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ROSALEEN ;

OR, THE WHITE LADY OF BARRA.

(From Legends of the Wars in Ireland, by Robert Dwyer Joyce, M. D.)

'A strange case!' said the doctor, as he came upon a certain page of his manuscript.

'What is it?' I inquired. 'Captain John Fitzgerald and Rosaleen his wife, aged eighty-four and eighty-two respectively, pursued the doctor, heedless of my question, and reading from the closely-written page, 'June 30, 1858,' continued he aloud once more, after a few moments' silent perusal, 'ten o'clock P.M.; respiration weak, pulse forty-five and forty respectively; and then followed a long minute catalogue of appearances and symptoms, on coming to the end of which, the doctor, who was in one of his fits of abstraction, sat up straight before his desk, and gazed vacantly into my face as I sat opposite. 'Eleven o'clock, P.M.; resumed at length, half remembering my question, 'cheerfully and without pain they both died,—died on the same instant.'

'Who were they, Doctor?' I inquired again. 'They must have been a strange pair, when they fasten on your memory so firmly.'

'They were my best friends,' answered the doctor, now fully awake, 'and had their troubles like other mortals,—or rather, I should say, unlike other people, as you will see by reading that.' And he handed me over his manuscript, in the perusal of which I was soon eagerly engaged, leaving him to pore with critical eye over some recent numbers of 'The Lancet.'

The doctor's manuscript was beautifully and closely written; and, if printed, and denuded of the quaint technical phrases with which it was so frequently interspersed, would make a handsome novelette. An abridgment of the tale, however, will better suit our purposes at the present:

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, there dwelt at the foot of a certain high mountain, in the south of Ireland, a gentleman named Weston, whose wife had died a few years after their marriage, leaving behind her to deplore her loss a son and a daughter. The demesne adjoining that of Westonwood belonged to an old gentleman who had served for a long time as an officer in the French army, and whose name was Fitzgerald. His only son John was about the same age as young Weston. The two old gentlemen lived on terms of very close intimacy with one another, and the youngsters were consequently very often companions in their sports. Young Weston was, while yet a boy, of a dark and violent disposition, subject to frequent fits of morose moodiness or passion, during which he was often known to vent his anger with strange vindictiveness on his father's domestics, and in fact on any one who interfered with him even in the slightest degree. His sister, on the other hand, was a bright, handsome little creature, full of joyous spirits, and beloved by the whole neighborhood. In the frequent rambles of these three young people together, John Fitzgerald, who was a bold and light hearted boy, was, during the gloomy fits of her brother, thrown into the exclusive company of little Rosaleen Weston, helping her over thicket and brook, gathering berries and nuts for her in the autumn, and bringing her many a blooming nosegay of flowers in the summer, from the leafy dells and fairy hollows and romantic crags that lay around their homes.

It was the old story. As years rolled on, their childish fondness ripened into love, and they were as happy for a time as human hearts could be. The old gentlemen met frequently, and talked jocularly over their wine of the prospects of their children, and even of the day when John Fitzgerald and the fair Rosaleen were to be united heart and hand in marriage. They were happy, that young pair; but they little knew that in a certain dark heart there was a plot fast maturing to put a period to their joy, and blight their future lives. Their enemy, strange say, was young Weston. Since his early boyhood, from some unknown cause, he had

hated young Fitzgerald; but, with the consummate tact peculiar to a vindictive and treacherous mind, he continued to conceal his hatred beneath the mask of friendly countenance. This was the more dangerous, as young Fitzgerald was of an open and impetuous temper, simple and confiding, and never restrained himself in telling to the brother of his affianced bride every secret of his heart,—every thing that arose to his mind at the impulse of the moment.

Young Weston secretly and skillfully continued to work at his dark plans as time wore on, and unfortunately the political disturbances of the time aided him surely in his treacherous intents. In an unguarded hour, John Fitzgerald disclosed to him his connection with a band of United Irishmen that were at the time maturing their plans for raising the South on the breaking out of the war. This band of United Men was at the time under the command of several young gentlemen who held a high place in society, and among whom John Fitzgerald was held in high esteem, on account of his daring courage and the knowledge of military tactics he displayed at their secret meetings. The disclosure of his fatal secret to young Weston filled that worthy with an infamous delight, knowing as he did that his base plot was coming speedily to a consummation; and yet he hesitated to inform his father, who was a magistrate, because he was well aware of the strong friendship that existed between the two old gentlemen, and suspected that his disclosure would not have the desired effect. But he adopted another plan. One morning his father walked out to the kennel to see how some of his favorite fox hounds were getting on; and met Ter Kelly, the whipper-in, before him, most industriously attending to the morning meal of the noisy dogs.

'Well, Ter,' asked the old gentleman, 'how is Miss Biddy to-day?' (Miss Biddy, by the way, was the favorite of the pack, and had been sick for a few days previous.)

'Begor! your honor,' answered the slippery Ter, 'she's getting on most beautifully. Look at her how she sits! May I never sin, if she's not able this mornin' to swally a fox, body an' soul, and all bekase o' the drop o' potheen I gave her this mornin' to warm her heart, the cratur!'

'She looks better certainly,' rejoined his master, turning away satisfied; but this did not suit Ter Kelly.

'I hope your honor is better o' the rheumatics this mornin', sir,' he said, 'an' that you heard the mornin' an' awful news that's runnin' about, like wildfire, through the counthry?'

'What news, you scoundrel?' answered his master, whose joints began to be afflicted at the moment with some twinges of the unpleasant malady Ter had just named.

'The news about the ruction that's to be, your honor,' answered Ter; 'an' about the way the United Men are meeting every night, an' preparin' to massacre every livin' sojer in the counthry. They say also, that the young master over the way, and he pointed his thumb knowingly in the direction of Fitzgerald's home, 'that he is to be general over them; an' that his name is mentioned in the prophecy of Saint Columkill, an' that he's to walk knee-deep in the blood o' the—'

'Is that all?' said the old foxhunter, turning away suddenly, and thus cutting short Ter's sanguinary communication.

That was all that morning. But day by day the news came in from every side, confirming Ter's statement, till at last, old Weston began to think seriously on the matter. It is enough to say, that, ere a week was over,—so artfully had young Weston worked out his plans,—the two old gentlemen were estranged, and all intercourse forbidden between Rosaleen and her faithful lover, John Fitzgerald. But prohibitions like this are rarely obeyed. The lovers still met frequently, and vowed eternal constancy to one another at each parting.

It was the summer of '98, and the insurrection had at length broken out, bringing consternation and sorrow to many a household throughout the length and breadth of the land. John Fitzgerald at length received a secret summons that

should be obeyed. It was an intimation from the insurgent commander, that his services were required at head-quarters; and, notwithstanding his love for Rosaleen and other circumstances, he began his preparations for setting out for Wexford, where the war was then raging furiously. The disclosure of his intention fell heavily upon the heart of poor Rosaleen Weston. After the first burst of her grief was over, they agreed to have one other interview before his departure; and, when the hour came, they met at the usual trysting-place,—a deep and woody dell that extended up the breast of the high mountain.

They sat beside the tiny stream that tinkled downward through the quiet glen, and with all they had to say, did not perceive the time passing, till the approach of sunset. The spot on which they were sitting afforded a splendid view over the broad and varied plain that extended far away from the foot of the mountains, and that was bounded on the south by a steep and picturesque range of hills, the green slopes and summits of which the setting sun was now gilding with his expiring glories.

'It is a hard thing to part, dearest,' said John Fitzgerald, looking fondly into the tearful eyes of Rosaleen; 'but it is harder still to stay inactive here, branding my name with dishonor, breaking my plighted oath, and perhaps hiding my head in shame, while my countrymen are bravely fighting for their liberties.'

'It is hard, John,' said Rosaleen, 'but does it not seem harder to leave me? Alas! why did you take that oath of the United Men?—Have you not liberty enough?'

'I have, perhaps, liberty enough, Rosaleen,' answered her lover; 'but there are thousands of my countrymen ground down to the dust, and it is my duty to give my humble aid in assisting them to arise. But I shall not be long away dearest,' continued he. 'The war cannot last long; and then, when we are victorious, as I trust we surely shall be; when I have gained by my deeds preferment in the new army of my country,—then, darling, I will return and claim you as my brightest reward.'

'Alas!' answered Rosaleen, as she burst into tears, 'it will be a perilous time for you, John, and for my part, I cannot look on the matter in any other light. You are going wilfully into danger, and the day you mention may never come.'

'But it will come, Rosaleen,' exclaimed her lover vehemently. 'Our plans are laid, and trust me, that, with God's blessing, I shall come back soon, and claim you for my wife. And the brave young enthusiast clasped her in his arms, kissed her wet cheeks fondly, and in a moment was gone. That night the United Men met on the summit of the mountain. John Fitzgerald was elected their commander; and, putting himself at their head, he marched gallantly down into the plain, and by many a wild and unfrequented path shaped his course for Wexford.

A deep melancholy fell upon the spirits of Rosaleen Weston, after the departure of her lover. She that was so joyous and happy while she knew the chosen of her heart was near, now that he was gone—gone to encounter hardship and privation, and perhaps to meet death upon the field of battle—was almost mad with grief, and knew not a moment's interval of enjoyment.—There are some, who, when parting from those they love, feel a sudden and violent burst of sorrow, which, like the mountain torrent when the storm is over, soon subsides; but the grief of Rosaleen was not of this kind: though deep and strong, it was as enduring as her very life itself. Her friends, her father, and all tried to comfort her, but in vain.

The country was now in a state of dreadful commotion. The insurgents had at length met the royal army face to face upon a fair field, and had conquered. Day after day news came of the progress of the war. Three successive engagements had again been fought, and in each of them the royal party had been worsted. It was indeed surprising to witness the celerity with which the intelligence of a battle spread throughout the country at this time. Fugitives endeav-

oring to return secretly to their homes from some skirmish in which they had been badly wounded, carmen driving downward after being pressed into the service of royalists or insurgents to convey baggage to Wexford, disbanded or deserting yeomen hurrying with terror in their countenance to some place of protection, spread as they brought information of the success or discomfiture of the insurgent armies—joy or sorrow throughout the southern province. But still no news came of John Fitzgerald.

Matters at last came to a crisis. The battle of Vinegar Hill was fought and lost by the insurgents; chiefly indeed through their own misconduct, and the irresolution and disagreement of their generals. Home was now their signal word; and, as they passed in detached parties through the southern counties, they spread sorrow and consternation on their way. A few days after the battle, as Rosaleen was sitting in a shady seat out on the lawn, thinking with sorrowful heart upon the probable fate of her lover, she saw her brother riding quickly towards her up a narrow walk that led to the public road.—

He dismounted, and, as he took a seat near her, appeared much excited, and in a far lighter and more jovial mood than was usual to his dark temperament. From this, however, she could augur nothing favorable, and, with a sad presentiment at her heart, begged of him, if he had, as he seemed, any intelligence to communicate, to do so at once.

'I was riding a few hours,' he said, with an expression of mock sorrow in his dark face, 'at the foot of the hills, and came upon a party of the broken down rebels returning from the thrashing they got at Vinegar Hill. I inquired about my old comrade, John Fitzgerald!—'

'My God, Harry!' exclaimed Rosaleen, 'tell me, I beg of you, what about him, at once,—at once, I tell you; for, no matter what's past, he is still my betrothed husband.'

'I am going to do so,' answered her brother coolly. 'They told me that on the evening of the battle, while leading—like a general, of course—the small detachment under his command into the final charge—they said that he was struck by a cannon-shot, and left for dead upon the field. That's the fate of your general that—according to his calculations—was to be.'

Poor Rosaleen could hear no more. With a wild shriek of despair and grief, she fell insensible from her seat. This was a result which her cruel brother very little expected; and, feeling now a real apprehension, he alarmed the servants, and Rosaleen was conveyed to her chamber. But there all their efforts to restore her to consciousness proved unavailing. A doctor was sent for immediately to the nearest town; but, when he arrived and learned the circumstances, he shook his head, and told her father that he had very serious fears regarding her recovery. His fears were but too well founded; for, at the dawn of the next morning, she awoke in the delirium of a brain fever. For many days the wild delirium continued. At length it subsided somewhat. For some hours she spoke to those around her with a strange and unnatural calmness; but the wandering fits again returned, again subsided and returned, and she finally relapsed into a mental derangement. Poor Rosaleen, the accomplished, the guileless, the beautiful! the fair fabric of her mind was sapped to its foundation, and the bright hopes she had built up seemed shattered forevermore.

After some time she began to gain a little strength, and was permitted by her father to take a short walk, occasionally, into the garden and round the lawn, but at first always attended by her nurse. On these occasions, with that affecting simplicity peculiar to persons in her state, she usually employed herself in searching round the shrubberies, and underneath the old beach trees that studded the lawn, for something which she appeared desirous of keeping secret. On returning one evening from one of these rambles, she appeared more dejected than usual; and, when her nurse inquired the cause of her sadness, she burst into a violent fit of weeping, saying that she was ever searching round the lawn for John Fitzgerald's grave, but that she could never find it. Time wore on: the vigil-

ance with which she was watched began to be relaxed, and she was frequently permitted to walk alone round the lawn, and farther into the demesne. She had not indeed abandoned the idea that her lover's grave was somewhere near; and between searching for it, and plucking flowers to deck it, should her search prove successful, she spent most of her time in the open air during the beautiful evenings of declining summer, but at the same time always returned punctually before nightfall.

One evening Rosaleen Weston did not appear in her father's parlor at her usual hour. The old gentleman, after waiting some time, sent out a couple of the servants to see what caused her delay. They came hastily back, saying that they had searched round all her haunts, but could not find her. A general search was now made, but it was unsuccessful. The tenantry around were by this time made acquainted with what had happened; and a sharp search was made round the villages near, round the base of the mountain, and into the wild dells where she loved so much to ramble when John Fitzgerald was by her side: but still no Rosaleen could be found. In the darkness, still the search was continued; but it was unavailing. Morning dawned upon the heart-broken father and the remorseful brother, and another and more vigorous search was made, but with the same success as on the preceding day and night.

Years before, ere dissension had arisen between their fathers, young Rosaleen and her lover frequently ascended to the summit of the mountain on the side of which lay their last trysting place. There they were wont to sit for hours, and talk of the wild legends told by the peasantry in connection with that stately mountain. Often, too, John Fitzgerald would tell her stories of the battered old castles that lay beneath, of the bravery of the sturdy chiefs that held them in the olden time, and the manner in which they fought against the enemy of their native land on many a well-contested field.—There was one feature of the scene, however, on which the lovers, particularly at sunset, looked with more delight than on all the others. It was the beautiful range of hills that formed the far southern boundary of the broad plain beneath. One of these hills towered high above its neighbors, in the shape of a smooth green cone, with scattered woods running up its sides, and a solitary rock upon its summit. On a certain evening they were sitting on their usual seat on the summit of the mountain near their home. A gorgeous scene lay before them. The silent plain, the broad river that ran along its northern verge glittering like a stream of gold in the descending sun, and the far circle of surrounding mountains, brought a holy and strange calmness into their young hearts.

'How red and clear!' exclaimed John Fitzgerald, turning towards their favorite point of the prospect: 'how bright the sunset falls upon that lonely group of hills!'

'And look,' answered Rosaleen, 'at the little rock on the point of the highest hill. It is like one of those ancient altars you tell me of, where the ancient inhabitants worshipped the sun.'

'Yes,' rejoined her lover; 'and beneath, how bright it is! Ah! Rosaleen, when in after times death shall steal upon us, how I long that we could sleep side in one of those peaceful and lonely gorges! There the birds would sing day after day their sweet songs, the wild flowers would bloom undisturbed over our grave, and the mountain streams murmur around it joyously forever.'

On the evening previous to Rosaleen's disappearance, she had paid a stolen visit to the summit of the mountain from which they viewed that loved scene so often. Casting her eyes to the south, she beheld again that beautiful chain of hills in all their sunset glory. Suddenly it struck her mind that the wish of her lover might have been fulfilled, and that his grave lay in the sunlit gorge he had pointed out on the evening alluded to above.

'It must be so,' she exclaimed, as she now quickly descended the mountain. 'His grave must be there, and I will go and seek it.' She hurried homeward, and it was noticed by