

ding at me, "but he cannot make out the meaning of the old rhyme."

"What old rhyme?" inquired Mrs. Urquhart, entering and bidding us good-morning.

"The tapestry legend, mamma—"

"Who seeks his own with kingly eye,

Beware the knightly arm!"

"Stuff and nonsense!" was the maternal reply. "Here is Johnnie Adams come to skate with you."

"Oh yes," cried Jessie, "and you promised to teach me, Tom."

"All right," said her brother. "Come along, Johnnie," and, seizing a dark-skinned youth by the arm without permitting him to speak, he carried him to the "school-room," where skates and all implements for outdoor amusements were laid up in ordinary.

"I must show you the way, then," said Jessie, and, rising as she spoke, she conducted me to the room where the boys were already looking out for their skates.

I was introduced to John Adams, and I didn't like him. He was very dark-skinned, having been born in the West Indies, where his father was the possessor of some sugar plantations. Adams was residing with his uncle (whose house was some few miles from the castle) for the purpose of completing his education. He was quick tempered, and Tom told me in confidence, that he (Adams) was in love with Jessie; that he (Tom) always addressed Adams as "Canes," in delicate allusion to his father's plantations, as I supposed, and that Adams had lots of money.

"Canes," so far justified Tom's rude remark respecting Jessie, who was by at least three years his senior, that he immediately constituted himself her attendant, a proceeding which I felt inclined to resent. Our rivalry led to a mere exchange of defiant looks at that time. It led to something else afterwards, as you will hear.

We got on the pond which, covered with smooth, thick ice, gave us capital skating-room. "Canes," of course, knelt at Jessie's feet and fastened her skates, while I, having inducted Mrs. Urquhart into an improvised sleigh, pushed her merrily over the frozen surface. Tom went through various figures in advance of us, and showed us the regular "North Pole Breakdown," as he termed it. This difficult figure was performed on one leg, while the other was held at arm's length by the heel, and as the performer was safe to fall twice out of every three times he essayed to cut the requisite figure, the performance was not inaptly termed. "Canes" and I both tried and failed, but as Jessie laughed at him, I was in a measure consoled. This state of things could not continue, and when after luncheon he hinted that was a "donkey," I followed him out of the castle on his homeward way and challenged him to fight! He quickly accepted, and we at once retired behind a wall of loose stone, and in three inches of snow began to pommel each other delightfully. We had several rounds, and the trampled snow showed traces of a severe encounter. Red drops fell heavily on the white carpet which Nature had so bountifully spread, until as we paused for breath after an unusually severe "round," we felt we had almost enough I had but one serviceable eye—"Canes" nose was much damaged, and his lip was cut; so was my hand. Thus bearing equal tokens of battle we sullenly agreed to a cessation of hostilities.

"Do you want any more?" inquired Adams.

"Do you?" said I.

In this manner a truce was concluded, and we parted only half satisfied, but not caring to renew the fight just then.

"I'll be even with you, you English donkey," shouted Adams, when he had got some distance on his homeward road. "He haw, he haw!" he went on, imitating the braying of the animal. I stopped and sent a stone flying after him, which fortunately did not strike him, and then I returned to the castle.

On my arrival I evaded inquiry as to my appearance by pleading a fall on the ice, but communicated the true facts of the case to Tom.

"You'd better mind your eye," said he; "Canes" will never rest till he has done you a mischief. What an ass he is! I'll tell Jessie to shut him up."

"Pray do nothing of the sort," I said; "don't let your sister know we have been fighting."

"Very well," replied Tom, "as you wish. But 'Canes' is an ass all the same!"

Of course I did not contradict this, and the subject dropped. After dinner that evening we held a consultation, and it was finally determined that on the last night of the Old Year we should make the long contemplated search for the hidden treasure.

I need not dwell upon our Christmas festivities. Suffice it to say that we were a merry little party. I learnt to dance a "reel," which performance on that occasion well deserved the title, for whisky toddy and the evolutions of the dance "sent me spinning," as Tom said, and I was glad to retire at one a. m. I have reason to believe that the others had breakfast before they went to bed, but of this I cannot be sure.

The important day arrived. Mr. Urquhart was obliged to go to Glasgow on business, but left us many directions and warnings as to our proceedings. Mrs. Urquhart derided the entire business, and Jessie was apparently quite uninterested, merely consenting to accompany us in order to "hold the light."

In the afternoon, to my disgust, Adams appeared, and was asked by Mrs. Urquhart to remain till the next day to assist us in our search and subsequent vigil. This he willingly agreed to do, and had the tact to conceal his real feelings towards me, but Tom gave me a hint not to trust him and his friendly overtures. "Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes," I muttered in reply, and Tom nodded. Jessie seemed to pay little attention to Adams and was apparently unconscious of his evident devotion, whereat he was wroth.

At seven o'clock in the evening, we set out on our "expedition in the following order, viz.—

First, Tom Urquhart, armed with a hammer, and a lantern to scare the ghosts.

Second, myself, carrying a small iron bar (use unknown), supposed to be intended for wrenching open secret panels, and such like.

Third, Jessie, a pine torch in each hand, and wearing an air of curiosity which her assumed nonchalance could not entirely hide.

Fourth, John Adams, armed with a rusty axe for the avowed purpose of slaying rats and mice. Ghosts were also included in the category of intended victims.

Thus accoutred, we started on that last evening of December, promising to return in time to "see the New Year in," with all formality and jollity.

Descending to the basement, Tom led the way along a stone-paved passage, which terminated in an iron door. This being unlocked, disclosed a flight of narrow and winding stone steps.

We mounted, and ever and anon the moonlight, streaming through the loopholes, disclosed the worn steps, and the damp stalactites dripping on the cornices. We soon reached another door, which admitted us with some difficulty. Pushing aside a curtain, Tom bade us enter, saying, "There, we are now in the 'Tapestry Chamber' of the Watch Tower."

The sensation was scarcely pleasant. The chamber was hung with rich old tapestry which waved to and fro in the draught, giving to the figures worked upon it, which had become visible in the light of Jessie's torches, an unpleasant life-like movement. This and the shadows thrown by the moon through the ivy-clad windows, made the Tapestry Chamber a fearsome and ghoulish place to be left alone in on a winter's night.

Tom and Jessie had no such sensations. The former taking the torches from his sister and fastening them above the ancient fire-place, throwing the light full upon the centre figure of a group representing some king seated on his throne, surrounded by his officers and attendants. The eyes of the monarch were opened widely, and apparently regarding with much interest a particular spot in the opposite corner of the room, which was shrouded in weird gloom.

"Now," said Tom, breaking the oppressive silence, "I think that there is real meaning in the legend, and that the line—

"Who seeks his own with kingly eye."

refers to the direction of the eyes of this king who, by the by, is the only king worked on the whole tapestry. Do you agree?"

We all did.

"Well," continued Tom, "I don't think much of the 'knightly arm' mentioned, because I can find no such thing. So our first business is to search for some indication of a hiding-place in that corner opposite; eh?"

Again his hearers applauded, and I ventured—

"Let us measure with a bit of string the exact direction of the king's glance!"

"Bravo!" said Tom, "that's the thing."

"I thought of that," said Adams, "and have got the string."

"Then why didn't you say so before?" I retorted contemptuously.

"Never mind," said Tom, fearing an explosion, "'Canes' has got the string. Catch hold, 'Canes.'"

Adams did as he was requested, standing at me all the time, holding the twine with one hand against the tapestry, and in the other grasping the rusty axe.

"Isn't he savage!" I whispered to Jessie.

"Don't vex him," she replied, "he is very passionate, and never stays to think when he is angry."

We all crossed the room where Tom was marking the wall at the point the string touched.

"Strike the wall and listen for an indication of a panel or opening."

We sounded the walls in all directions without effect, even the direction of the monarch's left eye was gauged—for his Majesty seemed afflicted with a permanent squint—but without success.

"Bother it," cried Tom, striking the wall a parting blow with his hammer, when, to our horror and amazement, a loud clang of metal was given forth.

A deep silence ensued, at length Tom spoke—

"There is a plate or something," and he thrust his knife against the wall, but the blade remained embedded in the wood.

"Perhaps there is a spring," Jessie suggested, nervously.

We searched and found a small button let into a circular iron plate, the whole so stained as to appear, even under careful inspection, to be part of the oaken panelling.

"The legend is right after all," Tom cried; "won't mamma be astonished?"

"Let us get inside," suggested Adams, practically.

Tom pressed the spring, the panel moved slowly back; but as he withdrew the pressure it returned forcibly to its place.

"Try again," I said, as I pressed forward to the opening, and closely followed by Adams, stepped over the wainscoting. I just caught a glimpse of a human skeleton, when a loud scream startled me, and made Tom turn round. I was conscious of something descending upon my head, a dull blow succeeded, and felled me down amid a pile of bones, while the panel rushed to its place, and I was a prisoner! I became insensible!

How long I remained so I don't know, about ten minutes, I believe; and when my consciousness returned I was lying on the floor of the Tapestry Chamber, supported by Tom, while Jessie rubbed my forehead with snow. I soon distinguished Tom's voice.

"You're a murderer, Adams; why did you hit him with that axe, you spiteful fellow?"

I heard the indignant denial, and I mustered strength and sat up.

"You villain," I said, "you intended to murder me I know, and I'll have you prosecuted for it."

"It's a lie," was all the answer Adams vouchsafed.

"You don't bleed much," said Tom to me; "you must have a jolly thick skull, old fellow!"

"I am glad of it," said Jessie, in a cheering tone; "you are better now, are you not?"

I replied in the affirmative, and still threatening Adams with all the penalties of the law, I reached the staircase, assisted by Jessie and her brother.

"How can we explain this?" asked the latter.

"Tell the truth, of course," cried Jessie, indignantly; "it's shameful! Mr. Adams, you need not add falsehood to your other misdeeds," she added, as "Canes" indignantly repelled her accusation.

"The panel knocked him down," he said.

"And inflicted the wound also," cried Jessie, ironically.

"Fie for shame, Mr. Adams, your axe gave the blow, and you know it. Let me see," she added impetuously.

Snatching the weapon from his grasp, she and Tom examined it closely. There was no trace of blood upon it!

"You are too 'deep' for us, 'Canes,'" said Tom; "but uncle must have carried by this time. I'll fetch the doctor up to see you, old fellow."

Dr. McLeod was Mrs. Urquhart's brother, and was expected that evening.

Jessie and "Canes" remained apart during Tom's absence, and none of us spoke till we heard the approaching footsteps.

"What's all this," inquired the Doctor, as he proceeded to examine my hurt.

"Could this axe have inflicted that wound, uncle?" inquired Jessie.

Dr. McLeod looked hard at her, then at the axe, examined the place, and then said "No," decidedly.

"There, do you believe me now?" exclaimed Adams.

"Come, come, Tom, what's all this mystery," said his uncle, "what pranks have you boys been playing?"

Thereupon Tom told him the whole affair, ending with a request that he would be secret.

"There may be something more in this than we imagine," said the Doctor. "Let me examine the panel."

We crossed the room once more and pressed the spring. The panel moved slowly aside, and the Doctor entered.

His ejaculations as he crossed the inner room sufficiently evinced his surprise, and after an exclamation of horror, he bade Jessie fetch her father and mother instantly.

Mr. Urquhart, who had returned from Glasgow with his brother-in-law, was, with his wife, soon amongst us.

His astonishment was great when assisting us in our wild goose chase, as he deemed it, he found his sedate relative.

"Look here, Urquhart," cried the Doctor as soon as he perceived him, "this is really a curious thing;" and coming out from the inner room he exhibited to his wondering audience a blanched skull.

"This young gentleman," he continued, indicating me, "has entered that room unexpectedly, and has received a blow in almost the same spot as did the owner of this skull," and the Doctor pointed out an incision in the bony relic he poised in his hand.

"Why, that skull must have lain there for ages," said Mr. Urquhart. "I never heard of any opening in the Tower. But for Tom's persistence respecting an old legend we should not have discovered it now."

"But how could he have been killed," inquired Mrs. Urquhart, timidly.

Tom, who had all this time been holding the panel back, here screamed out—

"I know; it is the 'knightly arm' of the rhyme that gave those blows."

"The boy may be right," said Mr. Urquhart.

"Yes, papa," continued Tom, "the legend says,—

"Who seeks his own with kingly eye, Beware the knightly arm."

"We found this door by following the 'kingly eye,' so the 'knightly arm' has done the mischief!"

Doctor McLeod, who had during the foregoing conversation been examining the inner chamber, at this juncture called out—

"I have it! What fiendish ingenuity!"

We all rushed to the opening except Tom; our astonishment mingled with a sensation of fear, which I cannot describe. But our horror may be guessed, when on joining the Doctor, we perceived behind the panel, the life-size figure of a man clad in rusty armour, and holding in his uplifted hand a rusty axe!

"But," said Mrs. Urquhart, after a pause, "how does this effect the panel?"

"You shall see," replied her brother; "stand back all of you. Tom, let go the spring," he shouted.

Tom obeyed; the panel shut to its place, and as it glided back the armed hand of the figure descended across the opening with a force which but for age and rust would have been irresistible!

"That is the 'knightly arm' then," we all cried.

"You had a narrow escape, my boy," said the Doctor, patting my head.

I thought so too, but said nothing.

Tom now opened the panel, and was shown the device which afforded him immense satisfaction, and turning to Adams begged his pardon on the spot, as did Jessie immediately afterwards.

When we had tried the novel experiment two or three times, Mr. Urquhart (now thoroughly roused) suggested further search while the ladies prepared supper. We accordingly went to work, and on removing the heap of bones, discovered a small trap-door, leading apparently to a lower chamber.

After testing the purity of the air, Adams as the lightest of the party was let carefully down, and in a few moments he shouted that there was a passage. The Doctor volunteered to descend and soon joined Adams. After some time, they both returned dusty, and with torn clothes, and when Adams was pulled up, we perceived that he carried a small iron box in his hand.

"We found this," he said, "and there is another. Can you get a ladder?"

Tom and I soon procured one, and letting it down we descended and found Doctor McLeod calmly resting, lantern in hand, in a small vault cut out of the thickness of the wall, at the end of a rough, sloping, and very narrow passage. With his assistance, we dragged the small iron chest on which he was seated, to the foot of the ladder, up which, after several failures, we succeeded in hoisting the box to the floor whereon we stood. Scarcely pausing to take breath, we youngsters pulled and pushed the prize to the head of the winding stair, down which we lowered it. Once on the terra-firma of the ground floor of the Castle, our difficulties were at an end, and we triumphantly rested our treasure in the house-keeper's room. Here we were joined by all the inhabitants of the Castle, and a few well-applied blows soon smashed the rust-eaten hinges. A goodly sight met our eager gaze. Several antique crosses, with rosaries attached; two daggers with splendidly-jewelled hilts; the remains (terribly moth-eaten) of a quantity of gold lace or cloth of gold, and various relics of more or less value. Quite at the bottom of the large box were some small leather bags of silver coins, with some copper pieces. One of the latter is by my side as I write, and bears date 1510.

In the smaller chest we found three handsome "dags," or short pistols. There were many other things which I have forgotten.

After all had been carefully replaced, we repaired to the dining-room, where a repast worthy of the occasion had been prepared. Need I dwell upon the festivity of that never-to-be-forgotten New Year's Eve! Adams and I under the combined influence of toddy and treasure, swore eternal friendship, which I regret to say, was not so lasting as it might have been. Doctor McLeod sang a comic song, and we all joined in "Auld Lang Syne" to an extent unprecedented in Castle Urquhart, and I believe, unknown even in cheerful Glasgow, which town my friend Christie tells me is the pattern of hospitality. Be this as it may, it was very early (or very late) ere we retired to bed and got rid of the festive strains and fumes of Scottish songs and Scottish punch.

Since then, some songs and some punch may have passed my lips, but neither have had the true flavour of Castle Urquhart.

Tom and his sister are still alive; she has changed her name. It is not Adams, however; and I often think that by spending my Christmas holidays at Castle Urquhart, I did indeed light upon a Treasure.

THE END.