

# INTECH (1984) associates

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## Guelph Evening Mercury

MONDAY EVENING, JULY 22.

### NORAH CUSHALEEN

OR THE  
HAUNTED CASTLE.

CHAPTER I.—NIGHT.

'Quick, quick,' said his master, 'I cannot bear to think of what we are about to do.'

The old man succeeded at length in lighting the lamp, and put it into Malvra's hand, which shook as much as his own.

'Stop a little, master,' whispered Dennis, going to a recess, and returning with a bottle and a cup. 'Take this drop of potheen. It's not much I've got, but take it, it will do your heart good.'

The contents of the bottle almost filled the cup, and the excited youth took it with-out a word, and drained it at a draught.

'Now, the key of the room.'

'Bedad, and I forgot that entirely,' uttered Dennis, taking a huge rusty key from his bosom, and handing it to Malvra, who instantly turned on his heel and left the apartment, taking his way along a passage which led to a stone stair at the base of the tower.

Dennis silently watched him till he disappeared at the first winding, then returning he walked rapidly to and fro in the kitchen, wringing his hands and groaning deeply.

'And this is the beginning o' murder,' he murmured. 'Little and little does the poor innocent colleen dream that it's to her death she's going, and not to a bright home to live with master. Oh, but it's well for her after all, for will she not sing this night in glory; and that's a better place than even Blantire Castle, which is as beautiful as any in Ireland. If we could only kill her quiet and peaceful, and if she wouldn't scream for fear o' the death that will never harm her, she'd be wid the Virgin, her and the babe in her arms, afore their purty bodies has time to settle on the green floor of the say. Ochone! I wish it would fall the same to ould Dennis; but I haven't the conscience to look for it; for its murder I'll be after, and sure the punishment for that is more nor the praste himself can tell. But should Dennis, should, and don't think any more about what you were born for. It's for the good uv Master Malvra and the honour o' the name o' Blantire, and for that sure it's my duty to do this night black work. Oh, murther, how the wind roars round the ould walls that I'll never see again in the blessed sunshine. Bedad, but it's little the boat will need to make it sink. Maybe it'll go down herself if she will, and that'll take the worse side o' the murther off my soul.'

While the old man was thus trying to find excuses for the awful crime he was about to commit, and striving to reconcile its cruelty to his naturally tender heart, he, for whose interests he was going to sacrifice himself and Norah, was proceeding to the chamber of the latter.

Ascending the winding stone stair which led to the lower apartments of the tower he paused at a black oak door, which was still in good preservation, and applying the key to the lock, turned it, pushed open the door, and entered.

The apartment within had a surprisingly comfortable look. A quantity of thick soft rushes were strewn on the floor, the walls were covered by a faded tapestry, and a few rude articles of furniture were ranged against the wall. At the far end a fire blazed cheerily up the wide chimney, and on a seat near the fire sat Norah with her infant in her lap, fast asleep.

A young and very beautiful girl was Norah Cushaleen, and as she sat there, with the firelight playing on her pensive face, and her large blue eyes bent with a mother's pride and tenderness on the up-turned face of her sleeping babe, she presented a picture which the greatest artist would have been eager to copy. Her's was a soft, fairy like beauty—not the bold queen-like gracefulness of a flattered belle, but a sweet, captivating loveliness of a pure, guileless being, that would give all the powers of her nature up to love.

She heard the door open, but did not turn her gaze from the sleeping cherub on her knee, thinking that the visitor must be her considerate attendant, Dennis Morgan.

'What! no word of greeting, Norah?' was spoken in a voice which made her bound from her seat, snatching the child in her arms as she did so, and turn round with a countenance of eager, happy joy.

'Oh, Malvra! you have come at last,' she cried, running towards him and throwing her unoccupied arm round his neck.

'You have been so long,' she murmured, 'and I have waited so much. Why have you been so long absent, dear Malvra?'

'Business detained me,' he hastily replied. 'I have come as soon as I was able.' And on such a night, too, she rejoined, as the wind howled in a fearful gust around the dilapidated tower. 'It was kind of you to come up the mountains when the storm raged so violently. But you have not kissed me, Malvra, nor our boy. See how handsome he grows; and he becomes more like you every day. If it wasn't for him I would have hoped to death in this lonely place.'

She held up her rosy lips to his, and he was forced to kiss them, though his conscience-stricken soul shuddered as he did so, knowing that all things had been planned for murder, and that in one hour she would be consigned to the depths of the sea. He also laid his lips on the soft, downy cheek of the sleeping child, and the act made the mother's eyes dance with joy.

'You do not like this solitude, then,' he remarked. 'What if I have come to take you from it? Would you quit its shelter in such a wild dark night as this?'

'I would go anywhere with you, she fondly replied. 'But will you, indeed, take me hence? and shall we live together in one house?'

'Even so,' he answered; 'and we must now set out on our journey. My horse is waiting for us among the rains. It will carry us to the beach where we shall require to cross the bay in a boat. Will you not be afraid?'

'Not if you are by my side,' was her ready reply. 'I will wrap my little Malvra carefully up.'

'Do, do,' he hurriedly rejoined; 'and pray get ready as fast as you can. I will wait for you in the kitchen, beside Dennis.'

So saying, he put down the lamp and quitted the apartment in great haste. He almost ran down the stair and along the winding passages till he burst into the kitchen, where Dennis stood near a still blazing fire.

'She is coming,' said the youth in accents hoarse with agitation. 'I have deceived her, and she is happy at the thought of going home with me. O! little does she know the fate to which she is doomed!'

'Whist, master, speak low or she may hear,' whispered Dennis. 'It's all for the best. It's the honour of the house and the name that requires it. And now, Master Malvra, followed the old man, 'I will very

when she comes, not a word will we dare speak at all, at all.'

'A last farewell,' repeated Malvra. 'What mean you?'

'Just that I would like yer honour to say 'Good bye, Dennis. You have been a faithful servant to our house.' And maybe yer honour will think kindly on me sometimes when there's dancing in the hall o' Blantire Castle, and the family is in its pride again in the country?'

'I don't understand you at all, Dennis. I hope you'll be there to share in the restored prosperity.'

The old man shook his head. 'Arrah, then yer honour, you are too kind to think so; for this night ould Dennis Morgan will find his last pillow at the bottom of the say!'

'You?' exclaimed Malvra, in amazement.

'Whist,' whispered Dennis. 'I'm ould now, master, and sure you can do without me. I've said more than once or twice that I would die for ye; and sure I will, for I might get into dotage, master, and spake something about Norah Cushaleen and that might get you into trouble.'

'But—'

'I am quite ready now, Malvra,' said a happy voice behind him, and turning round, they beheld Norah arrayed for her journey, with the infant carefully enveloped in her shawl, and still sound asleep.

Her presence put an end to the conversation, and in silence they quitted the ruined castle, their unsuspecting victim cheerfully accompanying them.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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People's Magazine,

Boys' Own

Boys' Monthly

Leisure Hour

Sunday at Home

Good Words

Sunday Magazine

Christian Society

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