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THE LAST LORD OF DUNORAN.

A LEGEND OF THE SOUTH OF IBELAND.

Business called me, in the early autumn of 1838, to the South of Ireland. The weather was delightful, the scenery and the people were new to me, and sending my luggage on by the mail-coach route in charge of a servant, I hired a serviceable nag at a posting-house, and, full of the ouriosity of an explorer, commenced a leisurely journey of five-and-twenty miles on horseback, by sequestered crossroads, to my destination. By bog and hill, by plain and ruined castle, and many a winding stream, my picturesque road led me.

I had started late, and having made little more than half my journey, I was thinking of

here and there a great beam dark and worn with tendrils of ivy trailing over it. The tall walls, with rotted plaster, were stained and mouldy, and in some rooms the remains of decayed wainscotting crazily swung to and fro. The almost sashless windows were darkened also with ivy, and about the tall chimneys the jack-daws were wheeling, while from the huge trees that overhung the glen in sombre masses at the other side the rooks kept up a ceaseless cawing.

from room to room, with ceilings rotted, and

As I walked through these melancholy passages-peeping only into some of the rooms; for the flooring was quite gone in the middle, and bowed down towards the centre, and the house was very nearly unroofed, a state of things which made the exploration a little critical-I began to wonder why so grand a house, in the midst of scenery so picturesque, had been permitted to go to decay; I dreamed of the hospitalities of which it had long ago been the rallying place, and I thought what a scene of Red-gauntlet revelries it might disclose at midnight.

The great staircase was of oak, which had stood the weather wonderfully, and I sat down upon its steps, musing vaguely on the transitoriness of all things under the sun.

Except for the hoarse and distant clamour of the rocks, hardly audible where I sat, no sound broke the profound stillness of the spot. Such a sense of solitude I have seldom expe-rienced before. The air was stirless; there was not even the rustle of a withered leaf along the passage. It was oppressive. The tall trees that stood close about the building darkened it, and added something of awe to the melancholy of the scene.

In this mood I heard, with an unpleasant surprise, close to me, a voice that was drawling, and, I fancied, sneering, repeat the words: 'Food for worms; dead and rotten; Ged over all."

There was a small window in the wall here, very thick, which had been built up, and in the dark recesses of this, deep in the shadow, I now saw a sharp-featured man, sitting, with his feet dangling. His keen eyes were fixed on me, and he was smiling cynically, and before I had well recovered my surprise he repeated the distich :---

"If death was a thing that money could buy, The rich would live, and the poor they would die." away from where you are standing."

times; I never come this way but I take a a last look round me, and go off in the dark never. You'll not find me a bad master, any look in. I don't think it's many more times again." I'll be turnin' in to see the ould place, for I'll

be under the sod myself before long.' "You'll outlive younger people," I said. And, quitting that trite subject, I ran on-"I

"I wish ye seen the glin when the nuts is ripe; they're the sweetest nuts in all Ireland. I think," he rejoined, with a practical sense of the picturesque. "You'd fill your pockets while you'd be looking about you."

"These are very fine old woods," I remarked. 'I have not seen any in Ireland I thought so beautiful."

"Eiah! your honour the woods about here is nothing to what they war. All the mountains along here was wood when my father was a gossoon, and Murroe Wood was the grandest of them all. All oak mostly, all out down as bare as the road. Not one left here that's fit to compare with them. Which way did your honur come hither-from Limerick ?" No. Killaloe."

"Well, then, you passed the ground where

Murroe Wood was in former times. You kem undher Lisnavourra, the steep knob of a hill, about a mile above the village here. Twas near that Murroe Wood was, and twas there Sir Dominick Sarsfield first met the divilthe Lord between us and harm-and a bad meeting for him and his."

I had become interested in the adventure which had occurred in the very scenery which had so greatly attracted me, and my new ac-quaintance, the little hunchback, was easily entreated to tell me the story, and spoke thus so soon as we had each resumed his seat :---

It was a fine estate when Sir Dominick came into it; and grand doing there was entirely, feastin' and fiddlin,' free quarters for all the pipers in the country round, and a welcome for hour's time. But, anyhow, you'd better not every one that liked to come. There was wine follow me, for if you do I'll shoot you, an' that every one that liked to come. There was wine by the hogshead for the quality, and potteen enough to set a town a-fire, and beer and eidher enough to float a navy for the boys and girls and the likes o' me. It was kep' up the bost part of a month, till the weather broke, and the rain spoilt the sod for the moneen jigs, and the fair of Allybally Killudeen comin' on, they wall, and then he comes in an' closes the door and he not half what had happened. As the wor obliged to give over the divarsion, and wid a heavy heart. Sir Dominick stopped to day drew near, towards the end of October. attend to the pigs. But Sir Dominick was think when he got to the middle of the decr-"It was a grand house in its day, sir," he only beginnin' when they wor lavin' off. park-for he had not made up his mind when bled in mind. One time he made up his mind continued; "Dunoran House, and the Sars- There was no way of gettin' rid of his money he left the house, an' the whiskey did not clear to have no more to say to such things, nor to fields. Sir Dominick Sarsfield was the last of and estates he did not thry-what with drink- his head, only it gev him courage. He did not the old stock. He lost his life not six foot in', dicin', racin', cards, an' all sorts, it was not feel the cowld wind now, nor fear death, nor many years before the estates wor in debt and think much of anything but the shame an' the failed him when he thought of his debts, and As he spoke he let himself down, with a Sir Dominick a distressed man. He showed fall of the old family. An' he made up his he not knowing where to turn. Then, only a a bold front to the world as long as he could; mind, if no better thought came to him between week before the day, everything began to go He was a dark-faced, sharp-featured little an' then he sould off his dogs and of the horses. hunobback and had a walking-stick in his hand, | an' gev out he was goin' to thravel in France,, an' the like. An' so off with him for awhile an' no one in these parts heard tale or tidings of him for two or three years years, till at last, quite unexpected, one night there comes a rappin at the big kitchen window. It was past goes, right for the wood of Murroe. It seemed ten o'clock, and old Connor Hanlon the butler. my grandfather, was sittin' by the fire alone, an' it was no time till he was among the big bad. Well, by the time the 28th of October warmin' his shins over it. There was a keen east wind blowin' along the mountains that night, and whistlin' cowld enough through the tops of the trees, and soundin' loncsome through moon shinin' down through them, and castin' the long chimneys. (And the story-teller glanced up at the nearest stack visible from his seat.) So he wasn't quite sure of the knockin' at the window, and up he gets and sees his masther's face. My grandfather was glad to see him safe, for it was a long time since there was any news of him; but he was sorry, too, for it was a changed place, and only himself and old Juggy Broderick in charge of the house, and a man in the stables; and it was a poor | along the dary ground under the trees, and thing to see him comin' back to his own like that. He shook Con by the hand, and says he; "I came here to say a word to you. I left my horse with Dick in the stable; I may want him again before morning, or I may nover want him.

And with that he tould him to be sure, in

oak box, in the closet of his room, to his cousin Pat Sarsfield, in Dublin; and the sword and

gives you money overnight, you'll find nothing but a bagful of pebbles, and chips and nutshells to night."

"Lord forbid !" says my grandfather standing up, with a start, and crossin' himself.

"They say the counthry's full o' men listin' sogers for the King o' France. If I light on one of them, I'll not refuse his offer. How big be contrary things goes! How long it is since most. me and Captain Waller fought the jewel at New Oastle ?"

"Six years, Masther Dominick" says my grandfather; "an' ye broke his thigh with the bullet the first shot."

"I did, Con," says he, "an' I wish, instead, he had shot me through the heart. Have you any whiskey?"

My grandfather took it out o' the buffet, an' the masther pours out some into a bowl, an' dhrank it off.

"I'll go out an' have a look at my horse," says he, standin' up. There was a sort of stare in his eyes, as he pulled his ridin' cloak about him, as if there was something bad in his thoughts.

"Sure I won't be a minute runnin' out my self to the stable, an' lookin' after the horse for you myself," says my grandfather.

"I'm not goin' to the stable," says Sir Dominick; "I may as well tell you, for I see you found it out already-I'm goin' across the deer-park; if I come back you'll see me in an 'ud be a bad endin' to our friendship.'

"An' with that he walks down this passage here, an' turns the kay in the side door at that end of it, an' out with him on the sod into the moonlight an' the cowld wind; an' my grandfather seen him walkin' hard towards the park

more than a bad servant. I love my own; and I command all the pleasures and the glory of case he should hear of his death, to give the the world. The bargain dates from this day and the lease is out at midnight on the last day I told you; and in the year"-he told And, quitting that trite subject, I ran on—"I Fat Barshend, in Dubha, and the short and by a low you, and in the you for the don't wonder that you like this old place; it pistols his grandfather carried at Aughrim, and him the year; it was easy reckoned, but I for-is a beautiful spot—such noble trees.!" two or three thriftin' things o' the kind. (If you'd rather wait," he says, "I wish we seen the clin when the nuts is

fore you sign the writin', you may, il' you meet me here. But I can't do a great deal for you in the morning. If I thought he played fair, in the meantime; and if you don't sign then, I'm in the humour to make a bargain with him all you got from me, up to that time, will vanin the meantime; and if you don't sign then, ish away, and you'll be just as you are tonight, and ready to hang yourself on the first tree you meet.'

Well, the end of it was, Sir Dominick chose to wait, and came back to the house with a big bagful of money, as round as your hat al-

My grandfather was glad enough, you may be sure, to see the master safe and sound so soon again. Into the kitchen he bangs again, and swings the bag of money on the table; and he stands up straight, and heaves up his shoulders like a man that has just got shut of a heavy load; and he looks at the bag, and my grandfather looks at him, and from him to it and back again. Sir Dominick looked as white as a sheet, and says he :

"I don't know. Con, what's in it; it's the heaviest load I ever carried."

He seemed shy of opening the bag; and he made my grandfather heap up a roaring fire of turf and wood, and then, at last, he opens it, and, sure enough, 'twas stuffed full of golden guineas, bright and new, as if they were only that minute out o' the Mint.

Sir Dominick made my grandfather sit at his cloow while he counted every guinea in the bag.

When he was done counting, and it wasn't far from daylight when that time came, Sir Dominick made my grandfather swear not to tell a word about it. And a close secret it was for many a day. When the eight months and twenty-eight days were pretty near spent and ended. Sir Dominick returned to the house here with a troubled mind, in doubt what was best to be done, and no one alive but my grandfather knew anything about the matter, Sir Dominick grew only more and more trouspeak again with the like of them he met with in the wood of Murroe. Then, again, his heart week before the day, everything began to go wrong with him. One man wrote from London to say that Sir Dominick paid three thousand pounds to the wrong man, and must pay it over again; another demanded a debt he and Sir Dominick could nowhere find the recame round, he was almost ready to lose his senses with all the demands that was risin' up agin him on all sides, and nothing to meet them but the help of the one dhreadful friend he had to depind on at night in the oak wood down there below. So there was nothing for it but to go through with the business that was an' he thought it 'ud be betther to 'list in the begun already, and about the same hour as he went last he takes off the little crucifix he wore round his neck (for he was a Catholic), and own life any time, but 'twould puzzle him to his gospel, and his hit of the thrue cross that he had in a locket; for since he took the money from the Evil One he was growing frightened in himself, and got all he could to guard him from the power of the devil. But to-night, for his life, he daren't take them with him comin' up to meet him. He was a hand-him. So he gives them into my grandfather's some young man like himself, an' he wore a hands without a word, only he looked as white cocked hat, wid goold lace round it, such as a sheet o' paper; and he takes his hat and officers wears on their coats, and he had on a sword, and telling my grandfather to watch for dhress the same as French officers wore in them him, away he goes to try what would come of times. He stopped opposite Sir Dominick, and it. It was a fine, still night, and the moonhe cum to a standstill also. The two gintlemen not so bright, though, now as the first timetook off their hats to one another, an' says the was shining over heath and rock, and down on the lonesome oak-wood below him. There was "I am recruitin', sir," says he, "for my not a lonesomer spot in the country round, and sovereign, an' you'll find my money won't turn if it wasn't for his debts and losses that was good angel was whisperin' in his ear, he would 'a turned back, and sent for his clargy, and made his confession and his penance, and changed his ways, and led a good life; for he was frightened enough to have done a good "Don't be afraid," says he, "the money dale. Softer and slower he stepped as he got once more in undher the branches of the old

an an an taran tara

making a short halt at the next convenient place, and letting my horse have a rest and a eed, and making some provision also for the comforts of the rider.

It was about four o'clock, when the road, ascending a gradual steep, found a passage through a rocky gorge between the abrupt termination of a range of mountains to my left and right. Below me lay a little thatched village, under a long line of gigantic beech trees, through the boughs of which the lowly chimneys sent up their thin turf-smoke. To my left, stretched away for miles, ascending the mountain range I have mentioned, a wild park, through whose swards and ferns the rock broke, time-worn and lichen-stained. This park was studded with straggling wood, which thickened to something like a forest behind and beyond the little village I was approaching, clothing the irregular ascent of the hillsides with beautiful, and, in some places, discolored foliage.

As you descend, the road winds slightly, with the gray park wall, built of loose stone, and mantled here and there with ivy, at its left, and crosses a shallow ford; and, as I approached the village, through breaks in the woodlands I caught glimpses of the long front of an old ruined house, placed among the trees, about half-way up the picturesque mountainside.

The solitude and melancholy of this ruin piqued my curiosity. When I had reached the rude thatched public house, with the sign of St. Columbkill, with robes, mitre, and crozier, displayed over its lintel, having seen to my horse, and made a good meal myself on a said: rasher and eggs, I began to think again of the wooded park and the ruinous house, and resolved on a ramble of half an hour among its You would not a' thought that, to look at me." sylvan solitudes.

The name of the place I found was Dunoran; and, besides the gate, a stile admitted to the grounds, through which, with a pensive said, glancing up at the ominous stain on the enjoyment, I began to saunter towards the di- wall. lapidated mansion.

A long, grass-grown road, with many turns and windings, led up to the old house, under the shadow of the wood.

The road, as it approached the house, skirted the edge of a precipitous glen, clothed with hazel, dwarf-oak, and thorn, and the silent hense stood with its wide-open hall-door facing

little jump, on to the ground.

with the end of which he pointed to a rusty stain in the plaster of the wall.

"Do you mind that mark, sir ?" he asked. "Yes," I said, standing up, and looking at it, with a curious anticipation of something worth hearing.

"That's about seven or eight foot from the ground, sir, and you'll not guess what it is." "I dare say not," said I, "unless it is a stain from the weather."

"'Tis nothing so lucky, sir," he answered. with the same cynical smile and a wag of his

head, still pointing at the mark with his stick. "That's a splash of brains and blood. It's there this hundred years; and it will never leave it while the wall stands."

"He was murdered, then ?"

"Worse than that, sir," he answered.

"He killed himself, perhaps?"

"Worse than that, itself_this cross be-tween us and harm! I'm oulder than I look, sir; you wouldn't guess my years ?"

He became silent, and looked at me, evideatly inviting a guess.

"Well, I should guess you to be about fiveand-fifty."

He laughed, and took a pinch of snuff, and

"I'm that your honor, and something to the back of it. I was seventy last Candlemas.-

"Upon my word I should not; I can hardly believe it even now. Still, you den't remember Sir Dominick Sarsfield's death ?" I

"No, sir; that was a long while before I was born. But my grandfather was butler here long ago, and many time I heard him tell how Sir Dominick came by his death. There was no masther in the great house ever sinst that happened. But there was two servants in care of it, and my aunt was one o' them; and kept me here wid her till I was nine year old, this dark ravine, the further edge of which was and she was lavin' the place to go to Dublin; prowned with a towering forest; and great and from that time it was let go down. The trees stood about the house and its deserted wind stript the roof, and the rain rotted the courtyard and stables. I walked in and locked about me, through years' time, it kem to what you see. But I follow it. It must be sold; and I'm come minute between February and March; and the he seen the same man steppin' from behind the passages overgrown with nettles and weeds; have a likin' for it still, for the sake of ould here, I don't know why, like a ghost, to have first of March ye'll come away with me, or big tree that was touching his elbow almost.

And with that he turns into the big kitchen, and draws a stool, and sits down to take an air of the fire.

"Sit down, Connor, opposite me, and don't be afeard to say what you think."

He spoke all the time lookin' into the fire, with his hands stretched over it, and a tired man he looked.

"An' why should I be afeard, Masther Dominick ?" says my grandfather. "Yourself was a good masther to me, an' so was your father-rest his soul-before you; an' I'll say the truth an'dare the divil, an' more than that, forany Sarsfield of Dunoran, much less yourself; and a good right I'd have."

"It's all over with me, Con," says Sir Dominick

"Heaven forbid !" says my grandfather. "Tis past praying for," says Sir Dominick. "The last guinea's gone; the ould place will

that an' there, so soon as he came to Murroe Wood, he'd hang himself from one of the oak branches wid his eravat. It was a bright moonlight night; there was just a bit of a cloud dhrivin' across the moon now and then, but never heard of before; and another, in Dublin, only for that as light almost as day. Down he denied the payment of a thundering big bill, to him every step he took was as long as three, ceipt; and so on, with fifty other things as oak trees, wid their roots spreading from one to another, and their branches stretching overhead, like the timbers of a naked roof, and the their shadows thick an' twisted abroad on the ground as black as my shoe. He was soberin' a bit by this time, an' he slackened his pace, Eronoh king's army, an' thry what that might do for him; for he knew a man might take his take it back agin when he liked. Just as he made up his mind not to make away wid himself, what should he hear but a step clinkin' soon ho sees a grand gintleman right before stranger:

into pebbles, chips, and nutshells, by to mor- drivin' him on half mad, in spite of his fears row." At the same time he pulled out a big for his soul and his hopes of Paradise, and all his. purse full of goold.

The minute he set his eyes on that gintleman, Sir Dominick had his own opinion of him ; an' at those words he felt the hair standin' on his head.

won't burn you. If it prospers with you, I'm willing to make a bargain. This is the last day of February," says he; "I'll serve you seven years, and at the end of that time you stopped and looked round him, and felt himshall serve me, and I'll come to you when the self turning as cowid as a dead man; and you. seven years is over, when the clock turns the | may be sure he did not feel much betther when

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