

## THE AUSTRALIAN DUKE; OR, THE NEW UTOPIA.

CHAPTER XV.—(Continued.)

"He said some very civil things about your notions on that head when I saw him in Edwards'." "Well, you shall judge for yourself; mine-ventilation was always a hobby of mine own, and there is fine scope for indulging it at Bradford."

The early train on Monday morning bore me away from the hills and valleys of Glenleven, from the gray minister, and the clear river bubbling among its rocks, and the granite peaks and quiet walls among which I had spent a fortnight so rich in bright and ennobling thoughts that it seemed to me as if I had been out of the busy world for a twelvemonth. An hour or two brought us to the smoke and asphalt of Bradford; and the spell was rudely broken. Grant twitted me a little on my pensive mood, and my reluctance to return to common life, and took me to the house of his engineer, telling me it was an excellent school for curing a man of day-dreams. He was soon busy with plans and sections, and I could not but marvel at the versatility of his mind, which could so easily turn from subjects of profoundest interior interest to the practical details of machinery and ventilation. He spoke like a man who understood what he was talking about, and evidently enjoyed the endless explanation of doors, and double shafts, and weight of atmosphere that sounded in my ears like a shrill-bell.

"Drybones will be here to-morrow," said Grant, at last; "and before he comes I shall have an examination of the Hen and Chickens myself."

"The Hen and Chickens?"

"Yes, my dear sir, we name our mines hereabouts, and this particular one, which is named after the multitude of cuttings proceeding from the main shaft. It was once considered the most dangerous mine of the district, but we have tried this plan of double shaft ventilation, and have redeemed its reputation. I think we shall teach Drybones a thing or two."

"How far is it from here?"

"About two miles, and the horses are at the door; so before returning to civilized life come and take your first lesson in mine engineering."

We mounted and rode off, and on the road he explained to me the system of ventilation which had been introduced into this particular mine, of which I retain only the general recollection that the air was admitted by one shaft and forced through the mine, leaving it by another; that these two shafts were at a considerable distance one from the other, and that the workings in the mine were, furthermore, divided into different compartments, or "panels," as they were called, isolated one from another by certain strong doors, the object being, in case of an accident occurring in one of them, to prevent its extending to the others. But the most important system of doors was at what he called the "Little Shaft," in a part of the mine which, for one cause or another, often generated the bad air. It was the business for one gang of men to open these doors at certain hours and close them at others, according to the part of the mine in which the workings happened to be going on; and by a careful attention to the system and regulations he had devised, all accidents had now, for a considerable time, been prevented.

"The shaft we are going to inspect first of all," he continued, "is the great shaft; the little one is a mile and a half away on the other side of the hill; but Dymock, the engineer, tells me that the men are at work on this side, and I am anxious to ascertain if the whole thing is in order before Drybones begins his visitation to-morrow."

We reached what Grant had called "the Great Shaft." I am not a professor, dear reader, and can only explain this much, that when a mine is ventilated by two shafts, one shaft is necessarily longer and deeper than the other, and the weight of the air column, therefore, heavier than at the shorter shaft. This causes the air to be forced in at the long shaft and out at the short one; and entering pure and wholesome, the air travels through the mine, issuing forth at the further end clogged with noxious gases. The "Great Shaft," then, was the spot where the air was forced in. Grant inspected the machinery, received a number of details from the overseer in attendance, and was informed that one hundred and eighty men were actually at work on the northern side of the mine. The "Little Shaft" was on the southern side, and no miners were at work on that side; but a certain number of men were on duty there attending to the doors, for the purpose of ventilation.

Grant proposed a walk to the Little Shaft, leaving our horses under the care of the overseer; and we set out, climbing the hill (very different in its aspect from the leafy meadows of Glenleven), and descending on the other side to a spot where a few sheds, some machinery, and a signal house, with a telegraph communicating with the works at the other side, indicated the locality we were in quest of.

"But where were the men? Not one was visible. In the shaft, I suppose," said Grant, a supposition quickly dispelled on approaching the mouth of the aperture, which displayed the necessary arrangements for descending it, prepared and ready for use; no one it was evident, had as yet gone down. Grant looked thoughtful, not to say perplexed. Presently he caught sight of a shock of hair and a ragged jacket in one of the sheds, and advancing to the spot, laid hands on a wild-looking boy, who seemed to shun observation.

"Hallo! whom have we here? Who are you, my lad?"

No answer.

"Where are the men on duty?"

"I don't know."

"Are they in the shaft?"

"Don't know, tell 'ee."

"Now, my lad, see here," said Grant. "That overseer will be here in an hour, and if he finds no one here but you, and you refuse to answer his questions, it will be worse for you. Come, none of that! as the creature tried to free itself from the strong grasp; 'you'll stay where you are; and if you don't want all the bones in your body broken when the overseer comes, think better of it, and tell me where Jones and the other fellow are at this moment.'"

The boy scratched his head, and fidgeted about in sore distress for a minute or so, and then came out the reply: "Well, I guess they're at the 'Feathers.'"

"The Feathers?"

"Aye, the public, Jones is father to I, and he bid me wait."

Grant gave a groan. The little public house on the road to Bradford, rejoicing in the sign of the Prince of Wales' Feathers, had proved too strong in its attractions for the guardian of the Little Shaft. After a moment's silence he resumed his interrogation. "See here," he said, "you'll run off to the Feathers, and tell your father the Duke of Leven is waiting for him here. Now be sharp."

"And leaving hold of his collar, Tim darted off down the hill, and disappeared in the road."

"Isn't it enough to break a man's heart?" said Grant. "Turn where you will, do what you will, 'always confronted with the creature's evil genius, an air of deep pre-occupation. In a few minutes Tim returned in company with a big man, who, judging by his appearance, was not the better for his sojourn at the Feathers. He surveyed the Duke with an air of stupid amazement, and in reply to his questions gave an incoherent answer which too plainly betrayed the fact that the visit to the old house had not been a brief or passing one. Grant turned to the boy. 'Is this your father?'"

"No."

"Then where is he, and why didn't you bring him?"

"Then came the fatal reply: 'Father's drunk.'"

Yes, it was so; Jones, the responsible guardian and doorkeeper was drunk, his companion little better; and the small amount of sense retained by the latter was of little purpose, for he was not the responsible man in charge of the shaft; and by himself, even had he been sober, could not have been questioning us at last gathered the alarming fact, that the shaft had not been entered nor the ventilation doors attended to that morning; that Jones, the only man of the two who understood the business, was past all efforts to recall him to consciousness, and that his comrade was capable only of working the machinery by which the bucket was lowered into and raised out of the shaft. Of the doors and management he knew nothing.

The situation was serious: Grant looked at his watch. "How long were we coming from the Great Shaft?"

"Three quarters of an hour or thereabouts."

"And this fellow would get over the ground in half an hour. Well, we must try what can be done." He tore a leaf from his pocket-book, and wrote the following words: "The two men drunk; doors unopened. Signal all the men out of the mine. Send us a gang at once to see to things here."—LEVEN.

Folding it up, and directing it to the overseer, he gave it to the boy, with half-a-crown, and bade him run for his life with it to the Great Shaft. If you are quick and faithful, you shall have the same sum when you return, now lose no time, but be off."

The boy grinned at sight of the silver, and set off at a round pace.

I only imperfectly apprehended the state of things, but I saw that Grant kept an anxious look-out on the road to detect the first appearance of the relief party. But half an hour passed, and no one yet appeared.

"The boy is frightened," he said, "and has made off. Well, there is only one other chance. Here, you fellow, addressing the man, who by this time was partially sobered, 'can you trust yourself to handle the wind, and lower the bucket?'"

"Aye, sure, but who'll be going down?"

"I shall," said the Duke, firmly; "and in another moment he had entered the bucket; and seizing the chain, gave the signal to lower away."

"Grant!" I exclaimed, "don't be so mad; why the fellows will be here in a moment; what can you do?"

"Leave go, Jack, it's all right; I must see to those doors."

"Is there danger, then?"

"To the hundred and eighty men on the other side of the pit there is, if they are not out of the mine."

"Let me go."

"Stiff! What would you do? You don't know a door from a donkey."

"But you?"

"I could find my way blindfolded. Why, Jack, I have planned the whole business; I've been in and out there a dozen times at least."

I implored, but all in vain; he gave the signal, and the man lowered the bucket; Grant nodded to me with his bright, frank, fearless look. "All right, Jack; say a Hail Mary," and he was out of sight."

I tried to still my fears—fears of what? After all, I knew not. I paced up and down, whether for hours or minutes I could not tell. At last, looking towards the hill, I caught the welcome sight of a dozen men descending the road towards the shaft. I waved my hat to urge them quicker, and in my impatience set out to meet them. We were nearing together when there was a low sound, as it were, far beneath my feet, a slight trembling of the earth, and a cry from the men. I sprang forward, crying, "The Duke! the Duke!"

"Where?" said the overseer, who led the party.

"In the shaft—alone."

"Then God rest his soul!" he exclaimed; "that was an explosion."

We hastened to the shaft, and whilst some telegraphed for more aid, others prepared to clear the shaft and descend without loss of time. Before long the whole gang were on the spot; for Leven's message to signal the men out of the mine had cleared the workings and saved the men from danger. They were all there, the hundred and eighty men he had so nobly saved; many of whom a short week before had been burning him in effigy. And as the rumor of the accident spread, and women and children came hurrying in dismay to the pit's mouth, loud were the expressions of joy and thankfulness to find fathers, sons, husbands, all safe and sound. But how was it with Leven?

An hour or two of work sufficed to answer that question. The shaft was cleared, and when the working party who had volunteered to explore came to the surface, they bore him with them, and laid him on the grass, and in another moment I was kneeling beside him.

Yes, he was dead. Not a mark of exterior injury. The breath of the fire had not touched him. A sweet smile on his face, a smile of inexpressible peace, but life had been extinct at least an hour. The cause of his death was not the actual combustion, but what miners call the "after-damp," that is, the mixture of bad gases caused by the explosion, and resulting in suffocation.

They laid him in one of the sheds, and we telegraphed to Glenleven and Oakham.

I do not stop here to speak of my own feelings, or those of the men around me. Some sensations are not keenly felt from their very intensity. This blow had come with a shock which, for the time, stunned me. I could act, and speak, and move, and give orders, but at first I could not think. Only gradually did the truth, the whole truth, break on me, and deluge me with anguish; and I understood that a noble life had been consumed by a death of sacrifice, and that in very deed and truth he had given his life for his brethren.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE END.

We carried him to Oakham. He was so completely the last of his family that we should have been perplexed as to whom to commit the direction of affairs had it not been for his secretary, Mr. Dymock, who placed in my hands a sealed packet which has been given into his keeping by the Duke the evening before he had last left Oakham. It was directed to myself. I opened it, and found his will, drawn up and signed with the usual formalities, and a brief document declaring Sir John Ripley, myself, and Oswald, his trustees and executors, and myself sole guardian of Edward Wigram, his heir.

This sufficed to enable us to act; and as we knew that he had already fixed on Glenleven as the place of his interment, intelligence of what had happened had already been sent to the monastery; and on our arrival at Oakham we found the abbot, Werner, and some others of the monks waiting to receive us."

Werner and the other brethren gently and reverently prepared him for his last rest, and then it was we came to know that not care nor toils alone had done the work of age, but that he, who had sacrificed his life to charity, had also been used to offer his body to God by the longer and more lingering sacrifice of penance. There were the rough hair shirt, and the iron girdle, and the sharp penitential. I beheld it all, and then, when I recalled the frank, joyous voice, and inartificial manner, I marvelled at the power of self-repression, the exquisite ingenuity with which he had hidden from curious eyes every one of his higher gifts of sanctity."

"Until all was ready for his removal to Glenleven, we laid him in the little chapel, before the golden tabernacle, and there, hour after hour, we watched beside him whilst there crowded in from all portions of the country round all whom he had served, and helped, and ministered to, young and old, Catholics and Protestants, gentle and simple, to look on him, and pray beside him, and take their last farewell."

But there was one who came and would not go away; he knelt there like one who had been smitten to the heart with something more than sorrow. It was Wilfrid Knowles, who, in the closing scene of that beautiful life, received the light of faith in his soul, and awoke to reality. The awful words regarding him had been an unconscious prophecy; he had been won by the suffering, not of himself, but of another.

I shall only touch on the last scene of all; the gorgeous ceremonial which bore to his resting-place the last Duke of Leven, followed by half the country, and all his tenantry, and by the colliers whom he had died to save, and who walked in the long procession, praying for, and blessing their benefactor. I will say nothing of all that, and of the bitter tears we shed, as we laid him at the feet of his father, and felt that one had gone out from among us who belonged to a higher sphere than men of a common mould.

We read his will; and all were startled and amazed to find that there was little left to dispose of. Oakham Park, and a modest estate attached to it, were devised to Edward Wigram; certain other lands and properties were left to be administered in trust for the maintenance of hospitals, schools, and other charitable institutions he had founded; but the vast wealth he had once possessed had all but disappeared, and of his Australian millions there remained not a farthing.

The news spread about, and gradually the truth came to be understood. The Duke, the greatest millionaire of England, had died worth comparatively nothing, because he had been steadily carrying out the purpose of his life to obey the precept of the Gospel: "to sell all, and give to the poor and follow Christ." The truth, when known, produced a powerful impression, especially among his own young men at Oakham, many of whom followed the example of Knowles, and embraced the faith. The domestic chapel soon became insufficient for the wants of the Oakham congregation; and gladly recognizing the opportunity thus presented of carrying out one of Leven's dearest wishes, I resolved to dedicate a portion of my own wealth to the erection of a church.

I chose a spot close to that part of the plantation where, years before, he had held me over the precipice and saved my life. There the new parish church of Oakham has arisen, dedicated to St. Alexis, and designed by Werner, who watched over every detail with loving eyes. It is my monument to the memory of my friend, and a thank-offering for that friendship which I number among the choicest graces of a not unhappy life.

In the completion of this undertaking I have been not a little assisted by the ardor of one whose story I have as yet left incomplete. The Duke's death hastened the work which the influence of his words and character had commenced in the heart of Florence Oswald. She was received into the Church within the same year, and my readers will not probably be greatly surprised to hear that two years later she became my wife. She shares with me the care of my little world, to whom, as she often says, she owes, in no small degree, the gift of faith. And I think, if there be a desire in both our hearts, it is so to train him that in after years he may worthily fulfill the trust committed to him, and realize our dear Grant's ideal of "the Christian family."

THE END.

LITTLE BETSY.

Adapted from the French of "Jacques Normand" for the Freeman's Journal.

I was travelling in Ireland with a few friends. After some time, we found ourselves on the south-west coast, crossing through Connemara, the poorest part of that terribly poor country, lying between Galway, on the one side, and Clifden and Westport on the other.

If anything can give an awful impression of barrenness and misery, it is surely Connemara. An immense sorrow seems to weigh on this corner of earth. You don't see any cultivation; to your left, low and naked, plain extends to the sea; to your right, a chain of bare mountains, looking as if they had been ravaged by a vast configuration, and you travel through immense spaces without meeting a village, or even a house. When you do meet one after journeying a couple of hours, it is simply four walls of rough hewn stones without cement, with a low, blackened roof, through which issues a slender thread of smoke.

As soon as one passes in front of one of those cabins, a bunch of children rushes out, from five to twelve years old, bare footed, pale and ragged, yet often with faces which artists in search of a model for the Divine Child would delight in. Uttering strange cries in a language half Irish, half English, they will run after the steps of a stranger for several miles. With a suppliant hand, they offer you a broken rock, or blackberry, the national pastime, or a little garogay of the lovely, pale flowers that are gathered on the sides of the mountains. As they run by the side of the coach, patting, "A penny piece sir; only a penny!" is repeated in chorus again and again. Their poor voices, shrill and yet silvery, continue this monotonous chant a long time, until gradually one after another drops out of the race.

About seven o'clock in the forenoon we were not far from Oughterard, where we were to lunch. For several hours a young girl about twelve years old had been following our coach. Out of a band of five or six children, whom we had outstripped on the road, she was the only one to hold out.

She was slender and quite tall for her age; very brown, with a charming head, of the fine Irish type, and with large eyes, under which were shadowed by the exertion of the race, and her mouth, widely opened to inhale the air, showed teeth gleaming like pearls. A rough bodice of coarse cloth, with a poor old ragged petticoat, formed her whole costume, and gave a glimpse of a breast and shoulders so white and delicate that they must, it seemed, have been bruised by a rough garb.

Poor little thing! It saddened one's heart to see her!

Suddenly she uttered a cry, raised her arms and fell on her face. We stopped the coach at once; but it was almost nothing. A sharp pebble had slightly cut her foot, which was bleeding a little.

We asked her who she was and where she came from. She told us her name was Betsy, and she lived in Oughterard. We bade her come into the coach with us, and we would try to get her home. She looked at us evidently not understanding. We had to repeat the same thing two or three times. When she understood, she blushed with pleasure, and fixed on us a long gaze from her beautiful eyes, beaming with gratitude. To ride in a coach! What joy! It was, without doubt, the first time in her life. Ten minutes later we were in Oughterard, a poor village of some forty houses.

We gave two shillings to the child. She could not believe her eyes.

As she was limping somewhat I was afraid that the cut in her foot might have been irritated by her long race; so I went into a shoe store, the only one in the place, and bought her a pair of shoes.

Betsy had been looking at me all the time, considerably puzzled, and eyed me curiously through the little window of the coach. When she saw me come out and hand her the shoes, which I told her were for herself, it would be impossible to describe her astonishment. She was altogether dazed. She did not dare to take them surrounded by three or four little girls, who were also looking on with wide open eyes, she stretched out her hand, then withdrew it.

At last, when I insisted firmly on her taking them, she seized the shoes and ran skipping with delight, without ever saying "Thank you."

"What a little savage!" I thought. And I joined my companions, who were already at table in the inn.

We had just finished lunch and were about entering the coach, when I felt a little hand taking hold of mine and trying to draw me away. It was Betsy.

"Come, sir," said she, "please, come."

"And where do you want to bring me?"

"To our house; it is quite close by."

I followed her; my companions did the same, a little puzzled by the proceedings. She led us to the bottom of a narrow lane, and before a humble cottage. She pushed open the door and we entered.

It consisted of a single apartment with hardly any furniture, gloomy and poorly lighted.

An old woman was sitting at the little window; it was the grandmother. In one corner was the bed of the grandmother, and, beside it, that of the child.

At the foot of this little bed Betsy showed me, with great pride, a shelf, covered with white linen, on which rested the image of St. Patrick, the cherished patron of Ireland, and, between two bunches of flowers, the little shoes I had bought for her. The whole formed a pleasant and smiling little spot in the midst of all this misery.

The poor little thing was gazing on them with admiration, almost with devotion, as if at the relics of a saint.

"But you ought to put them on your feet," I said to her, laughing.

She appeared astonished, almost angry: "Oh!" she cried, "never! they are too lovely!"

We put some money into the hand of the grandmother and said good-bye to Betsy. But she would not leave us yet, and went with us as far as the coach, which she followed with her eyes as long as she could get a sight of it.

A month afterwards we were passing the same route, returning from Clifden to Galway. We halted at the same little village, but we missed little Betsy. Before leaving this country, which, doubtless, I shall never see again, I resolved to pay a visit to the child who had interested us so much.

I knocked at the door of the poor cottage, but as nobody opened I raised the latch and entered. A sad sight met my eyes. Around the little bed of Betsy, lit by three smoky candles, knelt three old women reciting the prayers for the dead. As soon as I appeared the prayers ceased and every hand was raised. One of the old women came towards me; it was the grandmother; she had recognized me. Big tears were running down her wrinkled cheeks.

"Betsy!" I murmured, "Betsy—"

In a few words, which I guessed at rather than understood, she explained to me, in a low voice, that Betsy had caught the fever and died that very morning. I drew near the little bed. The pale face of the child was resting peacefully; her long black hair was scattered in thick curls over the pillow; her lovely blue eyes had been closed. With her thin little hands she claspeth to her heart the image of St. Patrick and the two little shoes.

"During the whole time that she was sick," said the old woman, "she would not part with them. I will bury them with her, as she asked me before she died."

The tears came to my eyes. I bent over the poor child and gently kissed her forehead. Poor little Betsy!

A SWEET STORY.

On a cold and foggy evening a tall man, leaning upon a stick, was going painfully along the Rue Mazarine, Paris. His clothing, insufficient to protect him from the biting of the northeast wind which that evening blew with great fury, consisted of a pair of summer pantalons, and of an old overcoat buttoned up to his chin. A broad brimmed hat, slouched down over his face, left in sight only his beard and the long white hair that fell upon his stooping shoulders. He carried under his arm an object of oblong shape, wrapped in a plaid handkerchief.

He crossed the bridge and the Place du Carrousel, reached the Palais Royal, and made the tour of the garden, stopping several times; then, as if the floods of light and the savory odors of the delicious viands prepared in the restaurants had made him sick at heart, he turned away with a trembling gait, and came out at the Cour des Fontaines. There he raised his head, seeing light in all the windows of that industrial human hive, where life and labor go on with a busy hum. He sought shelter under an awning at the corner of the narrow street forming an angle with that much-frequented passage, laid a stick with which he leaned against the wall, untied the plaid handkerchief, exposing to view a violin, felt along the strings to see if they were all there, tuned them up with a trembling hand, folded the handkerchief and laid it under his chin, placed the violin upon it, and began to play something so disconcerting, so discordant, that two or three street urchins who had planted themselves before him ran off crying that "that was a tune to bury the devil with."

A dog lying not far away began to howl and passers-by chuckled their pace.

The poor man, discouraged, seated himself upon a step in the passage way, laid his instrument upon his knee, and murmured:

"I cannot play any more. Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!" and a great sob came up from his heart.

At that instant three young men came sauntering along the dark and narrow passage, humming an air in their voices:

Lorsque deux élèves du Conservatoire, Renaud et le jeune du Conservatoire, Cécile, les trois élèves du Conservatoire, Enchanes rivaux, bien contents de se voir.

Free loins, free loins, free loins, free loins.

At first, they did not see the old violin player. One of them, merely stepped upon him, another knocked his hat off, and the third was greatly surprised to see the old man rising and coming out of the shadow.

"Pardon, monsieur. Have you hurt you?"

"No," replied the old violinist, leaning over with difficulty to pick up his hat, which one of the young men hastened to hand him, while his comrade, seeing the violin, said:

"You are a musician, monsieur?"

"I used to be," sighed the poor old man, and two great tears ran slowly down the furrows of his cheeks.

"What is the matter with you? Are you suffering? Can we help you?"

The old man looked at the three young men; then he handed to them his hat, saying:

"Give me something for charity's sake. I can no longer earn my living by playing the violin, my fingers are crippled with rheumatism, my daughter is dying of consumption and of want."

There was so much of real sorrow in his voice that the young fellows were moved from head to foot. They quickly put their hands in their pockets and drew out all they contained. Alas! the first found fifty centimes, the second thirty centimes, and the third a piece of resin; total, sixteen sous, for relieving so much misery. It was very little. They looked at each other helplessly.

"Come, friends," cried the one who had questioned the unhappy old man; "let us take hold, all three of us, and with good will. He is a fellow called Adolphe, take the violin and accompany Gustave, while our friend Charlie takes up the collection."

No sooner said than done. All three drew the collars of their coats, pulled their hats down over their faces and their hats down over their eyes.

"Now, then, for it, and all together! Adolphe,

joined my companions, who were already at table in the inn.

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