Larry, allright. I could tell him from his walk if he was half a mile away. He must have turned into that wood over there.

FIRST SOLDIER: I am anxious to see him because I have a pleasant surprise for him. This morning I met a cousin of his who has been living here for years, and who would like to hear some news about his kinsmen up in Tyrconnell.

SECOND SOLDIER: He'll certainly be glad to see that cousin; for he was talking to me about him not long ago, and he said he had not heard from him for years. Isn't this Imail a fine country?

FIRST SOLDIER: Indeed, it is a fine country, as you say, this Imail.

SECOND SOLDIER: We haven't any scenery like it up in our Northern land of Tyrconnell, but ours is fine, too. It's of a different style. Sure, we have all sorts of scenery in Ireland—a variety that doesn't exist in any other clime. And I'm not saying that because you and I are natives. I've heard members of our clan who traveled all over Europe say so. Just think of all the different kinds we've passed through in our long but leisurely and very pleasant march to this place, escorting our beloved chieftain,

The O'Donnell, Prince of Tyrconnell, and his beautiful and only sister, the Princess Moira, who this morning was wedded to The O'Byrne, the Prince of Imail.

FIRST SOLDIER: And the historic spots that we've seen—especially the battlefields. I can't recall half that the Shannakee told us. We saw the ruins of the Sassenah castle at Clones that was destroyed by the victorious soldiers of The O'Neill in 1212; Drumliff, where Godfrey O'Donnell conquered the allied armies of the Viceroy and Fitzgerald; Kilmainham and Killechin; Knockvoe, where the Sassenah's superior numbers defeated our dauntless native forces; and Monabraheer, where the defeat of Knockvoe was grandly avenged.

SECOND SOLDIER: Ay; grandly avenged, as you rightly say. Your mentioning of those battles makes me long to be engaged in one.

FIRST SOLDIER: And I too. When they called us the "Fighting Race" they made no mistake. We're born soldiers, every one of us; and when we haven't an opportunity of fighting the common enemy we fight a little amongst ourselves, just to keep in practice.

SECOND SOLDIER: I hope we'll soon get a chance to have a whack at the Sassenah.

FIRST SOLDIER: So do I, with all my heart.

[EXEUNT]

[Enter Jerry, a bagpiper. He looks around as if seeking somebody.]

BAGPIPER: What's keeping my two fellow-artists? I

thought I was a little late, but I find I am the first at the rendyvoos.

[*Looking to the right.*]

A fine castle he has indeed, The O'Byrne, the young chief who got married this morning. I wish them joy all their lives, which I hope will be long ones. I'll play a tune to pass away the time till my colleagues come.

[Sits down on rustic seat and plays a jig. If the audience applauds at the end, he says]:
Oh! wait till by-and-bye, when we all play together. Ah, here's one of them.

[*Enter, MIKE, a Harpist.*]

HARPIST: So you're here already, Jerry?

JERRY: What's the use of asking me such a question as that? Don't you see I'm here?

HARPIST: You're always ready with an answer, Jerry.

JERRY: What did the Lord give me a tongue for?

HARPIST: Did yeh hear the latest news?

JERRY: About what, Mike?

HARPIST: I'm told that all the clans are going to be united at last.

JERRY: That's good news, if it's true. Is there any special reason?

MIKE: Special reason! Why, there's every reason why they should be united. How can we ever beat the Sassenah if we're quarrelling among ourselves all the time?

JERRY: True for yeh, Mike. It's time they were driven out of the country. Talking about the Sassenah, did yeh hear what happened to Patcy Brogan's Sassenah landlord in the County Dublin?

MIKE: I didn't.

JERRY: The very day he evicted Patey and his family and took possession of his farm, he fell sick, and I hear he's getting worse all the time.

MIKE: The devil's skewer to him! Here's Barney Donovan with his fiddle.

[*Enter BARNEY, a Fiddler.*]

JERRY: Late as usual, Barney, for our rehearsal. It'll soon be time to go into the castle.

BARNEY: It wasn't my fault, I tell you. I met Tim Hoolahin and his colleen; and he begged of me, like a cripple at a cross-roads, to play them a dancing-tune. And she said to me: "Ah! Barney, do." And how could I refuse her, with that sweet voice and coaxing look of hers that would soften the heart of an anchorite?

JERRY: Did anybody tell yeh how Tim's grandmother won a gold coin by her ready wit the other day?

MIKE: No.

BARNEY: I didn't hear of it.

JERRY: They're so poor, yeh know, after so much sickness in the family and a bad crop, that she sits in a chair in the road on fine days, and offers to pray that the good wishes of people passing by may be granted, if they give her a little alms. That close-fisted Jim McMullen and his wife were passing. They got married a few weeks ago, you know. The woman beckoned to them, and they went over to her and asked her what she wanted. She told them. Miserly Jim, who's as crooked as a dog's hind leg, bad cess to him! tried to avoid giving her a little money, although his wife urged him. He's a bit clever, you know; and so he says: "How could I

have a wish to make? Am'n't I married to Kathleen, and so am the happiest man in the world?" She was more than his match. She answered him right away: "But could yeh not wish to be always as happy as y'are now?" That fixed him. He opened his purse, and as there happened to be nothing there but gold coins, that he had just taken out of the bank, he gave her one of them.

BARNEY: Did you ever hear how the Irish jig was originated, and where?

THE OTHERS: No.

BARNEY: In the Garden of Eden.

JERRY: Whisht, you omadhawn; how could the Irish jig have been invented in Paradise?

BARNEY: I'll tell yeh. As soon as Adam saw Ève he felt interested in her, and no wonder; for she was a pretty colleen, by all accounts. He smiled at her, and she smiled back at him. Then they stepped away from each other a little, to have a good look at each other. They fell in love with each other right away. Then they kissed each other. No; I'm wrong: He kissed her and she returned the compliment; and to show how happy they were they danced fornist each other, in jig style. And that's when and where the Irish jig began.

MIKE: That beats all.

JERRY: Now that we're all here, let's proceed with our practice.

[They play several tunes.]

JERRY: They may be ready for us now. Let us not wait to be called. Come on.

[As they are going off PHELIM, one of The O'Byrne's soldiers, enters.]