



CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

THE DOOM OF WARNHAM.

CHAPTER I.

Eighty years ago there was many a demesne in Ireland that, circled around with glade, with woodland, with lake and grassy sweeps, with mansions and princely halls, belonged to men whose very names have passed away from the land where they were once a power.

No one resides in that princely mansion, although its halls and dormitories, its offices and stables, could well accommodate a royal retinue, and house man and beast of a gallant train.

Yet it was to the gate-lodge at the entrance of this lonely carriage-drive that, late in an October night eight years ago, there came a man leading a horse by the bridle.

He looked around him, as if thinking what to do. His eye fell upon the horse, whose head was drooping, and which he could feel shivering with the cold and rain.

The man stooped and lifting up a splinter of stone, stood a little distance from the gate, and flung it, endeavoring to reach the window with the blow.

'It's Jemmy the huntsman!' said he, as if in reply to some observation from some one in the lodge.

'Why didn't ye come home earlier, Jemmy?' said he, as he proceeded leisurely to unlock the gate.

'Why didn't ye open the gate, an' I wouldn't?' was the fierce reply of the other; 'but I don't want to be losing my time talking to you now.'

'Don't be in such a hurry, man; you're time enough,' answered the other, walking into the lodge leisurely, from whence he seemed to have no great desire to emerge.

'Give me the light, man, an' don't keep me here all night!' roared the man whom we see addressed as Jemmy the huntsman.

'Here it is, Jemmy McCabe; here it is,' said the other; 'fair an' easy goes far in a day, where foul an' saucy never makes a step.'

'Hugh Dalton, mind your business, and I'll take care of mine,' said the huntsman, taking the lantern from the lodge-keeper.

As the man and his horse went onward the darkness became yet more dense, and the storm blew so strong against them, that their steps became slower.

Struggling along, they had passed for some time, when a faint and distant sound, like a bugle note afar off, swept by on the wind.

A flash of lightning at this moment—and in this unusual season of the year for its appearance

—for a brief interval brightened up all the vista; and so intense was its brightness, that the shadows of the trees fell across the avenue as though the noonday sun had cast them upon it.

'May the Lord keep us!' exclaimed the huntsman, in accents that betrayed agitation.

CHAPTER II.

It was on this same night, but earlier than the occurrence of the incidents we have related, that a caleche, travel-stained and dripping, drove up to the door of the Warnham Arms tavern.

'Give me some brandy,' was the reply of the new comer.

The dismissed postillion, though the rain was coming faster and the storm beginning, remounted his horse and drove away.

The stranger turned from the door where he held this brief colloquy, and approached the bar.

'Half fill it, man!—you will be paid for it.'

ing with the directions given him. 'Shall we prepare a bed for you, sir, and get in your luggage?'

'No, sir! I have no luggage, and I will not sleep here,' was the curt reply, as the stranger put the glass to his lips, and drained it at a draught.

'Is there a new road to Warnham Castle,' he asked; 'or is there any change in the old one?'

'There is no change,' was the answer.

'That is a mercy,' said the stranger, buttoning his coat around him, and walking out amidst the darkness into the gloom of the rising storm.

'Well, said the host, after a gaze of wonderment toward the open door, and in answer to the general inquiries as to who the stranger might be,

'What a change there is over that place!' chimed-in a voice from the group around the fire.

'I know no more about his lordship,' said the host; 'than you do.'

'Say! nothing; I could say nothing. He wasn't a man to be trifled with when he wanted any thing done.'

'Oh, yes,' replied the host; 'all great families have some legend following their name; and,' he said, with a touch of pride,

'I never heard that legend rightly,' pursued the interrogator; 'what is it?'

'Well, it does not want many words to tell it,' said the host of the Warnham Arms; 'for it is all printed in a book in the library of the castle.'

'Second, you mean,' said the speaker who had forced the tale from the host.

'Well, Second—yes, to be sure, Henry the Second. One of the barons that came to Ireland was Ralph, Baron de Warnham.'

'Half fill it, man!—you will be paid for it.'

'I don't fear that, sir,' said the host, complying with the directions given him.

'No, sir! I have no luggage, and I will not sleep here,' was the curt reply, as the stranger put the glass to his lips, and drained it at a draught.

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land, he received vast estates there. He was a fierce fighter in war, and a grasping man in peace, and profited by both.

'Fortune wavered for a while, but like a jade she deserted him at last. Mauor after manor, lordship after lordship, fled with her, and 'wicked Ralph' found himself at last with only his sword as his seignory.

'Oh, there was,' answered the host, shaking his head; 'but the dead ought to be let rest, and especially when the absent can't defend themselves.'

'That's a strange story,' said his interrogator, 'about the Ghost's Hunt.'

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