

# THE HEARTHSTONE

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For the *Hearthstone*.  
**CHANGING.**

BY DR. NORMAN SMITH.

I have stood beside the streamlet,  
Sparkling in the light of day,  
Watching how the little wavelets  
Flashed one by one away,  
I have listened to its music,  
Echoing sweetly o'er the plain,  
Till it changed to notes of sadness,  
Ending in a mournful strain.

I have seen the rosy sunbeams,  
Softly o'er the meadows play,  
Till the gloomy shades of evening  
Blotted out each golden ray,  
I have loved a tender flower  
Sweetly blooming by my side,  
But, alas, unwisely cherished,  
For it faded, drooped and died.

I have seen the form of manhood  
Growing up from childhood's hour,  
Full of vigor, strength and action,  
Full of life and mental power,  
I have seen it bowed and trembling  
Like a reed before the blast,  
And I've seen it cold and lifeless,  
Mingling with the dust at last.

Thus we're changing, ever changing  
On the shifting sands of time;  
Scarcely we catch the morning echoes,  
Ere we hear the evening chime,  
Passing onward, swiftly onward,  
Through our life's eventful day,  
Till the silver cord is broken,  
And we pass from earth away.

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

BY MRS. ALEXANDER ROSS.

**CHAPTER VII.**

"Not so long and wide the world is,  
Not so rude and rough the way is,  
But my wrath shall overtake you,  
And my vengeance shall attain you!"

As Margaret left the room Sir Richard rang the bell, and on the appearance of the servant, ordered Adam to be sent to him.

"When was Sir William Hamilton drowned, and where?"

"Eighteen years ago," was the reply, "in the Mediterranean Sea."

"Have you got my room ready for my reception?"

"Yes sir, there is a good fire in the dressing room, and everything is arranged as far as I could, I had no key to your valise, and it is locked, but I have placed toilet requisites upon your table."

"Have breakfast at eight, let the coachman see that the carriage and harness are in good order, I will pay a visit in the forenoon."

Adam bowed low in reply, and has he descended to his own apartment said, speaking to himself, in which pastime the old man frequently indulged,

"Pay a visit; wonders will never cease, he was my master for nineteen years before he went abroad, and I never knew him to pay a visit in all that time; I always blamed the lonesome life she led for my poor Lady's death, poor thing, her eyes were red with crying half the time."

"It was well poor Sir Robert died before the old Laird came home, it would have been a changed house to him, but I dare say it will be that to us all."

He approached the winding staircase which led up to the bedrooms, and looking up continued,

"I'm afraid it will be as bad times with the poor children up there, as ever it was with their father, and Lord help them if it is, as I think it will be; them that never shed a tear. I wish some of the princes at aroo rife in story books would come and steal them both away in a carriage with flying horses; Captain Lindsay I'll never get Miss Agnes that's sure enough."

As Adam left the drawing room, Sir Richard followed him, and carefully putting the catch on the door, lay down at full length on the crimson satin sofa, examined the appointments of the room with a critical eye, the tables, sofas, and chairs were the same that he had left there when he saw it last, but the covers of all were new, and of the costliest kind, new curtains, piano, and harp, fine pictures, statues and mirrors, the last reaching from floor to ceiling.

"My money has been flying at a brisk rate; well perhaps it is as well, Isabel Douglas is a widow, and if I can only persuade her to be a wife, she can spend as she pleases, I know her taste for the beautiful, and I would not like her to see bare walls when she enters my house for the first time; she enters my house" repeated he with a deep sigh. "Oh if I were only sure that she would enter it, I would forget the past, and determine to be the Lord Bountiful of the County for all time, what has my money ever been to me; it was to gain possession of this that I was shut up like a maniac for eighteen years."

His conscience told him, that it was the hate he had fostered in the breast of the child he stole, that had shut him up, but even to himself he would not acknowledge this, not then. "But away with such thoughts, I am master



THE PANEL LEADING TO THE TOWER CELL WAS OPEN.

here again, surrounded by luxury, I would not have given to myself, and provided Isabel Douglas will only share it with me it may be doubled or tripled any day she likes."

He rose and taking from the side table a couple of silver candelabra filled with wax candles, he placed them on each side of a large mirror, and stepping back a few paces surveyed himself therein; the reflection he saw there was to him a pleasing one.

"I have to thank my jailor for giving me eighteen years instead of taking them from me, I have a better face and a stronger frame at fifty five than I had twenty years ago, my face once red and bloated, now so white and firm of flesh, will tell her that the vice she hated is dead; would to God I had kept my promise to her and given up for her sake, what I learned to hate in loneliness and misery. To think that William Hamilton has been dead all the time I was in that prison, well perhaps it is better as it is, she would most surely have spurned me then, drunkard as I was, and now I could not drink if I would, there is no fear of my breaking my vow now. Oh! that she had sufficient love for me to ask for such a vow now."

He paced the apartment with long strides, going from end to end, and ever as he approached the windows, watching the lights in distant Inchdrewer, on its rocky height, until they went out one by one, and the dark night lamps were lost in the distance.

The man was excited beyond what he had ever felt before; the causes were obvious, master in his own castle for the first time in eighteen years, come back to find the dilapidated old house he had last seen with its old fashioned faded furniture, transformed into what seemed to him almost a fairy palace. Yet above all that luxury like a plague spot in a green oasis, was the terrible prison cell where he had spent in loneliness, impotent wrath, and alas often in hunger, thirst, and cold, the best years of his manhood; and now what made his heart beat with accelerated pace, and his cheek, with its more than fifty years, burn with the blush of youth, was the knowledge that she who had been a dream to him all his life long, was now a widow, poor in comparison to his great wealth, and he had determined to try once more to win her for his

bride, although half a century had passed over her head as well as his own.

He felt no need of rest, far less sleep, and taking a taper from one of the tables in the hall, he wandered through the rooms and corridors, so well known with their old memories, yet so new and strange to him whose earliest footsteps had been taken among them; each familiar place was walked over, and looked at, all had been visited except one, he would go to the armory, but not to the chamber under the roof, no; in the state his nerves were now in, he could not go there, he opened the armory door, and looked in, only looked in, now he was there he felt he could not enter; did his eyes deceive him?—the panel leading to the tower cell was open!—how was this?—in coming out he had closed it carefully; it was no door that could open of itself, moved by something in the wall above or below,—but a panel closing, which he, knowing where to look for had difficulty in finding; it could not have been opened by Robert Cuninghame, as lay dying the night Sir Richard made his escape, no one else knew the secret of the spring.

He stood for several minutes in the doorway, half holding the candle above his head, so that he might the better pierce the darkness of the large lofty room, his eyes staring at the open panel; there was no mistake, the panel was wide open, his limbs trembled under him with fear; slamming the door of the armory, and rushing down the staircase leading to the main building, he stayed not his footsteps until within the precincts of the lower drawing room, where surrounded with light and warmth, he could reason as to what could have caused the opening of the panel.

He was now anxious to conceal the story of his life during the last eighteen years, he was well aware it would not place him in a dignified position in the eyes of his fellow men, or increase the chance of his obtaining Lady Hamilton for his wife; its being known now could not punish the jailor, as was beyond that, there was therefore every motive for concealment.

Robert Cuninghame had more than once assured him that he would never be suffered to perish from hunger, and he feared that at the last Adam had been trusted with the secret of the eastern tower; he would speak to the old

man on the subject, and bind him down to secrecy; on the morrow with light and sunshine, he would himself close the panel.

He sought his room to rest not to sleep, the morning had already begun to fill the air and woods, with the songs of birds, the hum of insects, and he lay down with half shut eyes, on his velvet curtained bed, to dream the dream of youth.

To the surprise of the twin girls, they were received by Sir Richard at breakfast, with a suavity they had not the evening previous thought him capable of exercising. This was a matter of policy on his part, he knew they were favorites with the Lady he would fain make his wife, and if he could win her to love him, he was willing to conceal or conquer if possible, the hatred he felt for the father's children.

Breakfast over, Sir Richard summoned Adam to the Library.

"Adam," he began, "I wish to know when you were last in the armory?" he put the question in the tone and manner, that would imply it was one of little moment.

Adam considered for a moment, and, then answered.

"I cannot tell you Sir, but it must have been before you went abroad; Sir Robert locked the armory after your departure, keeping the key himself, he considered the whole of the eastern tower, in an unsafe state, none of the apartments are ever used."

The answer was most satisfactory; so far, whoever left the panel open, it was not Adam.

"Were there any of the other servants more in Sir Robert's confidence than yourself?"

"Oh no," a ready and decided answer. "Under Sir Robert I ruled everything outside and inside the Castle, when absent for a day, I, in his place attended the young ladies in their walks and drives."

"Tell the coachman to get the carriage in readiness, with his best horses, and his best harness."

Adam bowed and was gone; after his departure, Sir Richard took his way to the armory; seen in the daylight it bore witness to the truth of Adam's testimony, the armory on the walls, everything in and about the place, was covered with dust and cobwebs, only from the door to the sliding panel there was a narrow

path, shewing that there at least a human foot had passed and repassed while everywhere else dust reigned supreme.

"I must have been mistaken," soliloquized he, "in the hurry of my flight I must have fancied I shut the panel, there is no other way of accounting for its being open."

With the broad daylight came a feeling of contempt for the nervous excitement which made him leave the place so quickly the previous evening, he smiled when he thought of the fear which then prevented him, not only from examining the cage, but also impelled his footsteps in leaving the armory, and gaining the inhabited part of the house.

"Strange client!" said he mentally, "that fear produced upon me, instead of making me brave in self defence, I verily believe a child could then, have again shut me up in that horrible cage."

He entered the panel staircase, and ascended to the low apartment, so long his woeeful abiding place. Even before putting his foot on its floor, he beheld with dismay, the lantern which had fallen from the hands of the girls, also the food and water they had brought; there indeed was convincing proof that some one must have been in the apartment since his flight; everything else was untouched, the box with the biscuits, the foot water in the bottom of the flagon, he so often that last day tried to drink, and could not; the skins, the shepherd's plaid, the string he had made from one of the skins, and try to hang himself by; all exactly as he had last seen them. The lantern he picked up, it was such an one as was used by the grooms in visiting the stable at night; the sight of that lantern almost turned him from his purpose of going to Inchdrewer.

On the side of the cage furthest from the staircase, was a platter of dried up food, and a flagon of water. Some one else knew the secret of the cage in the eastern tower, yet who could that one be?

"I have heard!" thought he, of dying men who summoning all their strength, achieved by an almost superhuman effort in the last hour of their existence, what they could not do for days, or even weeks previous; most likely he has come to tell me, I must die of starvation, that this was the last food he could ever bring and in his dread at finding his victim gone, with the horrible conviction forced upon him that his captive was free, was now his master, would come back soon to consign him to prison walls, and hard labour for life,—his light fell from his hands, he went back to his bed to die." This explanation was the one which appeared most reasonable and suited him best, and he thought over it until he convinced himself it might be the right one.

He descended the staircase, shut the panel and closing the armory door departed.

It was with mingled feelings of hope and doubt that Sir Richard Cuninghame seated in his handsome carriage, attended by a coachman, and servant in livery approached Inchdrewer Castle, and as he was ushered into the presence of the Lady whose favor he came to seek, the latter feeling greatly preoccupied.

As he entered the drawing room where Lady Hamilton was seated, he heard a light ringing laugh he knew full well, and as he heard, his bounding pulse told him, that it had still the power to thrill his heart to its inmost core as in the old time.

The Lady was seated at a table with writing materials before her, two or three little children playing at her feet; some piquant remark made by one of whom had drawn forth the laugh, that reminded her guest so forcibly of his love.

The Lady held out her hand to him as he entered saying pleasantly, and with no more surprise in her accents than if she had seen him yesterday.

"How do you do Sir Richard Cuninghame; I am very happy to see you."

He took her offered hand, and its touch sent a second and a sharper thrill to his heart, but as he looked on the Lady, a feeling of disappointment arose, she was certainly very different from her bright youthful looking sister, whose lithe figure, and graceful movements Sir Richard expected to see in Lady Hamilton.

The Lady who half rose to greet him, would have appeared to the veriest stranger a middle aged woman, graceful and dignified to be sure; grace and dignity were the birthright of her race, and she could not lose them, but the graceful billowy motion of youth was gone for ever, in its place had come the heavy sweep of the shore bound waves.

The face was still one of great beauty, the eyes and hair had lost nothing of the lustre, by aid of which they had fascinated the young heart of Richard Cuninghame, and held it in sure keeping so many long years, but the eyes had a dreamy look, as if seeking for something they never hoped to find, and the bright hair was folded in heavy braids away under the pure white coil appropriate to widow-hood, the gauzy scarf like ends of which, fell like a veil over the black velvet dress that suited the large figure, and dignified air of the wearer, the lily on her face was fair as in her youth, but it was the white of alabaster, not of a flower, the rose leaf had fled for ever.

"Pray be seated!" continued the Lady in tones of sure welcome, which at once reassured and gave confidence to her guest. "I was so pleased when Lady Morton informed me of your arrival, so well timed and so unexpected; your grandchildren are sweet as well as beautiful