



The Last Prince of Ireland

Morgan Llywelyn

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The history of Ireland is studded with tragedies, but none is more poignant, or more decisive, than the battle of Kinsale. There the Gaelic nobility who held sway over Ireland for two thousand years were finally and resolutely crushed by the English invaders. There would follow four hundred years of English domination.

The Last Prince is Donal Cam O'Sullivan, still determined after the battle not to surrender his homeland. He flees with his clan toward an inland stronghold, as the Gaelic nation is ripped apart not only by war but by the seed of betrayal planted by the English, whose powerful bribes turn brother against brother. The awesome saga of Donal Cam and his clan's winter journey is a powerful vision of honor and betrayal, pride and desperation. Morgan Llywelyn captures the heart of the Irish struggle to survive.

The Last Prince of Ireland Details

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Author : Morgan Llywelyn

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From Reader Review The Last Prince of Ireland for online ebook

Katy M says

Not my favorite Morgan Llewellyn book. It got really good towards the end, but I just felt like it was dragging in the middle. However, that may have been the point, as of course, the "refugees" would have felt that way, too--that it was just dragging on and never ending.

I did like most of the characters. Donal Cam O'Sullivan was a very human hero. He wasn't perfect, made some mistakes, and got some people killed along the way. That's a realistic hero.

I even found some of the villains to be moderately likeable and not too one dimensional.

Elizabeth says

Anyone who's been reading this blog for awhile knows that I've got a penchant for history. My grandfather was a professor of history, my sister is a history teacher, my father was a history buff, and my favorite classes in school were always history. In the American school system, we usually focus on the "usual" docket of historical events, meaning European history and American history, with a sprinkling of ancient history thrown in. But what about those parts of the world that we've completely passed over? Those are my passion, my curiosity, my real love of history-- there are so many stories out there, each more fraught with passion and fear than the last. It is our privilege and our duty to learn and share them, to gain a fuller understanding of this wonderful world we live in.

But enough of my ranting, and on to the book of the day-- The Last Prince of Ireland, by Morgan Llywelyn (pronounced a bit like hly-WE-lin).

Based in Ireland during the end of the Elizabethan era, this book follows the journey of Donal Cam O'Sullivan and his thousand followers on their long, hungry, cold march out of the district of Munster, fleeing the wrath of his former friends and kinsmen. Although it takes place over just fifteen days (each chapter covers one day), the story seems much longer than that-- more like a slow fall into ruin and decay. Each day, the ragged survivors lose more friends, more animals, more dignity and more hope, and we can't help but wonder if it would be more of a mercy to let them just give in somewhere along the way. Donal Cam, the commander of his bedraggled and wretched army, wonders the same while struggling to lead them to life.

And yet, we see hope growing between the cracks of despair. From the earliest pages we see a lovestruck Niall spy Maire Ni Driscoll and attempt to win her heart with kindness rather than bravado, even in the depths of starvation and fear. Joan Ni Sweney and her husband, Dermot O'Sullivan, provide a wry sense of humor and determination, struggling onward and depending on one another more and more as their provisions and strength run out. And Orla Ni Donoghue, a strong woman married to Rory O'Sullivan, struggles with the past and her faith as she fights for life and fierce loyalty to her leader.

Although the novel is protracted and somewhat basic in its choice of words, the burning passion of the writer

is obvious. He sees Ireland itself in these pathetic survivors, relics of a noble and strong past being exterminated by the betrayal of the modern world. This is the time when Ireland finally succumbs to the rule of the expanding British, whose influence will change and shape Irish culture for the next four hundred years. Llywelyn, while recognizing this force, clearly believes that there is a deep individuality and strength within the Irish people that cannot be extinguished by oppression.

This, too, can be extended to the human soul in general. The factual march of Donal Cam and his survivors is a tribute to that, but Llywelyn's narrative of the horrific suffering and losses of those people in their struggle for that most basic of human rights-- freedom-- is heart wrenching. As the readers, we find ourselves growing more and more attached to characters we know are considered traitors and are sentenced to death, as if that bright glimmer of light just before it goes out is the most beautiful thing that a person can ever be. And despite the fact that they are bony, dirty, and desperate, these people are beautiful, if only for the sheer strength of will that carries them forward.

The whole novel feels like a slow decline into ruin, which may be intentional, but definitely detracts from the book's readability. There is no clear climax, only a long, drawn-out journey to the end. While the story is character-based, this can only carry on to a certain extent before it becomes dry and-- dare I say it?-- boring. Every tale needs some sort of arc, some sort of rising action, and while this one doesn't lack for battle scenes, it just seems like disaster after disaster before long.

But in the end, *The Last Prince of Ireland* is still a tale that needs to be told and understood in its fullest, for the true tragedy it is-- a betrayal of trust, and a shift in patriotism. Most of the princes of the island gave up in order to save their houses, which seems pathetic and selfish, but the motives are understandable. While practically foolish, Donal Cam's protest and subsequent rebellion are noble and contain a spirit of pride; we treasure that kind of national pride and look for it in our leaders, which makes Donal Cam a truly full, admirable, nearly tangible character.

Not exactly a best seller or common, I pulled this book off the shelf by pure happenstance and enjoyed it-- it's not a long read at 364 pages. It's actually fairly difficult to find on Amazon, but if you live in a city with a good library, they should have it. You can get a copy from Amazon for \$15.00, but the next lowest price was nearly \$40. Go figure on obscure books.

History is vital to understanding the present, even if it is obscure history. Every story weaves together to make the present, which makes it vital to appreciate the past before we move toward the future.

Elisabeth says

An astounding but sad story, like much of Ireland's history with England.

David A. Carey says

This was the longest book I ever read. I do not mean the longest word wise or hard to read. Simply, I never really got into the story. I just read page after page, chapter after chapter but never really enjoyed it. Just enough interest to keep reading and finally, finally, I was done with it.

Mark Montgomery says

For Interested in Irish History this book is for You! Donal Cam O'Sullivan is the Last Prince determined not surrender after a battle, he flees north with his Clan. A Well written Novel with rich cultural History!

Tom says

I liked this book much more than I thought I would. I had almost given up on Morgan Llywelyn, but she kind of redeemed herself with this one. This book follows the travails of a retreating army across the entire expanse of Ireland in the 1600's. From the realistic motives of the characters, to the skirmishes, it was very believable and drew me in. Recommended for those that already have some background in Ireland's history.

Maggie McClain says

I just love her books, they are fast reading and the history is just fastinating.

Julie says

Having a hard time getting into this one, hopefully I will be able to finish it.

Laura Caine says

A fascinating story about the infamous Brian Boru of Ireland. Love, adventure, war & tragedy. Difficult to put down, even when the story came to an end!

Gearóid O'Connor says

An excellent if slightly romantic view of Donal Cam O'Sullivan Bere's heroic march from West Cork to Leitrim against over whelming odds.

Elaine Coupler says

The Last Prince of Ireland by Morgan Llywelyn is a book which elicits anger, frustration and tears in the reader as it tells in gruesome detail the story of the flight of the last Gaelic prince to escape the English in 1601. He starts the escape with 1000 followers and helplessly watches as that number dwindle because of

attacks, freezing cold, weariness, illness and many other ills. When the last of them finally reach safety at O'Rourke's castle, the reader has, once again, a softness in the heart for those who must always suffer under an aggressor's tyranny. This is an excellent saga even though it does not end particularly happily. Reality reigns.

Wendy says

I had no idea!

Kenneth says

This dark book explores both the most base and noble aspects of human nature. It tells the story of Donal Cam O'Sullivan's terrible march of escape after the disastrous battle of Kinsale in 1601/02. It is amazing that, in the face of complete despair and the betrayals of their countrymen, the survivors managed to retain enough hope to continue their trek.

At times, the PoVs of different characters bleed into each other, which is consistently confusing. But the story is powerful enough to overcome this.

Ben Norton says

Superb. This book is the very pinnacle of historical fiction.

Megan says

Not my favorite of her works. The subject was a 15 day march by the army of Munster and their civilian followers. The march and ensuing battles take up the majority of the story leaving little room for interpersonal relationships.
