

"Sometimes we live ourselves to death too quickly. In my schooldays I watched a mouse in a jar of oxygen do that", said The Honourable.

"That is the best way to die", said Pretty Pierre—"much."

Jo Gordiner had been over the path before. He was confident of the way, and proud of his office of guide.

"Climb Mount Blanc if you will", said The Honourable, "but leave me these White Bastions of the Selkirks."

Even so. They have not seen the Snowy Hills of God who have yet to look upon the Rocky Mountains, absolute, stupendous, sublimely grave.

Jo Gordiner and Pretty Pierre strode on together. They being well away from the other two, The Honourable turned and said to Shon: "What was the name of the man that wrote that song of yours again, Shon?"

"Lawless."

"Yes, but his first name."

"Duke—Duke Lawless."

There was a pause in which the other seemed to be intently studying the glacier above them. Then he said: "What was he like?—in appearance, I mean."

"A trifle more than your six feet, about your color of hair and eyes, and with a trick of smilin' that would melt the heart of an exciseman, and O'Connell's own at a joke, barrin' a time or two that he got hold of a pile of papers from the ould country. By the Grave of St. Shon, thin he was as dry of fun as a piece of blotting-paper. And he said at last, before he was aisy and free again: 'Shon,' says he, 'it's better to burn your ships behind ye, isn't it?'"

"And I, havin' thought of a glen in ould Ireland that I'll never see again, nor any that's in it, said: 'Not only burn them to the water's edge, Duke Lawless, but swear to your own soul that they never lived, but in the dreams of the night.'"

"You're right there, Shon", says he, and after that no luck was bad enough to cloud the gay heart of him; and bad enough it was sometimes."

"And why do you fear that he is not alive?"

"Because I met an old mate of mine one day on the 'Frazer', and he said that Lawless had never come to Cloncurry, and a hard, hard road it was to travel."

Jo Gordiner was calling to them, and there the conversation ended. In a few minutes the four stood on the edge of the glacier. Each man had a long hickory stick which served as alpenstock, a bag hung at his side, and tied to his back was his gold-pan, the hollow side in, of course. Shon's was tied a little lower down than the others.

They passed up this solid river of ice, this giant power at endless strife with the colossal hills, up toward its head. The Honourable was the first to reach the point of vantage, and to look down upon the vast and wandering fissures, the frigid bulwarks, the rampired fortresses of ice, the ceaseless snows, the aisles of the White Sanctuary through which Nature's portentous antiphonals rolled. Shon was a short distance below with his hand over his eyes sweeping the semi-circle of glory.

Suddenly there was a sharp cry: "*Mon Dieu! Look!*" shouted Pretty Pierre.

Shon McGann had fallen on a smooth pavement of ice. The gold-pan was beneath him; and down the glacier he was whirled—whirled, for Shon had stuck his heels in the ice,

and the gold-pan performed a series of circles as it sped down the incline. His fingers clutched the ice and snow, but they only left a red mark of blood behind. Must he go the whole course of that frozen slide plump into the wild depths below?

"*Mon dieu—mon Dieu!*" said Pretty Pierre, piteously. The face of The Honourable was set and tense. Jo Gordiner's hand clutched his throat as if he choked. Still Shon speeds. It is a matter of seconds only. The tragedy crowds to the awful end.

Does it? See!

There is a tilt in the glacier, and the gold-pan suddenly whirling again swings to the outer edge, and shoots over.

As if hurled from a catapult, the Irishman is ejected from the white monster's back. He falls on a wide shelf of ice, covered with unimpacted snow, through which he is tunneled, and drops on another ledge below, near the path by which he and his companions had ascended.

"Shield from the Finish!" said Jo Gordiner.

"*Le pauvre Shon*," added Pretty Pierre.

The Honourable was making his way down, his brain haunted by the words, "He'll never go back to Farcalladen more."

But Jo Gordiner was right.

For Shon McGann is alive. He lies breathless, helpless, for a moment; then he sits up and seans his lacerated fingers; he looks up the path by which he had come; he looks down the path he seemed destined to go; he starts to scratch his head, but pauses in the act, by reason of his fingers.

Then he said: "It's my mother wouldn't know me from a can of cold meat if I hadn't stopped at this station; but wurra-wurra, what a car it was to come in!" And he looked at his tattered clothes and bare elbows. He then unbuckled the gold-pan, and no easy task was it with his ragged fingers. "Twas not for deep minin' I brought ye" he said to the pan, "nor for serapin' the clothes from me back."

Just then the Honourable came up: "Shon, my man! Alive, thank God! How is it with you?"

"I'm hardly worth the lookin' at. I wouldn't turn my back to you for a ransom."

"It's enough that you're here at all."

"*Ah roila!* this Irishman!" said Pretty Pierre, as his light fingers touched Shon's bare bruised arm.

This from Pretty Pierre!

There was that in the voice which went to Shon's heart. Who could have guessed that Pretty Pierre the Gambler would ever show a sign of sympathy or friendship for anybody?

But it goes to prove that you can never be exact in your estimate of character.

Jo Gordiner only said jestingly: "Say now, what are you doing Shon, bringing us down here, when we might be well into the valley by this time."

"That in your face and the hair off your head", said Shon; "it's little you know a toboggan ride when you see one. I'll take my share of the grog by the same token."

The Honourable uncorked his flask.

"For it's rest when the gallop is over, me men!

And it's here's to the lads that have ridden their last;
And it's here's"—

But Shon had fainted with the flask in his hand and this snatch of a song on his lips.

They reached shelter that night. Had it not been for the accident, they would have got to their destination in the valley; but here they were twelve miles from it. Whether this was fortunate or unfortunate, may be seen later. Com-