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THE ROCK OF THE CANDLE.

A TALE OF AN IRISH RUIN. By the Author of "Holland Tide."

It is strange that the effusion of a few drops of a briny liquid at the eyes, should enable the soul to give more tranquil entertainment to a painful thought or feeling—but it is a fact, however, which Minny experienced, in common with all who have known what painful feelings are.—She pictured to herself the probable nature of the fate which awaited her betrothed; and from the horror which she felt in the contemplation, proceeded to devise expedients for its prevention. This, however, appeared now to be a hopeless undertaking. The warrant of the Lord President must needs be executed within the time; and it was improbable that the White Knight could return before the expiration of the six hours. Would it be possible to contrive a scheme for his liberation? His guards were vigilant and numerous, and there was but one way by which he could return from the room—and that was occupied by sentinels. If Mun, or the Kerry thiel, his master, were on the spot, of what a load might they relieve her heart? She would have given worlds to be mistress, for one night, of the roquetry of the adept in aunt Norry's tale.

We shall leave her for the present, involved, like a bungling dramatist, in a labyrinth of ravelled plots and contrivances, while we shift the scene to the unfortunate hero of the night, who lay in his room expecting the catastrophe with no very enviable sensations.

The soldiers had left him to make the necessary preparations for his approaching fate, in darkness and solitude. He was now on the point of achieving a character, not without precedent in the history of his country—namely, that of a martyr to his own heroic fidelity—and he was determined to bear his part like a warrior, to the last. Still, however, to a lover, conscious of being loved again—to a young man, with prospects so fair, and present happiness so nearly perfect—to a bridegroom, snatched from the altar to the scaffold, at the very moment when he was about to become doubly bound to life, by a tie so holy and so dear—to such an one, tho' brave as a fiery heart and youthful blood could make him, it was impossible that death should not wear a grim and most unwelcome aspect.—Neither is the man to be envied, whose nature could undergo so direful a change without emotion. True bravery consists, not in ignorance of, or insensibility to danger, but in the resolution which can meet and defy it, when duty renders such collision necessary. Fear, in common with all other passions of our nature, has been given us for the purpose of exercising our reason, and acquiring a virtue by its subjugation; and the man (if any such ever lived) who is ignorant of the feeling, is a monster and not a hero. The truly courageous man, is he who has a heart to feel what danger is, and a soul to triumph over that feeling, when it would tempt him to the neglect of any moral or religious obligation. Such was the temper of Cormac. He believed that he was performing his duty, and did not even entertain a thought of any other line of conduct, than that which he was pursuing—but this did not prevent his being deeply and bitterly conscious of the hardness of his fortunes, in thus unlooked for and untimely separation.

Exhausted by the intensity of his sensations, he had dropped for some time into a troubled and uneasy slumber, when the pressure of a soft hand upon his brow made him lift up his eyes, and raise himself upon his elbow. He beheld Minny stooping over him, with a dim rushlight burning in one hand, while with the other she motioned him to express no surprise, and to preserve silence.

"Hush, hush!" she said, in a low whisper, "Cormac, are you willing to make an effort for liberty?"

He stared strangely upon her, and stood on his feet.

"What is the meaning of this, Minny; how came you here?"

"The soldiers have been merrier than they intended, and I drugged their drink for them.—Slip off your brogs, and steal out in your truis only. They are now sleeping in the next room, and I have left them in the dark. Fear not their muskets; I have drenched their matchlocks for them. There are only two waking, who are on the guard outside the door; and for these, we must even place our hopes in heaven, and take the chance of their bad marksmanship.—Ah, Cormac—but there is no time to lose; come with me."

"My glorious heroine!" cried the astonished soldier, "I could not have thought this possible."

"Hush, your raptures will betray us."

"But whither do you intend to fly?"

To the cavern on the western side of the hill, where Fitzgerald lay on the night of the great massacre at Adare Castle. Keep close to me, and I think it likely we shall pass the sleepers."

She extinguished the light; and both crept, with noiseless footsteps, into the adjoining room, which was the chamber of the heroic maiden herself? As they endeavored to steal between the soldiers, who lay locked in slumber on the ground, Minny set her foot on some brittle substance, which cracked beneath her weight, with a noise sufficient to awaken one of the soldiers.

"It is the mirror," said Minny to herself.—"My aunt Norry's prophesy was but too correct, and my vanity has ruined everything."

Still, however, her presence of mind did not forsake her. The soldier, turning suddenly round, laid hold of Cormac's *estaign*, or mantle, and arrested his progress.

"Ho! ho!" he exclaimed, "who have we here?"

"Pray thee, let go my dress, master soldier," returned the young girl; "this freedom talles not well with your sermon on Grace to the White Knight—I doubt you for a solemn hypocrite."

"I knew you not, wench," replied the sergeant, letting Cormac's mantle fall; "or I would as soon have thought of clapping palms with Beelzebub, as of lingering any part of your Irish trumpery. Whither do ye travel at this time of night?"

"Even to kindle my rushlight, at our hearthstone in the next room. 'Turn on your pallet, sergeant, and let me go."

They passed on, and reached the outer room in safety.

"Now, Minny," said Cormac, "it is my turn to make a suggestion. Do you pass out, and await me at the stream that runs by the edge of the wood. The sentinels will suffer you to proceed, and the risk of detection will be lessened. Nay, never stop to dispute the point—its advances are unquestionable."

Minny would not even trust herself with a farewell, before she obeyed the wishes of her lover. A few passing jests were all she had to encounter from the sentinels, and Cormac had the satisfaction to see her hurry on, unmolested, in the direction of the stream. When he supposed a sufficient time had elapsed to enable her to reach the place of rendezvous, he threw aside his mantle, and prepared to take the sentinels by surprise. The door stood open, and he could plainly see the two guards pacing to and fro in the moonlight. Pausing for a moment, he uplifted his clasped hands to heaven, and breathed a short and agitated prayer of mingled hope and resignation. Then, summoning the resolution which never failed him in his need, he darted through the doorway, into the open air.

Astonishment and perplexity kept the sentinels motionless for some moments, and Cormac had fled a considerable distance, before they became sensible of the nature of the occurrence which had taken place. Both instantly discharged their pieces in the direction of the fugitive, and with loud shouts summoned their comrades to assist in the pursuit. The bullets tore up the earth on either side of Cormac, who could bear, as he hurried on, the execrations and uproar of the awakened troop, at finding their arms rendered incapable of service. He dashed onward toward the wood; and had the happiness, while the sounds of pursuit yet lingered far behind him, to discern the white dress of his betrothed fluttering in distant relief, against the dark and shadowy foliage of the elm wood. Snatching her up in his arms, with as little difficulty as a mother feels in supporting her infant, he hurried across the stream, and was quickly buried in the recesses of the wood.

The morning broke before they had reached the appointed place of concealment. It was one of those ancient receptacles for the noble dead, which was hollowed out of the earth in various parts of the country, and were frequently used, during the persecutions of foreign invaders, as places of refuge and confinement for the persons and property of the public. When they found themselves safely sheltered within the bosom of this close retreat, the customary effect of long restrained anxiety and sudden joy, was produced upon the lovers. They flung themselves, with broken exclamations of delight and affection, into each other's arms, and remaining for a considerable time incapable of acting or speaking with any degree of self-possession. The necessity, however, of providing for their safety during the ensuing day, recalled them to a more distinct perception of the difficulties of their situation, and suggested expedients for their alleviation or removal.

They ventured not beyond the precincts of their Druidical sojourn until the approach of evening, and even then it was but to look upon the sunlight, and hurry back again to their lurking place, in greater anxiety than before. The English had discovered, and were fast approaching the mouth of their retreat.

Cormac, signifying to his bride that she should remain silent in the interior of the cave, drew his sword and stood near the entrance, just as the light became obscured by the persons of the party who were about to enter. They paused for some time on hearing the voice of Cormac, who threatened to sacrifice the first person that should venture to place his foot inside the mouth of the recess. In a few moments after, the devoted pair were perplexed to hear the sound of stones and earth thrown together, as if to erect some building near the cave. Unable to form any conjecture as the nature and object of this proceeding, they clung together, in silence and increased anxiety, awaiting the issue.

On a sudden, a strong whitish light streamed into the cavern, casting the dark and lengthened shadows of the party who stood without, in sharp distinctness of outline upon the broken rocks on the opposite side.

"Look there, Minny," exclaimed the youth, "it is the moonrise—and we may shortly look for the return of our chief."

"It cannot be, Cormac. The shadows would fall, in that case, to the westward, and not to the south. It is a more fatal signal, it is the death-light of the Rock."

Cormac paused for some moments. "Fatal it may be," replied—"but do you observe, Minny, that no part of its ghastly lustre has fallen upon us? It is shining bright upon our enemies.—There is a promise in that, if there be in reality any supernatural meaning in the appearance."

Minny signed anxiously, while she hung upon his arm—but made no answer to this cheering suggestion. The party outside continued their labor, and in a little time the light was only discernible, as if penetrating through small crevices at the entrance.

"What can they intend?" said Minny, after a pause of some minutes, during which the party outside maintained profound silence. "All-merciful Heaven!" she continued, starting to her feet in renewed alarm, "we are about to suffer the fate of Desmond's Kernes—they are going to suffocate us with fire."

A dense volume of smoke, which rolled into the cavern through the crevices before mentioned, confirmed this terrific conjecture. The practice, all barbarous as it was, had been frequently resorted to by the conquering party, in the subjugation of the inland districts of the island.—Feeble as he had been rendered by fatigue, anxiety, and want of food, Cormac resolved to make a desperate effort to escape the horrible death which menaced them, and rushed, sword in hand to the mouth of the cave. But he was met by a mass of heated vapor, which deprived him of the power of proceeding, or even calling aloud to their destroyers. He tottered back to where he had left his bride, and sinking down on the earth beside her, felt a horrid sense of despair weigh down his energies, like cowardice.—Again he rose, and attempted to force his way through the entrance, and again he was compelled to relinquish the effort. He cried aloud to them—offered to surrender—and entreated that they would at least have mercy on his companion. But no answer was returned—and the dreadful conclusion remained to be deduced, that contented with having made the work of death secure, they had retired to a distance from the place.

With a sickening heart, eyes swollen and painful, and a reeling brain, Cormac once more resumed his place by the side of his betrothed. She had fallen into a kind of delirium, and extended her arms towards him with an expression of suffering, which made his heart ache more keenly than his own agonies.

"I want air, Cormac!—oh, Cormac, my love, take me home with you—take me into the green fields—for I am dying here. Air, Cormac, air, for the love of heaven!"

"My own love you shall have it—look up, and bear a good heart for two minutes, and we shall be happy again."

"This place is horrible—it is like hell! It is hell! Are we living yet? I have been a sinner; and yet I hoped, too, Cormac—I always hoped!"

"Hope yet, Minny, and you shall not hope in vain—keep your face near the earth, where the air is freest. Ha! listen to that. The White Knight is returned and we are safe."

A rolling of musketry, succeeded by yells, shouts and cries of triumph and of anguish, was heard outside the cavern. Cormac and his bride stood erect once more; but poor Minny's strength failed her in the effort, and she sank lifeless into the arms of her lover. In a few moments the mouth of the cavern was cleared; and a flood of cool, sweet air rushed like a welcome to life and happiness, into the bosoms of the sufferers. Recovering new vigor, with the draught, Cormac staggered toward the entrance, and passed out into the open air, with his fainting bride on his shoulder, and a drawn sword in his right hand—presenting to the troop of liberators, who were gathered outside, a picture not

unlike that of Theseus, bearing the beautiful queen of Dis from the descent of Avernus.—His pale cheeks, looking paler in the moonlight; his wild staring eyes, scattered hair, and military attire, contributed to render the resemblance still more striking.

The White Knight received him with open arms; but Cormac would hold no more lengthened communication, until his bride was restored to health and consciousness.

In this no great difficulty was encountered; and tradition says that the White Knight was one of the merriest dancers at the bridal feast, which was given at the cottage in a few days after these occurrences.

I learned from a person curious in old legends, an account of the manner in which the 'Candle on the Rock' was exercised,—for it has not been seen now for a long lapse of time. About two years after the marriage of Cormac and Minny, they were both seated, on a calm winter evening in the room which had been the scene of so much tumult and disaster on the occasion above mentioned. Minny was occupied in instructing a little rosy child (whose property it was, my fair readers may perhaps conjecture,) in the rudiments of locomotion; while Cormac (young husbands will play the fool sometimes)—held out his arms to receive the daring adventurer, after his hazardous journey of no less than two yards, on foot, across the floor. The tyro-pedestrian had executed about half his understanding without meeting with any accident worthy of commemoration, and lo! aunt Norry was bending over him, with a smile and a 'Ma gra-hu!' of overflowing affection, when an aged man presented himself at the open door and solicited charity for the love of Heaven.

Minny placed a small cake of griddle bread in the arms of the infant, and bade him take it to the stranger. The child tottered across the floor with his burden, and deposited it in the hat of the poor pilgrim, who laid his withered hand on the glossy ringlets of the little innocent and blessed him with much fervency. At that moment the fatal light of the Rock streamed through the doorway, and bathed in its lustre the persons of the wayfarer and his guileless entertainer. The poor mother shrieked aloud, and was about to rush towards the child, when the pilgrim, assuming on a sudden, a lofty and majestic attitude bade her remain where she stood, and suffer him to protect the child.

"I know," said he, "the cause of your fear, and I hope to end it. The evil spirit who possesses that fatal signal, is as much under the control of the Almighty as the feeblest mortal amongst us; and if there be on earth a being who is exempt from the pernicious influence which the demon is permitted to exercise, surely, the fond may, with the chiefest security be defied by innocence and charity."

Having thus said, he knelt down, with the child between him and the Rock, and commenced a silent prayer, while his clasped hands rested on the head of the infant, his long grey hair hung down upon his shoulders, and his clear blue eye was fixed steadily upon the fatal Candle. As he prayed the anxious parents observed the light grow fainter and fainter, and the shadows of the old man and child became less distinct, until at length the yellow hue of the pilgrim's countenance could scarcely be distinguished from the bloom that glowed upon the fresh cheeks of the infant. Before his prayer was ended, the light had disappeared altogether, and the child came running into the arms of its enraptured mother. When the first burst of joy had been indulged in, she looked up to thank the stranger, but he was nowhere to be seen.

The death-light has never since reappeared upon the Rock, although it preserves the name which it received from that phantom. Cormac and Minny long continued to exercise the virtue of hospitality to which they owed so much in the instance; and, I am told, that the child became a bishop, in course of time. 'Tis, surely, a good fortune enough to enable to wind up a long story with credit; and I have only to conclude after aunt Norry's favorite form, by wishing—*if they don't live happy that you and I may.*

(THE END.)

THE DRUMMER BOY; OR, PIETY REWARDED.

(From the Lamp.) "On piety, humanity is built, And on humanity much happiness; And yet still more on piety itself. A soul in commerce with God is heaven; Feels not the tumults and the shocks of life, The whirls of passions and the strokes of heart. A Diety believed is joy begun, A Diety adored is joy advanced, A Diety beloved is joy matured." Some fifty or sixty years ago, there lived in the quiet little town of —, in the county of Waterford, a poor husband and wife, whose only comfort in poverty was their solid piety, and whose only hope, when the future of their worldly prospects appeared dark and lowering, was cast in that dear object of a parent's love and

care—an only son. But soon this piety, which had grown with their growth, and this hope which had been their strength and prop, which buoyed and supported them in their daily increasing infirmity, were at last to undergo a test, a severe test, such as none but those in poverty can alone feel or know. Sickness, the chastening messenger of God's almighty providence, the harbinger of gladsome tidings to the poor and penniless, and the precursor of a most reward to virtue's children, paid a visit to their humble home, and no sooner had it made its appearance among the hitherto happy trio—the husband, wife, and son—than the friends who had but lately gathered around their lowly fireside, and discoursed with all the freedom of honest friendship, fled, and through a deeply-rooted fear of contagion, left the poor sick-struck couple to their hapless fate. And then, when all were gone, when neither friend nor fellow stood by the wretched couch of the aged pair, to minister even the poorest assistance, to cool their fevered brow, or to raise a cup of water to their parched lips, those many, and indeed, painful duties devolved upon one who could not but with the greatest difficulty perform them—and that person was no other than their little son Frederick, then only twelve years old.

Oh, dear Catholic reader, you who possess feelings of charity, love, and kindness, worthy of God's own faith, imagine for one minute the distressed state of this poor family,—a father and mother, husband, wife, already far advanced in years, struck down by sickness, stretched on a mean straw pallet, with no person to supply their wants, to soothe their sorrows, or to attend them in their illness, save a child, so young, so innocent, so artless and inexperienced, as to stand in need of that very assistance which, poor creature, he dutifully and ceaselessly endeavored to render. And if, oh kind, gentle reader, your feelings, upon imagining such a scene, be those which a Christian, a true Catholic, should experience, then the writer of this little tale would earnestly entreat that whenever or wherever such a scene as the one above described come under your notice, you will not resist the kind impulse of your nature, to assist a fellow being in the hour of trial, that you will never withhold your assistance from those in distress, and that you will at no time delay to pour the healing balsam of comfort and consolation into the sorrowing heart. And if, perhaps, your means deny you the power to respond to the generous feeling of your beating breast, at least do all you can. Nothing more I ask; and the Great Being, who created the ragged beggar and the crowned king, will give you that reward which the world cannot give, a good conscience, an honest principle, and a noble disposition to practice what is good.

But to return to our subject. The old couple thus circumstanced, without medical aid, assistance, or even the common necessaries of life, never rallied, never raised their aching heads from the damp pillow till they breathed forth their pure spirit into the hands of Him who created them; and then when poor little Fred experienced for the first time in his life the bitterness of sorrow—sorrow rendered more bitter by the sense of loneliness which haunted his young mind, when he stood alone a helpless orphan, cast forth upon a wicked world, when he was rudely pushed from door to door like the despised Nazarine himself; when all these things seemed to wage war with his young spirit, still he had one hope, one consolation, one comfort in his hard helpless case, and that one was religion. Oh, how frequently did he not pray and raise his pure little heart to God and Mary his mother, at several times of the day, perhaps in the fallow of some headland, in the falling snow, or from under the insufficient covering of a hawthorn bush or a cattle-shed; and how truly did he not feel the benign influence of the Holy Spirit working in his little heart, sending floods of bright sparkling tears from his wild blue eyes, irrigating, as it were, his half-famished frame, and tacitly bidding him to trust and look high with holy hope to Heaven.

Providence had decreed that matters should not long continue in this state, for as the aspect of nature appears dull and gloomy under the mighty influence of the dread tornado, and is followed by the genial heat and glow of the effulgent sun, so the trials and troubles of this life have but a time, a mark, a meaning beyond which we dare not, cannot pass, and the person whose youth is beset with difficulties, may yet, with the help of heaven, surmount all, be the carver of his own fortune, and in the end, earn a name deserving of a place among the good ones of the earth, on the golden pages of the world's history. Thus it was with young Fred. Worn out by fatigue and hardship, he at length enlisted in the — regiment, was made drummer, and sent to England where, having been billeted in the house of a Catholic lady, he had frequent opportunities of attending the family devotions, and the lady, in turn, had thereby a means of