

"Forward then. Death to the Maccons—one and all, root and branch, man, wife and child. Death to Sir Colin!"

"There'll be the devil to pay then," said Rory fiercely, "I'll shoot the first that lays a finger on him without my word." "You forgot," whispered one to his neighbor, "Dark Rory himself is half a Maccon."

"Get out the sweeps," said the outlaw

With an order and promptitude worthy a better enterprise, the robbers put the lugger in fighting trim. The mist had risen a little, and a hazy moon gave a candle's light to the scene. They muffled the long oars and at a word from their leader took their places each silent and stern but inwardly exultant. The lugger glided from her moorings with scarcely a sound.

It seemed to Helen, watching from the shore, that there was something diabolically dogged in the stealthy sweep of her black hull across a patch of moonlight. But it was gone again in a moment; and she saw it no more, yet it left an impression on her mind of a resolute Devil-may-care spirit that haunted her for hours after.

"Keep well out, lads," said Rory, "as you round the point."

"Ay, ay," was the answer of the man at the tiller.

They rested on their oars for a moment and listened—listened as they had done a thousand times before during the night-time to the murmurs of the dark. Men, whose business for the most part, was concerned with other folk's cattle-yards, had need of every precaution. All the hundred and one sounds, which meant so little to the vast company stroked out in sleep behind their bolted doors and shutters, carried a meaning to their ears of the utmost importance.

But there was no sound except the lap-lapping of the tide against the hull.

"Forward again," said Rory, and the lugger renewed her course. About half a mile away from the brig she hove to. Roderick with his smith—an indispensable member of the band—took the small boat. They rowed into the narrow channel running now like a mill-race between the reefs. The brig loomed before them; a huge phantom, for the mist had fallen again and hung a ragged curtain all round, faintly luminous through the light of the moon. A few men were brawling on her decks, most of them, however, were beyond that state of exuberant good-humour and sprawled about in every posture and condition of intoxication.

The boat crawled under her bows. Her cable was cut. It sank with a rattle, and immediately the brig began to drift. Rory pushed off, confident that in another minute she would be on the rocks. Twice she scraped her sides; but her crew did not heed the warning. Sir Colin snored on in his cabin and his men played ducks and drakes with their wits on deck.

Nearer she swung; then with a last wild sweep crashed full at the black saw-edges. A shiver ran from stem to stern. The crew staggered to their feet.

"Gad! we're on the rocks."

A yell burst from their lips while the brig launched forward again and all her timbers cracked and shook.

"We're on the rocks. Do you hear, lads? The anchor's gone. Curse those hill robbers: this is their work."

They flundered to the bulwarks and stared down.

"Lordie! what a plight," said one with a stupid leer; then the seriousness of the look-out dawned on his fuddled brains.

"Rouse, Sir Colin," he called, "we'll be at the bottom in a trice."

But at that moment the black hull of the lugger swept down on them, and grappled herself to the brig. Rory leaped aboard, followed by his men.

"Confusion take you," cried he, "confusion at the hands of Glen Lara wolves, and a black death. What ho! my lads, overboard with them. Give it them, give it them."

"Cockle-brained callants," stormed Sir Colin reeling from his cabin, "have you no respect—? Curse it! What's wrong?"

He was driven back against the mast by the impetus. No one answered him, no one heard him. His men were hurled overboard, some on the rocks, some into the sea, they were as twigs in the strong cruel hands of Dark Rory's band.

"A plague on you, ill-favoured buckies," spluttered Sir Colin, "why didn't you charge us fair and square? Spying, sneaking gipsies and hill-robbers that you are."

"Charge you fair and square! Did you charge me fair and square?" said Rory dealing a blow that splintered the old man's sword and left him only the hilt.

Sir Colin recognized the voice. He flung the broken hilt in the outlaw's face.

But he was tripped from behind and fell with a crash. Two men dragged him off to the lugger.

"All aboard!" shouted Rory.

"All aboard," was the answer.

He cast a look round on the brig. A few dark forms were huddled on the deck, and the moon breaking through the mist showed him her hopeless and desolate plight. A seam had opened in her side.

"Cast off," he said, and the lugger sailed away.

But as they withdrew from the shadow of the larger vessel a scornful cry came to them from the shore.

"It's your big fellow who tipped over," said one. "Gad! but he swam like a duck though he was three sheets in the wind."

"What does he say?" asked Rory.

They paused and listened. Then the far off voice came like a murmur.

"I'll be avenged."

(To Be Continued.)

THE FRIENDLY HAND.

Rev. Mark Guy Pearse relates this story: "I was waiting for a train a little while ago. A man came to me and said, 'You don't remember me?' I said, 'Yes I do. I remember you when you were a boy. When did I see you last?' 'Don't you remember while you were preaching to 3,000 people you saw me and called me up on the platform? You saw that I was low down and you said, 'Wherever you see me, whatever company I am in, come and shake hands with me, because I knew you when you were a boy.'"

"That was the turning point of my life; I don't know what you preached about, but I said if you would shake hands with me like that there is some hope for me. That was nineteen years ago. I am a prosperous manufacturer now, and have a devoted wife and family. 'You have forgotten that text?' I said. 'Yes.' 'And you don't remember the sermon?' 'No.' 'That sermon that I had prepared so carefully!' No, but the grasp of the hand saved him. One little bit of love weighs down all oratory, or whatever you like to call it."

The prodigal should not forget that no matter how many swine there may be around him he has still a father's nouse to go to. And such women as those in John 8:13-11 should ever remember that there is forgiveness at the hands of the Redeemer. Swine are poor companions and bad men are hard masters, but Christ is always merciful. He waits for even the chief of sinners. In that way lies the sinner's opportunity. He is waiting to "vindicate" the higher spiritual law of a new chance. Penitence never leads in vain.

To destroy the microscope does not remove the impurities from the food. We call truth impracticable does not remove the errors which it discloses. To quench the thirst with aconite is death and not life.

A JAPANESE MARTYR.

Thousands of young people who are studying "Sunrise in the Sunrise Kingdom" have been profoundly impressed with the incident related in the following paragraph, and the author's comment thereon:

"Japan has produced one man who gave his life to save the people of his province from oppression and ruin. He was cruelly crucified, his innocent wife with him, and their children were barbarously executed before the parents' eyes. Yet this man's dying words on the cross were: 'Had I five hundred lives, I'd gladly give them all for you, my people.' So far as I know there is no story in all history so closely resembling that of the crucifixion of Christ as this. The nation that can produce one such hero has the potency and promise of noble morality. This fearlessness of death in the face of duty runs all through the history of the people, which tells of wives who willingly died for their husbands, of children for their parents, of parents for their children, and of subjects for their lords."

Trust not to appearances; the drum which makes most noise is filled with wind.

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