

THE LITTLE OLD SECRETARY

(CONTINUED.)

"Yes," replied her companion, "you must hear the end now, and the sooner the better. Macdonald"—he laid a strange emphasis on the name—"was taken back to his quarters, and the Catholic priest came and spent those awful hours of the night alone with him. At dawn they led him out to die; led him to the spot beside the yawning grave already prepared to receive his corpse. The whole regiment was drawn up in open square to witness his execution, while opposite the doomed man a line of a dozen men, taken from his own company, stood with carbines in their hands, awaiting only the word of command to pour a volley of bullets into his breast. As he raised his eyes and saw their well-known faces, he gave them gravely and calmly a military salute. It was the completion of his acts of Christian forgiveness. The unhappy Cochrane, who was compelled to be present, sat on horseback with averted eyes and head sunk on his chest. The moment had now arrived. The guards who had led him to the ground and the priest, who up to this time had been whispering to him holy words of prayer, withdrew; while the sergeant who had charge of the execution approached him to bandage his eyes. Poor Macdonald raised his hand in deprecation. "May I not be spared this indignity?" he pleaded, gently; "I am no coward." He submitted quietly, however, making no resistance, though his pale, calm face crimsoned as the sergeant, while performing the act, spoke a few words to him in a tone of voice too low for any one but himself to hear.

The signal was given—the men fired—and Macdonald fell. The sergeant and one private laid him in the grave prepared for him, and covered him with his military cloak. A moment afterwards the bugles sounded the signal of preparation for an immediate advance; the regiment was marched back to its quarters in the camp, and all was bustle and excitement. None were left by the solitary grave but the sergeant and the soldier he had selected to assist him in the interment.

"This was all that transpired," said Mr. Everard, looking up at Kathleen, who was sitting with her face buried in her hands, "but I know," he continued with a great certainty in his voice, "I know by that most trusty of witnesses, the lips of a dying man, that Macdonald was not killed, but that friendly hands drew him from that grave and secured his escape.

Kathleen raised her head. "A low, shuddering 'Oh!' burst from her pale lips; it was an exclamation of something like relief. "How could he possibly have escaped death?" she asked, breathlessly.

"I do not know," replied Mr. Everard. "I did not wish to seek or know more than my dying informant thought fit to tell me. And it must never be known," he continued very emphatically, "so as to be brought against those warm-hearted fellows who risked so much to save their officer. It is a thing which has probably never happened before, nor will ever happen again in the British army. I do not suppose that such a thing could have been even attempted, but from the circumstance that the detachment was under immediate orders to march; under cover of the excitement and hurry it was just possible, and it succeeded. How the sergeant managed it, however, I cannot tell. I have heard he was of the same nationality as the unhappy youth; and I

suppose his old heart had been touched to the quick by the noble manner in which the young fellow had met his doom. No doubt he picked his men, amongst whom Macdonald was enthusiastically beloved, while I fear my nephew was as heartily disliked. That Cochrane was much too heart-stricken to be likely to make any investigation could be seen by any one; while I suppose it was no secret in the regiment that the General would have given his eyes to save so promising a young officer, if he could have done it without sacrificing military discipline. Anyhow they risked it. Whether all the men employed were in the secret, I cannot tell; probably they were not. Of course the carbines aimed at the prisoner must have had the bullet withdrawn—by whose hand we do not know; while some must have retained their bullets, in order that the sound of mere powder-firing might not betray them; and these must have been directed wide of the mark. It was a terrible risk—risking more than disgrace. Lyttelton is a stern disciplinarian. If he had been compelled to know the fact, I believe he would have had those men shot too. But the secret was well kept. Even my unhappy nephew was left to his agonies of remorse. I suppose, as an earthquake will sometimes completely change the face of nature, so a grief that shakes the heart to its very centre will often entirely change the character of the man who goes through it. It is so with my nephew. He had asked and obtained permission to visit the prisoner after he had received his sentence. What passed between them during that interview no one knew. But whatever Macdonald's parting words may have been they had a powerful effect upon Cochrane. He is noted now as the most considerate and kind-hearted of officers, and his men worship him.

"You will wonder why I have told you this secret history," continued Mr. Everard, looking at Kathleen with a grave smile; "the reason is that I have come to a point in which I want help, and I think your mother will be able, as I hope she will be willing, to render me that help. My nephew had unusual success in the campaign in Persia that followed soon after. He received the Victoria Cross, together with great praise for his brilliant services in leading a daring attack on the enemy which turned out successful, and a large share of prize money was awarded him. Now I have just received a letter from him asking me to spare no pains in hunting out the family of his brother-in-arms that he may send his prize money to them, as a tribute of respect to their son from a brother officer. It is in this search I want your mother's help, Kathleen."

Kathleen's tears found free vent now. She wept long and bitterly, but quite quietly. For some time Mr. Everard left her undisturbed, but when she began to grow calmer he turned to her and took both her hands in his own.

"My dear child," he said, very tenderly, "I am an old man and have known much trouble. Trust me with the whole history about your brother, and what it is that has roused in your mind the painful idea that now possesses it. I promise you that I will spare no pains to get at the truth, and at any rate to put you out of all suspense."

"Oh! I thank you," said Kathleen, eagerly. "Indeed, I should like to tell you. My parents would like it now, I am quite sure."

She clasped her hands together tightly, and looked up sadly into Mr. Everard's kind face.

"My poor brother! I must

tell you of his faults, for he committed many; yet, believe me, he had not a bad heart. He was always, as a boy, good and affectionate and dutiful to his parents, and so he continued when he first got his cadetship. His regiment was in Ireland then, not far from us, and we used to see him occasionally. How proud he was of his profession, and how happy; and how proud, dear mother and father were of him! But before long his regiment went to England, and unfortunately it was quartered for a long time near a large town. Then little by little a change seemed to come over him. His letters became more and more scarce, till at last he almost ceased to write at all, and he did not appear to care in the least about all our troubles at home.

"We had not heard from him for more than three months, when suddenly a letter came, telling us his regiment was ordered abroad, that he was coming to bid us good-bye, and would be at Glenmore that evening. It was just after that struggle with the famine that I told you of, when my father had been obliged to excuse many of his tenants from paying their rents, and had stripped himself of all his ready-money resources to keep his poor from dying of starvation. Well, my poor brother came; I feel sure he was very unhappy at heart, but he was proud and could not bear to confess how wrongly he had acted. Putting on outwardly a kind of reckless manner, he announced without any apparent contrition that, 'he was over head and ears in debt,' adding it was no fault of his, as of course he was obliged to live as his fellow-officers lived, while the allowance his father made him was so extremely small, it had been quite impossible to keep out of debt; and as he could not leave for India without settling with his creditors, no doubt his father would supply him with the necessary money."

"My poor father naturally fell hurt at the imputation of niggardliness implied in his speech. But he spoke gently to my brother, explaining to him that it was only with the greatest difficulty he had made him the allowance he had received. He reminded him of the warning he had given him when he entered the army, that his allowance was the utmost he would have the power of doing for him, and he referred to the calamities through which we had been passing, as having rendered him peculiarly unable at the present moment to meet his son's demand. Then Ewan broke out with a disrespectful speech, accusing his father of caring for strangers more than for his own son, and of wasting his substance foolishly on the poor, while he left his own flesh and blood to want. This taunt stung my father to the quick, and he spoke some very stern cutting words to Ewan about his disappointment in him; and told him that he should have no pleasure in owning him for a son, so long as the generous, unselfish spirit of his race was dead within his breast. At these words Ewan's fiery spirit blazed up, and exclaiming passionately that his father should never again be troubled by the sight of him, he rushed out of the house without bidding his mother or me good-bye, and sailed to India without a word of apology or farewell. The only news we have heard about him since we received from a private soldier who came back to Ireland invalided, and who had belonged to the Thirty-first, my brother's regiment. He told us that for some reason the destination of the Thirty-first had been altered and it remained at home, and that my brother had got leave to change into another regi-

ment that was on the point of sailing to India; but the soldier could not tell us the number of the regiment.

"This was the blow that crushed my father. It fell on the tenderest part of his heart and nearly broke it. Poor father, he blamed himself for having spoken harshly to Ewan; yet he really deserved it. When the creditors found that Ewan was gone, they sent in their bills to his father, and Ewan being still under age, his father was bound to pay them. In consequence of all this sorrow and anxiety, my poor father had a terrible attack on his lungs. He broke a blood vessel, and for some time was in danger. Then my mother wrote to Ewan, sending her letter through the War Office, but she got no answer. We have always had the idea that he may have assumed another name in order to get out of reach of his creditors.

"My father has been ill ever since. Mother dismissed all our servants but one, and we have economized in every possible way; but it is more than hopeless; we are ruined; and the sting of it is, that Ewan has done it. And now what is harassing my poor father into his grave, is that he has promised to sell McDermot's Hill—the place which has belonged to the McDermots for hundreds and hundreds of years—if the demands of the creditors cannot be met this midsummer. It is for Ewan's sake he so grieves to part with it; and oh! where is he? Tell me," she said, fixing beseeching eyes on Mr. Everard, "in such a case as you have described, what would become of a man who had escaped his sentence?"

"It would be a very painful life of concealment for some time," replied Mr. Everard, gently. Of course he would feel bound in all honor not to risk those who had rescued him. Probably, I should think, he would get on board some ship coming to Europe, and work his way home as a sailor."

"Life would be no great boon to Ewan under such conditions," said Kathleen slowly, as the dreariness of such an existence forced itself upon her mind. "Free among the dead—unable to claim name or position—with no past, no future. Oh! Mr. Everard," she exclaimed, pitiously, "they had almost better have let him die! And he had such a noble heart at the bottom. Till that unhappy winter we thought that he would have turned out one of the heroes of his race."

To be continued.

St. Patrick's Blessing.

A short time before St. Patrick died, he is said to have ascended a high mountain and blessed the whole island. A translator, some time ago, versified the ancient blessing thus:

Be Erin blessed! At evening hours, When sunset gilds her fragrant bowers; When whirlwinds howl, my blessings be, My generous Erin, still with thee, To thee be every blessing given From a favoring sky by bounteous heaven; Be blessings on thy bashful maids, Be blessings on thy battle blades, Blessed be the fisher tribes that roam The black 'ning surge and whit'ning foam; Oh! blessed be thy stormy night, And blessings on thy mornings bright, Be blessings on thy castle towers, Be blessings on thy village bowers; My blessing on the waving corn, And every babe in Erin born; Bless be thy thunder's angry roar, And every wave that laps thy shore, And blessed be the smile serene Of sunshine on thy forests green; Where meadows spread and hillocks rise, Where lordly mountains kiss the skies, On every hamlet, vale and hill, My blessing be with Erin still, Oh! blessed be the rain and dew, And every breeze that visits you, And blessed be thy warriors tall, Thy chieftain's dun, thy abbot's hall; My blessings on thy matrons fair, Thy mineral treasures rich and rare; The flocks that bleat, the herds that low, The streams that warble as they flow, On every cottage, hall and hill, My blessings be with Erin still.

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The Facts

The second is his assumption of the identity of the dead, unacquainted with the fact that it is nevertheless a kind. It falls to that we have cases of identity was hood, finally his claim to be.

A single instance is of these spirits—their identity. Immense difficulties come it; but so of identity is still Conan Doyle means which causes him this "will to believe. Although it is really impersonate to persuade him of the kind. It is that the deception comes. In one many years the cated man, admitted in proof of the his experience of imparted by a President of the personally a high in his president Mediums are not cators? Are the proof that there the whole meaning fully thought of evidence in favor experience of the A spirit claiming intimately acquainted after many months and boasting a success by drawing sub-conscious mind. Indeed, the fact that the sub-conscious mind that these are probably accessible and quite beyond this aspect of the circumstance that intimate knowledge evidence of identity quainted he is aware too briefly judgment; but explanation in in the sources beings. I am proud of the subject proof of identity articles most of photography. ceased lads have But this is, as evidence of all. to be but mind and exteriorized intelligences.

This is available. Some very much in evidence in the New Year house well known materialisation of him. But I find that this difference Cardinal which published photographs in which ages—in one person, the peculiar mind-imagery I have in my mind had never visited a fairly good picture, for Sir Conan Doyle's photograph also is still living, I knew her years ago, a married woman. I not photograph taken from the Phantasmas of the where the critic

Space does not sufficient honor in favor utterly worthless mental and fat