GLENANAAR

A STORY OF IRISH LIFE

BY VERY REV. CANON P. A. SHEEHAN, D.D., AUTHOR OF "MY NEW CURATE," "LUKE DELMEGE," "UNDER THE CEDARS AND THE STARS," "LOST ANGEL OF A RUINED PARADISE," ETC.

CHAPTER XVII.

AN OLD MAN'S DREAM.

On the evening of that day in which Redmond Casey had given his solemn commission to Donal, old Edmond Connors, returning slowly from his walk through the fields, sat weary and tired on the parapet of the little bridge that curved itself above the Ownanaar. The years, and perhaps much musing and sorrow, were telling on the great, muscular frame of the old man. And everyone said that since Donal's marriage, and the death of the *vanithee*, Edmond Connors had aged more than twenty years. He often too, fell into fits of drowsiness. He slept before the hot fire in the kitchen; he slept outside against the south wall of the barn, where the sun shone fiercely; he slept sitting on a boulder above a mountain torrent; and people said he was breaking up, and that this somnolency was a forerunner of death. And this evening, as he sat tired, there on the mossy wall of the bridge, Edmond Connors fell asleep, and dreamed, in the fitful way of the old or the troubled, that Nodlag had gone from him forever. He did not know why or wherefore. He vaguely conjectured that Nano, Donal's wife, had made her life unbearable; and that himself and Donal could not prevent it. He only remembered that the girl had come into the kitchen, flung her arms around his neck, kissed him on forehead and cheek and lips, and passed out the back door of the kitchen without a word. He was moaning sadly in his dreams, when a light finger touched him, and he woke. He saw standing over him a tall woman, with great black eyes, shining out of a pinched and sallow face, and above it a crown of the whitest hair he thought he ever saw. He rubbed his eyes, and stared, not knowing whether this, too, was not part of his dream. The woman spoke.

"Edmond Connors, you don t know me?"

"N-no," said the old man; "are you alive, or am I dhramin' yet?"

"You are wide awake, now," the woman said, looking down upon him. "Listen! I want somethin' from ye!"

"I have nothin' to giv' ye, me poor 'uman," said the old man, feelingly. "Whin God giv' it to me, I shared it with His poor. I've nothin' now, but what does not belong to me."

"You have somethin'," she replied, "that belongs to me. I have come to claim it."

"You're makin' a mistake, me poor 'uman," said the old man. "Edmond Connors never kep' as much as the black of yer nail from annywan. You mane somebody else!"

"No!" she cried. "I mane you! I want me child!"

The dream and the reality rushed together through the brain of the old man. He did not know "which was which." He looked up at the woman, and said faintly:

"Nodlag?"

"Yes!" said the woman, apparently remorseless. "I have come to claim back the child you have called Nodlag. Her right name is Annie Daly, and she is my child!"

"And are you the 'uman that met me on this bridge fourteen or fifteen years ago, whin the snow was on the ground, and — she was a little child in yer arrums?"

"I am," said the woman.

The old man paused.

"And was it you that lef' that little infan' to the mercy of God on that cowld Christmas night in the byre among the cattle?"

"It was," said the woman, unmoved.

"Thin, as you giv' up yer mother's rights thin, what right have you now to claim her back?"

"The same mother's rights," she answered, "and the sthrong hand of the law."

"To the devil wid you and yer law," cried the old man, starting up in a fury. The word "law," so utterly hated by the Irish peasant, as synonymous with every kind of injustice and brutality, set his cold blood aflame.

"To the divil wid you an' yer law," he repeated. "You an' yer law darn't put a wet finger on *my* child. I've saved her from worse than ye, an' as long as God laves me the bret' of life, nayther you nor yer law will take her from me."

The woman now sat down on the mossy wall, and pulled the old man down beside her.

"Listen to rayson, an' common sinse, Edmond Connors," she said. "'Tis thrue I put me child into your hands that Christmas night. Your byre was warmer than the cowld river. If I remimber right, 'twas you yourself that axed me."

"'Twas," said the old man; "you thought to murdher that weeshy, innicent crachure that God giv' you, and I said many a Christian family would be glad to take her frum ye."

"Did ye know at the time to whom ye were shpakin'?" asked the woman.

"No! But I know well 'twas Annie Daly, daughter of the man that was swearin' away me life, that was brought in from the bastes that night."

"You did?" said the woman.

"I did," he replied. "An' I clung to her since, and she has growed into me heart, as none of my own childre' ever growed; and, be the high Heavens, nayther you, nor your law, nor any livin' morchial man will take her from me, ontil she puts me in me coffin and sees the last sod above me grave."

The woman was silent for a few minutes.

"You did a good an' charitable act, Edmond Connors," she said at length, "but didn't ye ever get back annything in return?"

He did not catch her meaning for a few minutes. Then, as the recollection of the trial dawned upon him, he cried, as he felt for the woman's hand, and grasped it firmly:

"Yes, *mo shtig, mo chree*, an' I have never forgot it. But for you, me bones would be blaching this manny a year, beside poor Lynch's, in Cork gaol."

"'Tis to save you from somethin' worse," said the woman, disengaging her hand, "that I've come acrass three thousan' miles of stormy ocean, and am here now in the teeth of those who'd murdher me, if they knew me."

"I'm at a loss to know what you mane, ma'am, replied the old man. "I have only a few years, it may be a few months, to live, an' I'm not sorry to be goin' to the good God——"

"People like to die in their beds, and to have the priesht wid them," she replied, "no matther how tired of life they are."

"An' wid God's blessin', that's how I'll die," he said, "I've been prayin' all my life agin a "sudden and unprovided death,' and God is sure to hear me in the ind."

"He'll hear you, but He won't heed you," said the woman, rising up, and pulling the black shawl over her head, as the preliminary of departing, "As you don't take me advice, Edmond Connors, this blessed evening, a worse death than the Cork gallows is before you."

"What wrong have I ever done to morchial man or 'uman," he cried, anxiously, "that anywan should murdher me?"

"'Tisn't to the guilty, but to the innicent, the hard death comes," she replied.

"But I have never made an inimy in me life, 'uman," he cried, passionately. "I've always lived in pace with God an' me nabors."

"I don't say 'tis on your own account," she replied. "But I hard since I kem back to this misforthunate country that your sacret is out, an' the bloodhoun's are on yer thrack."

"Why don't you spake to Nodlag hersel', and let her decide?" he said, after a long fit of musing.

The wretched woman gave a short, hoarse laugh.

"An' do ye suppose for a moment she'd listen to me story?" she said. "Do ye suppose she'd lave you for the likes av me?"

"Nodlag is a good girl," said he, seeing how much he was gaining. "If you can shew her that you are her mother, she'll go wid you to the inds of the airth."

"I don't want her to kum wid me," said the wretched mother. "I want her to go where she'll be cared for well, without puttin' any wan's life in danger!"

"An' where might that be?" he asked.

"She can go among the gintry," the woman answered. "They'll sind her where she'll be safe, and where no one can find her; and she'll be rared up a lady, instid of bein' slushin' and moilin' for Nano Haygerty!"

"And be brought up a Prodestan', I suppose?" said the old man, looking at her keeniy.

"That's nayther here nor there," said the woman. "Her belongin's have got more from Prodestans than Catholics anny day."

"Av they have, 'tis the dirty wages they got," the old man said. "And Nodlag never yet did anything mane, to say she'd do it now."

"There's no use in talkin' to you," the woman cried, lifting the shawl high on shoulders and head. "Keep her, Edmond Connors, keep her. You've a better right to her than me, and may it be a long time till the death comes between ye to part ye! But there's blood before me eyes these nights I have been spindin' out there on the heather and the furze; and I misdoubt me if there's not blood to be shed like wather. But I have warned ye, Edmond Connors, I have warned ye! An' yet, may the Blessed Vargin be 'atween ye an' her inimies, for all ye have done for me child!"

She took his hand, raised it to her lips, and kissed it passionately, as she had done so many years before; and then strode away with her swift, swinging step across the road, and down through the moorland.

"Am I dhramin still?" said Edmond Connors. "I'm so ould and wake, now, I don't know whin I'm asleep or awake. But 'tis quare, out and out, that Nodlag should be comin' up so often."

Hence, when the old man returned home he could scarcely keep his eyes off the girl, he stared at her, and watched her, wherever she was, and whatever she was doing; stood up and followed her figure from the kitchen when she went out; sat down resignedly and kept his eyes fixed upon her as she sat beneath the lamp, darning his stockings or polishing his brown gaiters. She was getting somewhat alarmed at the persistency of his gaze, when, late at night, looking around cautiously first, to see if Nano was in the kitchen, he beckoned the girl to his side.

"Whisper, alanna," he said, "and don't spake loud, for fear thim would hear who oughtn't to hear. Did ye see anny wan strange to-day?"

"No, sir!" said Nodlag, surprised. "There was no sthranger round the house to-day."

"No 'uman," he asked, "with a yallow face, and big eyes, and gray hair?"

"No, sir!" answered the girl. "There was no wan of that kind about, at laste as far as I know."

"Don't mintion to anny wan that I asked the question," he said.

He fell into a fit of musing that seemed to last very long to the young girl. Then he woke up suddenly to see her face near his.

"What was I sayin'?" he cried. "Oh, yes! Don't mintion to anny wan what I was sayin', Nodlag. But, whispher! Come closer, Nodlag!"

"Yes, sir! what can I do?"

"Nodlag, sure you won't lave me?"

"Leave you, sir?' Certainly, I won't."

"Promise me that you won't lave me till you see the hood of the habit pulled down on me face, and the last sod flattened above my grave."

"Sure, you know, sir, I'll never lave you," said Nodlag, crying. "Where 'ud I go from you, who have been father and mother to me?"

"Thrue for you, child," the old man whispered. "More than fath. mother, if ye knew all. But ye didn't see the white-haired 'uman I was spakin' about?"

"No, sir," she said, now believing that he was grown delirious. "There was no wan of that kind here, at all, at all!"

"Thin, you'll say nothin' to nobody about what I was sayin'," he whispered. "'Twas all a dhrame! 'Twas all a dhrame!"

She went back to the table and resumed her work; but from time to time he called her over, when there was no one in the kitchen but themselves.

"Say nothin' about it, Nodlag! Say nothin' about it! 'Twas all a dhrame! 'Twas all a dhrame!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

A LIFE FOR A LIFE.

Donal was quite wrong when he said that Nodlag had nothing but the clothes she wore. She was, unknown to herself and the world beside, the heiress of Edmond Connors, her more than father. The old man, feeling that time was narrowing for him, and that he should soon sleep with his fathers down there beneath the elms at Templeroan, had gone into Kilmallock, and apportioning equal shares to Donal, Owen and their unmarried sister, had left by will, duly drawn and signed, the rest of his money, and such property as he might die possessed of, to Nodlag. And lest this might not be strictly legal, he had called her for the first time in his life by her baptismal name, Annie Daly.

How the double circumstance, the legacy and the revelation of the name, became known to Donal's wife, it is difficult to ascertain. But the knowledge was conveyed to her in some way, and by her own minute and vigilant inquiries she placed the matter beyond doubt. Needless to say, it doubly intensified her dislike for Nodlag, until that hatred became an obsession. The thought that *her* fortune, the money accumulated with such infinite pains by her father and mother, and even by the labor of her own hands, should go to this girl was maddening. On one excuse or another she left Glenanaar, and went home to her parents for a few days. When she returned she was unusually silent, and her manner towards Nodlag had changed almost into an attitude of kindness. Donal's spirits rose, and, after waiting many days for a favorable opportunity, he opened the subject of the young blacksmith's suit to Nodlag. He was so cheerful that he spoke with a light heart, and with that bantering manner that best bespeaks friendship amongst the Irish peasantry. He met Nodlag on the bridge that crossed the Ownanaar, the bridge where he had discerned Nodlag's tiny footprints the night of the great snow.

"Did you dhrive the yearlings up the glen?" he said.

"I did," answered Nodlag. "They're up in the high field."

"'Tis a grand year, glory be to God, for near everything," said Donal, not looking at the girl.

"'Tis indeed," said Nodlag. "Everythin' is thrivin', thanks be to God!"

"I suppose you'll be a bit lonesome now, lavin' the ould place?" said Donal, breaking in at once on the subject in a whimsical manner.

She started, and turned quite pale. Had the voice for which she had been listening all these years spoken at last?

"What do ye mane, Donal?" she said, almost crying; "am I goin' to be turned away at last?"

"Faith, an' you aren't," he said buoyantly, "But, begor, I'm afther thinkin' you are goin' to be *took* away from us; and sure 'tis we'll miss you."

"I thought there was somethin' goin' on," she said, "from the way the Missis was talkin'. I knew she begredged me the flare, but I never thought, Donal, you'd turn agin me."

And here she broke down utterly, and, putting her apron to her eyes, wept bitterly.

"Why did you take me out of the snow-drift, Donal Connors," she said, amidst her sobbing, "up there under the ash-tree; an' why didn't you lave me die, and go to God, instid of turnin' me now adriift on the world? You know I have nayther father nor mother; I don't know who I am, or what I am, or where I came from. All that I ever knew was that I thought I had a father an' a frind in your father, Donal; an' if you and him now are goin' to turn agin me—well, sure, I've no right to complain," she said, in a sudden burst of gratitude, "ye both have been more than father an' mother to me, and, whatever happens, I'm not likely to forget it."

"Like all women," said Donal, smiling at her sudden emotion, "you're running away wid the question. What I was thryin' to say was, that a likely young colleen like you won't be long widout a husband, an' a good one."

Nodlag blushed scarlet, and dried her tears.

"You're jokin', Donal," she said. "You know as well as I do, that there's not a dacent boy in the whole neighborhood would look at me, whatever it is, is agin me."

"I know wan dacent boy enough," said Donal, "that has worn his two eyes a'most blind lookin' at you, or for you. At laste, I know the sun never shines for him unless you're to the front afore him."

"Whoever he is," said Nodlag, her woman's heart leaping up at the thought that she was thus singled out for admiration, "he has never spoke to me; an' whatever be his manin', he never intinds to make me his wife."

"I'm not so sure of that," said Donal; "in fact, I kem to offer you his hand, as they say; and the divil's own black wan it is."

"What's the great saycret, Donal?" said Nodlag, anxious to turn away for a moment from the revelation of a happiness that seemed too great. "Who am I, an' where did I come from?"

"That I can't tell you. But I can tell you this, that, unless you throw away your chance, you will be, in a very short time, Mrs. Redmond Casey."

The declaration threw both into a reverie. Donal, having spoken, and seeing the success of his intervention on his friend's behalf, was plunged in conflicting emotions of delight and regret. It was a happy thing for Nodlag and for them all. It would mean a new life for her, surrounded with all kinds of affection, and a happy emancipation from the sordid trials to which she had for so many years been subjected. For himself it would mean peace at least. And yet he thought there would be a big blank in his own and his father's life. There would be a gap at the fireside, where they would miss her bright presence, and her gentle voice, and her silent but affectionate ministrations. He felt it was a change and a sad one.

Nodlag's memory was running rapidly over the past, trying to recall every little incident indicative of the newly-revealed affection of Redmond; and her imagination fled forward to the future, and she saw herself, no longer the unnamed dependent on the charity of others, but the honored wife of a decent tradesman; and she was thinking how she would make up for all this blessedness by her loving solicitude to his mother and himself, when the morning reverie was suddenly broken by the shrill, sharp voice of Donal's wife:

"Wisha, thin, Donal Connors, aren't I well in my way, huntin' and seekin' for you all over the farm, and you nowhere to be found? Wouldn't it be betther for you to be above driving out Hickey's pigs from the grass corn than colloguing an' codrauling with that idle *thucka*?"

"Are the pigs in the grass-corn?" said Donal, lazily raising himself from the wooden parapet of the bridge.

"They are! An' 'tis mindin' thim an' your bisness you ought to be; an' let *her* do somethin' to airn the bread she's atin'."

"Thin, why didn't you drive out the pigs yersel'?" said Donal. "'Twouldn't be the power and heap an' all of throuble to dhrive out a few little bonniveens, sure?"

"I have enough to do, slushin' an' slavin' for you an' your ould father, mornin' noon an' night," she retorted. "It was the cowld, bitter day for me I came upon yer flure."

"Think over what I've been tellin' ye, Nodlag," said Donal, following his wife. "You see it can't be a day too soon."

All that day, Nodlag's heart was singing its own jubilant song of triumph and affection, as she went around, doing little things here and there. The poor girl walked upon air, and saw a new color and shape in all things. This sudden transformation in her life was so much more than she ever expected, or hoped for, that she found it difficult to still the beatings of her heart. It was like a beautiful dream come true. For often down there at the forge, as she went around and tidied things for old Mrs. Casey, she couldn't help thinking how much better she would do her work of benevolence if she had a right to the place, and it was a housewife's duty. How often she dreamed of the new curtains she would loop up over the diamond panes; and the flowers she would place in the windows, and the new chairs she would get in place of the old *sugan* chairs now tattered and frayed and worn. And what broods of chickens she would rear, and what fresh eggs she would have for Redmond's breakfast, and all the other airy fantasies of young and hopeful girlhood. And now 'twas all come true. Yes! Donal would not deceive her. Redmond had asked her to be his wife; and she had—No! Her heart stood still. She had never answered Donal. But he understood, and would make all right. She leaped so suddenly into happiness that it was almost too much for her. The servant-girls, following their mistress, disliked her, noticed it. They said to one another:

"Begobs, you'd think she had come into a fortune, or found a crock of goold. What's the matther, I wondher!"

Alas! And the cup of hope and love was dashed from the lips of the poor girl in one instant; and it was only after many years and many bitter trials that it was proffered to her lips again!

It was the early spring time, and night fell sharply at 6 o'clock. There was no moon and the thick banks of gray clouds shut out the feeble light of the stars. Supper was over in the house; the dishes and cups had been washed and laid aside on the dresser, and the mistress had done an unusual thing. She had allowed, nay ordered, the girls to go up to the dance at the cross-roads that branched to Ballyorgan on the right, and to Ardpatrick on the left. The old man, half asleep, was nodding over the fire. Nodlag was reading by the light of a paraffin-lamp in a corner; reading, to her surprise, undisturbed, for her mistress rarely allowed her that luxury without breaking in with sundry commands to do this or that work about the house. Donal was in the bawn-field looking after the lambs and ewes. Donal's wife was busying herself in the bedroom.

Just as the clock struck 9 the front door, opening on the by-road, was opened noiselessly, and one by one, six masked men came into the kitchen. Nodlag, with her back to the fire, was the first to see them. She gave a little shriek, and her heart stood still. Instinct told her that it was on her account they had come—that this was her life's great crisis. She stood up, with white face and eyes dilated with terror, as she noticed that the two last of the intruders carried firearms.

"What's the matter, alanna?" said the old man, turning around.

She couldn't reply. She merely pointed with her finger.

The old man arose from his chair slowly and with difficulty, and confronted the intruders. His faculties had become so weakened by age that here again he found it difficult to distinguish a dream from a reality. But the trembling figure and white face of Nodlag assured him that this was no delusion. Here were six masked men, and their presence boded no good.

"Run out for Donal, Nodlag!" he said, turning to her.

"Stop where ye are," said the leader of the gang in a voice that he sought to disguise, "av ye don't want yere brains blown out!"

"Who are ye, and what in God's name do ye want in a dacent house, an' at this hour of night?" asked the old man.

"'Twas wanst a dacent house enough," said the man, "but it is no longer so. It is cursed and blighted and banned, in the eye of every dacent man, 'uman, an' child in the three parishes."

"That's quare enough intirely," said the old man. "I never hard that priest nor minister had ever anythin' to say agin' us."

"'Tisn't priesht, nor ministher," replied the other, "but informer and approver, who sint manny a dacent man to the gallows; and whose spawn," he cried passionately, pointing to Nodlag, "you have been rarin' to turn on you an' yours in the ind."

"Oh, wirra, wirra! Oh, ochone, ochone!" cried Donal's wife, coming out from her bedroom, and in a paroxysm of fright. "Oh, who are ye, at all, at all, and what do ye want? Oh, sure take annythin' ye like, and go away like dacent boys! Oh, where is Donal, at all, at all; and the girls? Oh, spake aisy to them, sir, or they'll murdher us all."

"We don't want you here, hones' 'uman," said the ringleader. "Go back to where you kem frum, an' hould yer tongue."

"I will, indeed. But sure you won't kill him, nor do him harm. Sure, av 'tis atin' or dhrinkin' ye want, ye can have the besht—"

"Hould yer tongue, 'uman," he cried, rudely pushing her aside till she fell on the settle, "an' let us do the bisness we're sint to do. This is," he said, turning to the old man, "to warn you to-night, Edmond Connors, to sind out from you that girl, an' let her beg her bread as she ought to do, from house and house—"

"That I'll never do," said the old man, firmly. "Who tould you, you ruffian, that this is Cloumper Daly's child; Not that 'twould make much difference—"

"Who tould me?" said the fellow, fumbling in the breast pocket of his coat. "Doesn't every man in the parish know it? Do you deny it? Nobody knows better than you!"

"Lave me go, sir," said Nodlag, coming forward bravely, now that the truth flashed certainly on her mind. "Lave me go! I have been here long enough!"

"No," said the old man, pulling her softly toward him, "you and I go or stop together."

He did not know how prophetic were his words.

"But wance more, you ruffian," he cried, fiercely, for all the old lion-spirit was now aroused, "what do you know of this girl? An' how do you say she's Cloumper Daly's daughter?"

"You d—d ould hypocrite, here are yer own words fur it," said the fellow, showing a sealed paper. "Who wrote, or got wrote, 'Annie Daly' there?"

The old man looked, and his face fell. It was his own will, that had been stolen.

"I see it all now," he said, looking over to where his daughter-in-law was crouching on the settle, "I see it all now. I'm in the way, and she's in the way of those who are well behoulden to both of us. I think I know who ye are now; but whoever ye are, let me tell ye, that nayther Nodlag nor I will lave me house, where me fathers and their fathers lived before me, ontil we are put out by the shtrong hand of the law."

"Ind the argyin'," cried the rough voice of one of the ruffians behind; "we can't be stayin' here all night."

"Wance more, I put it to you for pace sake, and to prevint bloodshed," said the leader, "let her go, and do you remane in pace."

"Oh! For the luv of God, Mr. Connors," cried his daughter-in law, who now saw the unexpected determination of the old man, and feared that matters would end in a way she had not anticipated, "give in to them. Sure the girl is big and shtrong enough to airn her own bread now."

The old man looked at her with such anger and contempt that she shrank from him and rushed into the fields to summon her husband.

"I gev you my decision," said the old man, turning once more to the intruders. "I say whatever is mine and Donal's is hers, so long as we live."

"Thin, be all that's holy," said the ruffian, levelling his musket at Nodlag, "we won't shtand it. I'll give you while I do be countin, twinty—"

He held the musket still levelled towards Nodlag, his eye running along the barrel, whilst he commenced: "Wan! Two! Three!—

He had scarcely said these words, when a dark figure leaped from the door, and flew through the kitchen; and a strong hand caught the would-be-murderer by the neck, and swinging him round and round, at last pushed him towards the wall to wrest the deadly weapon from his hand. The other ruffians, thinking there was help at hand, fled through the door, and up along the road. The old man had pushed Nodlag into the recess of the fireplace and had stood before her to protect her. The two strong men struggled wildly, but Donal, having his two hands free, had driven the fellow up against the whitewashed wall and pinned him there.

"Don't shoke me, Donal Connors," said the ruffian, gasping for breath, as Donal squeezed and twisted his neckerchief. "Unhand me, or be this and be that—"

To relieve the suffocation, he had to part with the weapon, which he flung on the floor. The moment it struck the ground, the flint touched the steel, there was a frightful explosion, and the whole kitchen was filled with smoke, as some heavy body fell with a thud upon the hearthstone.

But, unheeding this, the two men, now equally matched, struggled desperately for the mastery. Donal Connors had the reputation of being the fiercest fighter and most powerful wrestler in the country, and was reputed a dangerous antagonist when his passions were excited. His opponent now, an equally powerful man, felt he was fighting for his life, and he threw into the combat all the energy of desperation. And, when he had got his right hand free, he caught Donal by the collar and the blue necktie; and the two men swung around the kitchen, now flung against the settle, now against the door, now dragging each other along the mud floor, which their rough boots had powdered into dust, and again, erect, with white faces and panting breasts, and breathing hotly into each other's mouth the silent hatred and determination that this was to be a death-struggle and nothing less. They were strangely silent, and struck but few blows. At last, swinging round in their death-embrace, they stumbled up towards the fireplace; and here the would-be murderer tripped over some heavy body, and fell towards the fire, dragging Donal with him. In an instant, the latter was up, and planting his knee so firmly on the ruffian's chest that the ribs seemed to crack beneath the pressure, he tore the black mask from the fellow's eyes, and revealed the face of—*his wife's brother*.

"I thought so, you ruffian," he cried; "you'll pay dear for this. Nodlag, come here!"

No Nodlag answered; but turning around he saw his father, lying senseless across the hearthstone, his legs shattered and splintered by the heavy slugs discharged from the blunderbuss, and the hot blood pumping from the severed arteries, and making a ghastly dark pool in the lamplight.

He rose up at the awful sight, and lifting his hands to Heaven, he shrieked!

"Great God in heaven to-night: Nodlag! Nodlag!"

But Nodlag, like one insane, had fled shrieking into the darkness.

TO BE CONTINUED.

DOWN IN NO. 2.

THE STORY THAT WON THE HUNDRED DOLLAR PRIZE.

Written by Sister Aquinata, Teacher of Philosophy and Literature, at Mt. St. Vincent Academy, Rockingham, N. S.

Sandy had a job down in No. 2, and no one in the world was more satisfied with his lot in life than Sandy. Fifty cents a day his job brought him; 50 cents and much grime. But somehow you didn't think of the grime as you looked at Sandy. You said to yourself: "Poor Sandy!" and then wondered why you had said it. It could not have been his eyes that touched your sympathy; for by them the electric bulbs in the long dingy passages paled. It could not have been his ridiculously tip-tilted nose that struck out from his eyebrows with a tremendous spirit, then stopped suddenly somewhere midway, curled up, and angled down to a full pair of red lips that were always making gestures. It could not have been the lips; they suggested naught but mirth and a loving heart, under the ragged coat; a heart that had little to love, except the old horses in the mine, a woebegone, scrappy dog that would not follow him into those dim regions, but stayed round the shaft and whined and howled when Sandy went aboard the cage to descend; and a friend, the man who had got him the job in the mine, and another friend. But could it have been the moth-eaten fur cap, the swallow-tailed coat, much too long in tails and wear, the shoes, twin sisters to clogs, into either of which both his feet and much of his legs would have fitted? Was it all this? All this, with him to boot! But he had now a job in No. 2, and all this would be different soon.

Sandy was in great spirits to-night. How his blue eyes sparkled, as he tossed back his cap, tilted his chin, and sauntered along the track, 1,500 feet below the surface, feeling his full importance as he opened a door, and watched the snorting engine speed past and disappear into the great blackness beyond.

To-morrow was Christmas Day, and Sandy had a secret; a secret that affected him in his own buoyant way. He had bought that day his first Christmas present, a beautiful book, bound in red, for a friend of his—a young lady friend, a little past twenty, and Sandy was not yet past ten. The book was in the Post Office now. Oh, it was a beauty! He had paid 25 cents for it! And her name—Miss Florence Smith—was written on the wrapping in the most beautiful letters. He hadn't done the writing. Writing wasn't a particularly easy job for him; he preferred opening doors in a coal mine.

How he loved to scurry down the long passages, that everwhere intersected, as they came from every direction. They were only 12 feet wide, some narrower, and a track lay along the centre of each, and over the track ran long low engines, propelled by compressed air, carrying cars of wood, iron or steel, when needed; but mostly coal, coal, coal. Sandy often wondered where in the world it all went to.

Sandy is no dreamy doors opener. He has been there but a week and knows his trade. His work for to-day is nearly over. An engine whizzes by; he adjusts the door, and shifts his cap, now much the worse for moths, coal-dust, and continual shiftings, to another place on his head, runs his long grimy fingers through his locks, naturally of the color of corn, but now of the same color as his nose—a cross between grey and black. He had scarcely readjusted his cap, when Jack, the oldest horse in the mine, pulled up, puffing and snorting.

"Poor old fellow," said Sandy, patting the outstretched nose. "I guess you don't know it's Christmas termorrer! I wonder how you feel bein' a horse!"

"Hi, there Sandy, out of the way!" as Jack, under the crack of his master's whip, slowly moved off.

Sandy had great sympathy for Jack. He had seen another old horse, one that had worked in the mine his short life time, and then, worn out by labor and the damp, shot. It gave Sandy a queer feeling under his collar—that shooting. He hoped he would not know when Jack's turn came.

The wind through the long passages, lit here and there by hanging electric bulbs, blew damp and chill. Sandy buttoned his coat up closer, and when the next whistle blew, turned towards the cage. His day's work was done.