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### THE LAST HEIR OF FERNEY—A LEGEND.

One Hugh Roe M'Mahon succeeded his brother, as Chief of Ferney, at the time that Elizabeth was queen of England. He was not only the natural heir of his brother, but he had a grant of the county from the English government; for the late chieftain had surrendered it to the queen, and been reinstated in his honors and possessions under the broad seal of England. Well, sir, on his brother's death, this Hugh thought he should go up to Dublin to have his title recognized; and so he did: but it turned out the most unfortunate journey he ever made, except, indeed, the journey back. He got plenty of hard usage at the castle, and very little satisfaction of any kind, till at last the Lord Deputy, one Sir William Fitzwilliams, spoke to him wonderful fair, and said that he would go down with him to Monaghan, and settle him in his inheritance himself. Of course, M'Mahon thought all was right, and expressed his great obligations to Sir William, and off they set to Monaghan; when the first thing the worthy Lord Deputy did, was to clap the baron into irons; and the next thing, after a sort of a sham trial, was to hang him up like a dog before his own door. That was the end of the M'Mahons as chieftains and men of power. Their county was confiscated of course, and their descendants left to wander the world, or depend, as it might be, on the charity of their own vassals. However, sir, it happened that after the wars of the Revolution, as they call it, there was a widow lady living in an humble little cottage, but most beautifully situated, just about a mile, I think, from where we are sitting at this moment. Her husband was the lineal descendant of the chieftains of Monaghan, but he had been killed in the wars, fighting for King James, and he left this lady and one boy poorly enough provided, as you may suppose.

The old castle of the M'Mahons was at this time in the possession of one Colonel Vaughan, who before the Revolution had been the brother officer and most intimate friend of Major M'Mahon; indeed they were so attached to each other, that there was a mutual understanding between them, that Vaughan's eldest daughter should become the wife of young M'Mahon. However, when the war broke out, Vaughan sided with the English party; but still, when all was over, he entertained a warm regard for the memory of his friend; and though the obstacles to the contemplated marriage seemed almost insurmountable, for young M'Mahon was of course a Catholic, and under the ban of the new laws; yet the colonel had him constantly at his house, and was even in hopes that he could, in the course of time, be induced to change his religion for the sake of the lady, and of the property of his ancestors, which he would in that case inherit with her. Vaughan had another daughter, and that was his whole family; but as they grew up there was not their equal for beauty in the whole country round. The eldest, however, was by far the loveliest. She had the heavenliest eyes, they say, that ever shone in a woman's head; and when poor M'Mahon would see her moving through the lighted ball-room, with her dark hair rolling down in rich waves like, to her waist, a sadness used to come over him, when he would think, that notwithstanding her own love and her father's regard for him, it was little better than a wild dream to think that he could ever possess the hand of his beautiful Sassenagh.

Well, sir, there was a cousin of M'Mahon's, one Neal Nugent, and from the time that they were both children they were more like brothers than cousins, though their dispositions were, in all respects, the very opposite. One was a proud, high-spirited fellow, loyal in his heart to the cause and religion for which his father perished; but Nugent, though he was brave, too, thought it a hardship to give up everything for the sake of religion, and be shut out from all chance of gaining either riches or honours, because he happened to be born a Catholic. He often hinted to M'Mahon that he'd be a fool to forfeit such a splendid alliance for any scruples he might have about the affairs of the other world; and his advice might have been more dangerous, only it was plain that it was for her rich domains, and not for the lady herself, that he would have had his cousin sell his faith. He was an ambitious young fellow, this Nugent; and he was a clever fellow, too; and so, when he was determined he would be a slave no longer, wasting away his youth and intellect among the hills of Ferney, but that he would make a name for himself in the world, and become one of the lords of the land where he was now trampled on and despised. The end of it was, sir, that he turned Protestant, got into the army, and sure enough, he did seem in the way of rising fast to honour and distinction. In the meantime, Mr. M'Mahon was still received at the castle in the character of Ellen's lover; but their intercourse became every day more painful and embarrassing. The colonel still entertained the hope that the young baron, as he called him, would yield to what might be almost considered as the necessity of his fate,

and remove the only obstacle that seemed to stand in the way of his worldly happiness; but Ellen knew him better, and she knew that not even for her would he abandon the religion of his fathers. At last the colonel thought it was time that there should be a full understanding on the subject; and one day he asked M'Mahon when he intended to conform, for that he saw no necessity for delaying the marriage any longer. This was a severe trial to poor M'Mahon: but he was prepared for it, and he told the colonel that conform he never would; and that if he must relinquish the hand of his daughter, he hoped that he might soon enjoy in another world the happiness that was lost to him for ever in this. The colonel was vexed, and disappointed; but he had to acknowledge, that though he had deceived himself, M'Mahon had never deceived him, nor by word or act given encouragement to the false hopes he had entertained; and though he was as proud a man as ever buckled on a sword, the tears fell from his eyes, as he wrung the hand of his young friend, and saw him ride out from the castle, which he never entered but once again. It was a lonely castle now to poor Ellen Vaughan. Her lover had often told her that it must come to this; for that although he was suffered to live in peace, he was, in all other respects, little better than a common outlaw; but yet, as they had known and loved each other so long, even since their childhood, indeed, he could never bear the thought of losing her; and he sometimes tried to persuade himself, that by entering into a foreign service, he might attain such rank as would compensate in some degree for the loss of her inheritance, which she must have sacrificed by marrying him. It was this vague hope that prevented him breaking off their intercourse long before; and he might have carried it into effect, only that his mother had no friend in the world but himself, and he could not, of course, abandon her; and now it was too late to think of entering on such a career. It was not long after this interview with Colonel Vaughan, that Nugent happened to be quartered down in this part of the country. He had now been three or four years in the army; and a fine looking young fellow he was; but he was one that didn't care very much for old times or old friendships; and when he found that it was all over between Ellen and his cousin, he thought he might do worse than propose for the heiress himself. He was now in high favour with the government, and had every prospect of rising in the world, so after a while the colonel consented to give him his daughter; and while the poor girl's heart was regularly breaking, she had to receive the addresses of a new lover, who knew at the time how she was devoted to his rival. At last the day was fixed for their marriage. Ellen and M'Mahon had never met from the day of his fatal interview with her father; and when they parted that day it was with the firm belief that they would never meet again. The night before the morning appointed for her unhappy marriage, the lady was sitting alone in her chamber. It was just such a night as this, wild and desolate; and there poor Ellen sat in a kind of abstracted reverie, "looking with idle grief on her white hands," when the door gently opened, and lifting her eyes, she saw her lover, wan and ghastly as a ghost, standing before her. She never shrieked nor spoke, but her lips turned as pale as ashes, and she kept gazing at him with her large dark eyes, as if she thought it really was his ghost come to claim her promised hand. At last M'Mahon came forward, and told her he was come to take his leave of her for ever; but then as they talked of old times, and thought of the future, all their feelings yielded to the love they had cherished through life; and Ellen that night left her father's castle to wander with her lover wherever fate might guide them. M'Mahon had left his horse in a grove at a little distance; and the servant, by whose means he had gained admission, joined them there in a few minutes with the lady's palfrey; and off they rode through storm and darkness as hard as their horses could lay a hoof to the earth. Their flight, however, was almost immediately discovered. Instantly the retainers were up and mounted, scouring the country in all directions; for no information could be procured as to the course which the fugitives had taken. It happened that Nugent was at the castle at the very time, arranging some matters with the colonel, and he had with him a very intimate friend who was to be groomsman on the following morning—an officer of high family, and connected with some of the greatest people in the country. He and Nugent were, of course, among the most active of the pursuers, but they took different routes; and as this gentleman was riding along the wild road that you and I travelled to-night, he heard the tramp of horses a little way before him; and so he pressed on, and got almost within pistol shot of M'Mahon, as he and the lady reached the stream you remember crossing. He had taken the precaution of slinging a bugle-horn across his shoulder, and when he first got sight of the fugitives he winded this to collect any of the pursuers that might be within hearing; and as he gained on M'Ma-

hon, he called on him to surrender, or that he would fire. There was no time for parleying then. They could hear at a distance the tramp of steeds dashing along the road. M'Mahon was on one side of the stream, and his pursuer just entering it on the other, when he wheeled round, and drawing a pistol from his belt, shot him dead. On M'Mahon and his lady rode; but where they rode to none could ever tell, for he knew all the wild by ways of the country, and he soon had his prize safe beyond the reach of his enemies. It was a night of hard riding; and when the horsemen gathered in before dawn of day to the castle, it was with the sorrowful tidings of the lady's loss and the death of a young and honorable gentleman. The circumstances of that night broke the old Colonel's heart. He never heard more of the being he had loved and prized above the earth; nor of the unfortunate companion of her fate. M'Mahon was outlawed of course; but though all possible measures were taken for his discovery and apprehension, both by the relatives of the young officer and the Sassenagh gentlemen of the country generally, who felt highly indignant at the idea of a papist having the audacity to carry off a lady of rank and fortune, their efforts were all unavailing; no trace could be discovered of the rank or fortune of the ill-starred pair. Vaughan, as I told you, had another daughter, younger than Ellen; though without any of the romance or high sentiment of her sister. She was now, of course, the heiress of her father's possessions; and in a little time Nugent, as was natural transferred his affections to her; and in a little time more they were married; and soon after that the Colonel died; and Nugent became lord of that noble castle, while the lady that should have graced it, had no home but the wild retreat of the outlaw. Nugent now became a man of great power and influence in the country. He was appointed to the commission of the peace, and made himself very active in the suppression of those rapparee bands that were at this time very formidable, and in some parts kept the gentlemen of the country in a state of constant apprehension and alarm. After some years the country became more tranquil; and these rangers disappeared at last altogether. *Pulsat equo pede*—as Horace says. In the course of time Nugent was gathered to his fathers; and his son occupied the same position in the country, and earned for himself the same character of a useful and energetic magistrate, which his father had formerly maintained. He had abundant opportunities for displaying his zeal. About fifty years after the occurrences I have told you of, there was a robber in this country, one of the most daring and celebrated characters that ever took to the hills. He was formidable not only from his own extraordinary prowess and the number of his band, but from the great attachment which the people entertained for him, and the protection which it was supposed they frequently afforded him. You know, sir, that in those wild times, and in such a wild country as this was then, a robber might well be a very popular character, and M'Mahon was particularly so: for he acted here as a sort of self-constituted arbiter between the rich and poor; and though he made sad havoc among the possessions of the great, he saved many a wretched family from want and ruin. The country, you must know, is full of M'Mahons, and the gentry knew nothing of this man but that he was a very notorious and desperate outlaw; but there was a secret concerning him among the people, and it is probable that their knowledge of his origin and history increased the influence he possessed among them. There is a wild district off to the west here, which was at this time very thinly inhabited. You might travel for miles and miles without meeting an acre of cultivated land; and it was at a place called The Rocks, a beautiful spot it is, the heart of this wild region, that the banditti had their retreat. It was a regular little community. The robbers lived there, with their wives and children, beyond the reach of the law, and enjoying an abundance of everything the country could afford. They drove the cattle, levied money, and did everything, in fact, as if their leader's family were still the lords of Ferney. Nugent was one of those that suffered most from their incursions; and as active as he was for their suppression, and no man could be more so, they baffled him in all his efforts. M'Mahon had constant intelligence of whatever concerned his safety. He was always aware of Nugent's movements, and seemed to care as little for him and his dragoons as he would for a party of village schoolboys. They went on in this way for years. M'Mahon, in fact, held the country; and with the trifling aid which could be afforded them by government, the magistrates found it was impossible to think of dislodging him. They agreed, at last, that they had nothing for it, but to try and make some sort of terms with him, and prevent him, by fair means, from harrying the country in the way in which he was doing. Now, sir, this is the truth, I assure you, though you seem to doubt it.

(I certainly did suspect my historian of romancing a little—but