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For the *Hearthstone*,
DREAMLAND.

BY J. A. PHILLIPS.

Oh, call me not back to my earthly abode,
From roaming through dreamland with those that I
love;
Oh, break not the spell, by which shadowy, thread
I was joined with the loved ones, the absent, and
dead.

I dreamt of my boyhood, so joyous and free,
Ere the cares of the world had grown heavy on me;
Forgot was my sorrow, unhooded my pain,
In the bright sunny dream of my boyhood again.

I dreamt of my mother, so gentle and kind;
My sister, whose light laugh threw oars to the wind;
My father's fond smile, and my brother's loud cheer;
Now where are the loved ones? Sad solo sigh—
"Where?"

From the home of my childhood I have faded away.
A stranger and exile I wander to day;
So let me roam on in the shadowy sphere,
And call me not back to the world and its care.

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IN AFTER-YEARS; OR, FROM DEATH TO LIFE.

BY MRS. ALEXANDER ROSS.

CHAPTER VIII.

A year, a long and weary year, had passed since the night of Sir Robert's death. Agnes and Margaret Cuninghame sat in their half-lit chamber, clasping each other's hands as if they would thus assure themselves they were yet together; they had so often been threatened with separation, that it had become their greatest dread; they talked of Arthur Lindsay, and the poor girls, to whom sorrow was now familiar as a household word, wondered if he was dead; they had neither seen or heard of him since the first evening, Sir Richard Cuninghame came to blight their young lives; they never for an instant doubted either his love or truth, their faith in him knew neither change or wavering; they knew not that the gate-keeper, while there still was a gate-keeper, had strict orders to prevent his entering the Castle grounds, and now that the gate was fast locked, and chain barred and the key kept by Sir Richard himself, there was no chance for any one to enter, and if he could have forced his way in by force or guile, how was he to find his love, high up in one of the upper chambers of the north tower?

The beautiful suite of rooms appropriated to their use by their father, had been taken from them long before, and a room with scanty furniture, and bare floor and walls, given them as a sleeping place in the north tower, a room which in their father's lifetime they would not have asked their maid to occupy.

Their maid had long since been dismissed, and together with her went all whom Sir Richard considered superfluous servants, among whom was Adam.

There was now a Lady in Haddon Castle; a woman who had married Sir Richard for his gold, and the title he could give her, one who in her early home, had never seen other servant than a maid of all work, and considered herself with two women servants and one man, her fine rooms shut up half the time, and no visitors except her mother or sisters, the best waited on, and greatest lady in all the land.

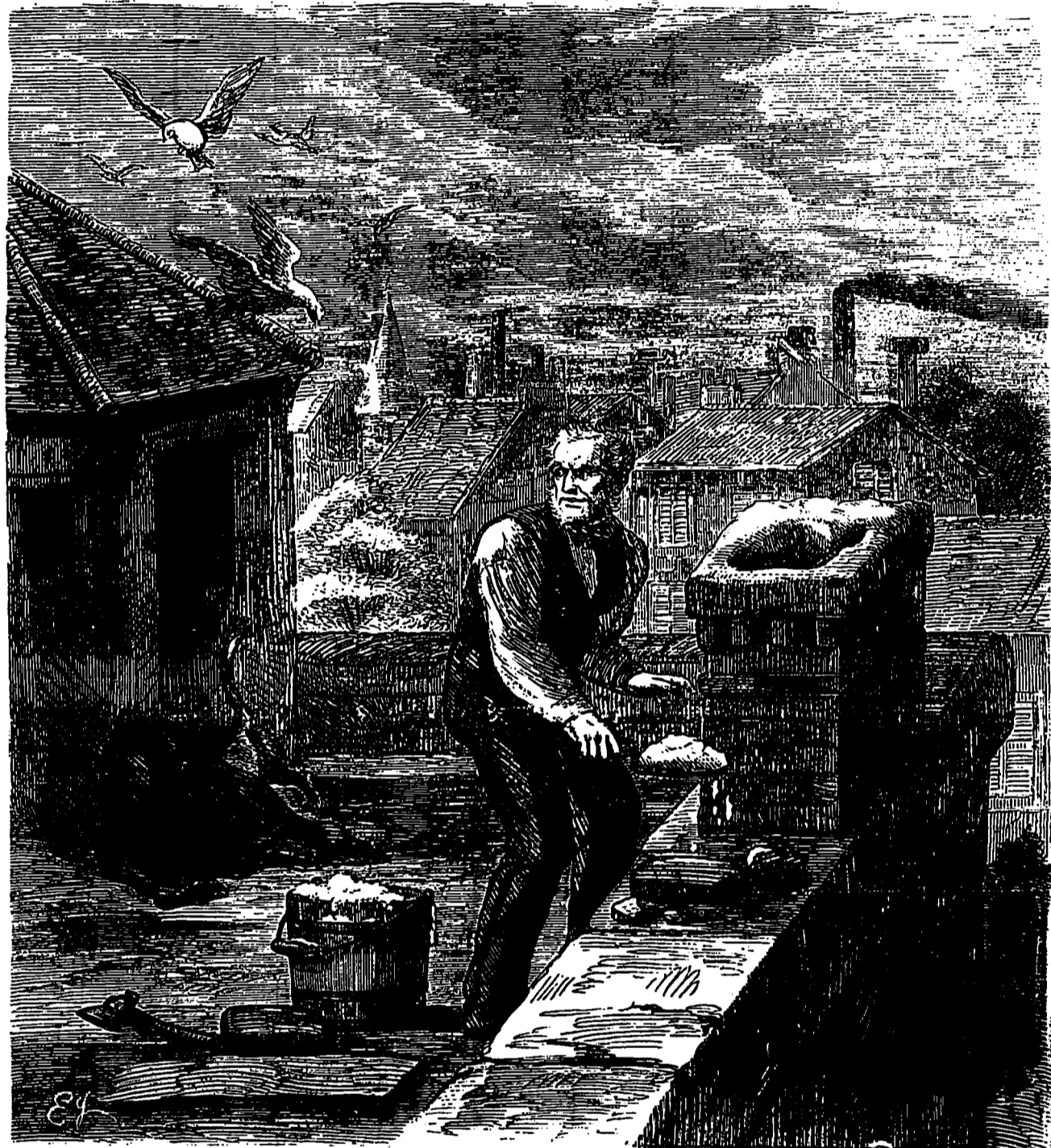
She was a large coarse-looking woman, strong and healthy; it was for those last qualities, Sir Richard sought and wooed her. "Happy is the wooing, that's not long of doing," says the proverb; Sir Richard's wooing and marriage, was begun and ended in two days.

She hated the twin girls; in the first place, she could not bear the idea of being even a step-grandmother; in the next place their high bred beauty was a constant source of annoyance, "ugly, washed out, discontented like things," she called them, but she could not conceal from herself that the brick dust cheek she saw in her mirror, would stand a bad chance of admiration if seen beside the rose-leaf of theirs; they were idlers too in her eyes, they could neither "make nor mend," as she expressed it "what was fit for a Christian to wear," and when they made themselves "scarce" another of her elegant expressions, she felt at her ease, which she never did in their presence.

"I hate those girls with their great calf-like eyes," she would say to her mother, "I cannot call my soul my own, when they are in the room, the one looking so meek and mild, and the other like the Queen of Sheba."

"They are very quiet and inoffensive, Charlotte," said her mother, who sincerely pitied the poor girls, whom she saw from day to day, passing their young lives in a state of unhappiness, little removed from dumbness, "and I felt quite sorry for poor Miss Margaret, when you would not let her touch the baby; she looked so hurt."

"I dreamy she did," replied the young mother, who was really in horror, lest either of the twins should come near enough to her young son to touch him; "but I am very sure, they would both be glad enough to hear he was dead to-night, I judge others by myself, and I am sure I would not like any one who came to take the bread out of my mouth, as



A FIENDISH ACT.

he has done to them; I wish Sir Richard would get rid of them, but there is no use speaking to him about that, I believe he has made up his mind they will live and die here."

She was right there; Sir Richard had determined that the two girls should never leave Haddon Castle except on a pier, and were it not the fear of his fellow men that held him in check, they would have slept beside their father, instead of daily being an offense to his eyes; at times he was tempted to immerse them in the sea, but he would do so, this would do him to Haddon, he must remain at home to be their feeder, and he had been so long confined to a narrow space, that liberty was doubly dear to him; besides, chance had revealed to him the way to open the cage, but he could not possibly find the spring by which to shut it, neither could he shut the door or the sliding panel entering into the Armory, the door of which last, alone could be shut and locked.

Another motive, on the second visit he made to the eastern tower, he found the lantern the girls had dropped there the night of their father's death; he knew from Adam's account of his master's illness, and death bed, that the great destroyer had set his seal on each limb of Robert Cuninghame, ere he himself had made his escape; therefore the lantern must have been left by another, who now possessed the secret of the tower, and at any time that man might walk in accompanied by the minions of the law, and demanding to see the girls walk straight to their hiding place in the eastern tower; he must not risk such a possibility.

He would gladly do them unto death by some slow, sure means, which would leave no trace behind, except the look of suffering and sorrow, which he hoped both their young faces would express in the fullest sense, when he would show their dead bodies to Lady Hamilton, and in presence of her dead, tell her how her son was lost and found, and how his children were tortured according to law; and all the fruits of the seed she had sown.

The evening was darkening into night, and

the wind seemed to shriek, as it came in gusty eddies round the old Castle, walling in their ears, and reminding them of the night of their father's death.

They spoke of their father, the love they bore him, his affection and kindness, which now by contrast seemed angelic, the happiness they had known until death came to bring in his train such weariness and woe for them.

A wild gust of wind tore round the tower, shaking the old window casement in its frame, as if it would force its way inside, the girls clung to each other in the darkness, speaking of the night they visited the cage chamber, and wishing (fruitless wish) they had not been sent, and then their father, with them beside him, might have lived and been with them still.

Just as that wild wind shook and rattled the casement, the door of their room was silently opened, and a figure with stealthy foot, entered amid the darkness.

The girls still spoke of the eastern tower and its iron cage, wondering how Sir Richard could have opened the iron gate, and with the shut panel, how he could have made his escape.

Agnes put her arm round her sisters' waist, and leading her to the window, they stood thus for some minutes looking out into the wild night, the moon was struggling through dark misty clouds, its fitful light sufficing only to show the tempest which was struggling in the air, and at times for an instant to light up the window, and show to each sister the terrified, marble white face of the other.

"Would to God," said Agnes clasping her sister close round the waist as she spoke, "we could devise some means of escape from this desolate home; something seems to whisper to me day and night, that that terrible man, means to keep us here till we die; Oh! that we had died at the moment we lost the lantern in the tower, we should then have been happy with papa in the heavens, and escaped the almost daily torment we have suffered since."

A heavy hand was laid on the shoulder of

each of the girls, they shrieked with horror as looking round they saw amid the darkness, a gray head with fierce eyes of hate, staring down upon their upturned faces.

The wind swept round and round the old Castle, at times groaning like a sick spirit, with wild whirl and rush, tearing along; the stately trees, the growth of centuries, bending like saplings before the fury of the hurricane; the night accorded well, with the troubled spirit of the Castle's Lord, as descending the broad staircase, he hastily crossed the hall and opening the lower drawing room, strode up and down its length with unequal steps, commanding with himself on the discovery he had made.

"These two girls then" he inwardly cogitated "were the trusty conductors, with whom Robert Cuninghame deposited the secret of his father's prison."

They it was who left the lantern which so often stared him in the face sleeping and waking, silently telling that another knew the story of eighteen years, which miser as he was, he would have given thousands of pounds to bury fathoms deep in the bottom of the sea.

Richard Cuninghame had been a drunkard and gambler for many long years, he was also covetous and miserly, but all his other passions bent low before his pride, and this was wounded to the death, when he thought of the lifetime he had passed on the bare floor in his own Castle; a captive to the man whom he had stolen in his childhood, and treated worse than a slave, or a dog in his boyhood and youth; and now the children of this man were aware of his disgrace, and might at any time blazon it round the country. He ground his teeth and stamped with rage at the very thought, his neck and face livid purple; they must be quieted, but how with safety to himself? aye, that was the question; poison, a dagger, a pistol all effluent, but the danger to himself so great, that neither could be thought of for a moment. He still walked the length and breadth of the room, at times grinding his teeth and clenching his hands in his mad rage, at

times sitting with folded arms looking at the storm, feeling himself helpless as "a leaf tossed by the wind"; the night was wearing into the gray morning, the storm dying away and away, out over the sea, its bursts of fury subdued, and growling at intervals like a lion returning to his lair; Sir Richard sat looking at the streak of light as it struggled with the heavy, rain-laden clouds to rise above the horizon.

The evil one, who whispereth to the souls of those who work his will; passed by, and stayed his flight for one moment, to whisper in the ear of his despairing servant; Sir Richard drew a long breath, a grim smile played around his thin lips, and relaxed his hard cheek.

"Just the thing, stupid not to think of it before." His satisfaction forming itself into words, and giving voice to his thoughts; he started to his feet, he longed to be at work, but the gray dawn told him he had yet many hours to wait, and throwing himself on one of the sofa's, he tried to obtain rest for his wearied body, while his guilty soul strayed abroad, working beforehand the foul deed which was to employ his waking hours.

The sun rose fair and beautiful, his rays given back from every drop of dew, as they hung in millions on each blade of grass and mossy spray.

Sir Richard stood on the stone steps in front of his Castle door surveying the wreck the storm of the past-night had made, more than one of the stately beeches which for centuries had adorned the park, were snapt in twain, their long branches trailing on the ground, their brown leaves glistening in the bright sunshine, shewing in fine contrast to the wet green grass they lay on. One great elm in front of the house, had been with the force of the tempest torn up by the roots, and now lay prostrate, its roots pointing to the sky.

"Curse the wind!" exclaimed the wrathful man as he looked on the havoc the storm had left to mark the line of its march.

Just at the same moment, upon the pine clad hills three miles from Haddon, Adam, the discarded servant who had dwelt in the Castle for fifty years, stood at the door of the shepherds but which now sheltered his aged limbs, and looked on a scene of equal devastation, the huge branches and treetops of the first-growth thickly around, while several of the hardy denizens of the forest had been torn from the rocky bed, on which they had made their home.

As the old man looked around, a feeling of awe and wonder arose in his soul at the scene of desolation he beheld; and lifting up his highland bonnet from his head, in reverence, he exclaimed:

"So sendeth He the whirlwind; praise to the Lord who hath kept me while I slept."

Sir Richard's first act, was to despatch his only man servant with a message to the doctor in the neighbouring town, a distance of twenty miles, desiring him to let the horse rest for hours before his return.

He next sought his wife, and desired her frame some excuse for sending out the cook on an errand which would occupy her for the day; and immediately on her departure, to bring the chamber maid into her own apartments, there to keep her employed until he signified she might pursue her usual occupations; this was the more easily accomplished, as the baby boy had been sick and fretful during the past night, and the tired mother wanted rest.

Sir Richard waited with impatience, until all fear of his actions being watched and noted was gone; in the whole pleasure ground no human being but himself was abroad.

He now sought the coach house, which had been in the hands of the plasterer for repair a few days previous, and possessing himself of a bucket full of plaster, and a trowel, he took his way to the top of the north tower, where disengaging a part of the lead roofing, he carefully spread it on the top of the chimney, and then proceeded to plaster it round, so that no foul air could escape, no pure air enter.

This accomplished, he sought the door of the room where the twins slept, and which he had carefully locked the previous evening.

He listened, all was still, save the heavy breathing of the girls, which told they still slept; a grim smile passed over his sinister face, as with fiendish glee he thought of the long weary hours, of choking, fainting and pain, endured over and over again, his innocent victims must suffer ere death came to set them free. He had provided himself with materials, and he now proceeded to carefully close up each passage to the air which the top, bottom, or sides of the door might afford, and having completed the work to his entire satisfaction, another grim smile of approval, spread from his guilty soul to his fiendish face; verily he was obeying the behest given him, and doing his master's work well.

This last work had occupied more time, and given him more trouble than he anticipated; the sun was high in the heavens ere he had finished his hellish employment; the girls were stirring for some time back, they tried to open the door, they spoke to each other, but he had stopped every crevice, it was impossible to distinguish a word they said; a loud crash told him they had broken the window, they were suffering for want of air, and he laughed, a snoring fiendish laugh at the impotency of all their efforts to escape the doom so surely theirs.

He now resumed the trowel and plaster bucket he had formerly employed on the chimney top, and with these he sought the outer