



CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

VOL. XIV.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9, 1863.

No. 9.

THE ROCK OF THE CANDLE.

A TALE OF AN IRISH RUIN.

By the Author of "Holland Tide."

Soldiers—Room, ho! tell Antony, Brutus is ta'en. Antony—This is not Brutus friend; but I assure you, a prize no less is worth. Keep this man safe, Give him all kindness. I had rather have Such men my friends than enemies

JULIUS CÆSAR.

On a misty evening in spring, when all the west is filled with a lazy sunshine, and the low clouds stoop and cling round the hill tops, there are few nobler spectacles to contemplate, than the ruins of Carrigounnell Castle. This fine building, which was dismantled by one of William's generals, stands on the very brink of a broken hill, which, towards the water, looks bare and craggy, but on the landward side slopes gently down, under a close and verdant cover of elms and underwood. It is when seen from this side, standing high above the trees, and against the red and broken clouds that are gathered in the west, that the ruins assumes its most imposing aspect.

Such was the look it wore on the evening of an autumn day, when the village beauty, young Minny O'Donnell, put aside the woodbines from her window, and looked out upon the Rock.—Her father's cottage was situated close to the foot of the hill, and the battlements seemed to frown downward upon it, with a royal and overtopping haughtiness.

'Hoo! murder, Minny honey, what is that you're doing? Looking out at the Rock at this hour, and the sun just going down behind the turret?'

'Why not, aunt?'

'Why not?—Do you remember nothing of the candle?'

'Oh, I don't know what to think of it; I am inclined to doubt the story very much; I have been listening to that frightful tale of the Death Light since I was born, and I have never seen it yet.'

'You may consider yourself fortunate, in that, child, and I advise you not to be too anxious to prove the truth of the story. I was standing on the side of poor young Dillon myself, on the very day of his marriage, when he looked out upon it through the wicket, and was blasted as if by a thunder-stroke. I never will forget the anguish of the dear young bride—it was heart-breaking, to see her torn from his side when the life had left him. Poor creature, her shrieks are piercing my ears at this very moment.'

'That story terrifies me, aunt. Speak of it no more, and I will leave the window. I wonder if Cormac knows this story of the Fatal Candle?'

'The good old woman smiled knowingly on her pretty niece, as, instead of answering her half query, she asked—'Do you not expect him here before sunset?'

Minny turned around, and seated herself opposite a small mirror, adorned by one of those highly carved frames which were popular at the tables of our great-grandmothers. She did so with the double view of completing her evening toilet, and at the same time screening herself from the inquisitive glances of her sharp old relative, while she continued the conversation.

'He promised to be here before,' she replied; 'but it is a long way.'

'I hope he will not turn his eyes upon the Rock, if he should be detained after nightfall. I suspect, Minny, that his eyes will be wandering in another direction. I think he will be safe, after all.'

'For shame, aunt Norry. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, an old woman of your kind, to speak in that way. Come now, and tell me something funny, while I am dressing my hair, to put the recollection of that frightful adventure of the Candle out of my head. Would not that be a good figure for a Banshee? she added, shaking out her long bright hair with one hand, in the manner which is often attributed to the warning spirit, and resting at the same time, a not indifferent glance at the mirror above mentioned.

'Partly, indeed—but the Banshee (meaning no offence at the same time) is far from being so young or so blooming in the cheeks; and by all accounts, the eyes tell a different story from yours—a story of death, and not of marriage.—Merry would the Banshee be, that would be going to get young Mr. Cormac for a husband to-morrow morning early.'

'I'll go look at the Rock again, if you continue to talk such nonsense.'

'Oh, bubboo!—rest easy, darling—and I'll say nothing. Well, what story is it I'm to be telling you?'

'Well, I'll tell you a story of a boy that flogged Europe for cuteness—so that if you have a mind to be ready with an answer for every cross question that'll be put to you, you can learn it after him—a thing that may be useful to you one time or another, when the charge of the house is left in your hands.'

'Well, let me hear it.'

'I will, then, do that. Go on with your dress, and I'll have my story done before you are ready to receive Mr. Cormac.'

So saying, she drew a stool near her niece, and leaning forward with her chin on her hand, commenced the following tale:

'There was a couple there, long ago, and they had a son that didn't know rightly what was it they'd do with him, for they had not money to get him Latin enough for a priest, and there was only poor call for day laborers in the country.—'I'll tell you what I'll do,' says the father, says he: 'I'll make a thief of him,' says he; 'sorrow a better trade there is going than roguery—or more money-making for a boy that would be industrious.' 'It's true for you,' says the wife, making answer to him; 'but where will you get a master for him, or who'll take him for an apprentice in such a business?'

'I'll tell you that,' says the husband to her again. 'I'll send him to Kerry. Sorrow better hand would you get at the business anywhere, than there are about the mountains there—and I'll be bound he'll come to us a good hand at his business,' says he. Well and good, they sent off the boy to Kerry, and bound him for seven years to a thief that was well known in those parts, and counted a very clever man in his line. They heard no more of him for the seven years, nor hardly knew that they were out when he walked in to them one morning, with his 'Save all here,' and took his seat at the table along with them—a fine, handsome lad, and mighty well spoken.

'Well, Mun,' says the father, 'I hope you're master of your business?' 'Pretty well for that, father,' says he; 'wait till we can have a trial of it.' 'With all my heart,' says the father; 'and I hope to see that you haven't been making a bad use of your time while you were away?' 'Well, the news ran among the neighbors, what a fine able thief Mun had come home, and the landlord himself came to hear it, amongst the rest. So when the father went to his work the next morning, he made up to him, and—'Well,' says he, 'this a queer thing I'm told about you, that you had your son bound to a thief in Kerry, and that he's come home to you a great hand at the business.' 'Passable, indeed, he tells me, sir,' says the father, quite proud in himself.—'Well, I'll tell you what it is,' says the gentleman, 'I have a fine horse in my stable, and I'll put a guard upon him to-night—and if your son be that great hand that he's reported to be, let him come and steal him out from among the people to-night—and if he does, he shall have my daughter in marriage, and my estate, when I die,' says he. 'A great offer, surely,' says the poor man. 'But if he fails,' says the gentleman, 'I'll prosecute him, and have him hanged, and you along with him, for serving his time to a thief; a thing that's clearly against all law,' says he. Well, 'tis unknown what a *whilldilloo* the father set up when he heard this. 'O, murder, sir,' says he, 'and sure 'tis well, you know, that if a spirit itself was there he couldn't steal the horse that would be guarded that way—let alone my poor boy,' says he; 'and how will it be with us, or what did we ever do to you, sir, that you'd hang us that way? I have my own reason for it,' says the gentleman, 'and you'd better go home at once, and tell the boy about it, if you have a mind he should try his chance.'

'Well, the father went home, crying and bawling as if all belonging to him were dead. 'E' what ails you, father,' says the son, 'or what is it makes you be bawling that way?' says he.—'So he up and told him the whole business, how they were to be hanged, the two of them in the morning, if he wouldn't have the racer stolen. 'That beats Ireland,' says the son, 'to hang a man for not stealing a thing is droll, surely, but make your mind easy, father, my master would think no more of doing that than he would of eating a boiled potato.' Well, the old man was in great spirits when he heard the boy talk so stout, although he wasn't without having his doubts upon the business, for all that. The boy set to work when the evening drew on, and dressed himself like an old *bucough*, with a tattered frieze coat about him, and stockings without any soles to them, with an old *cabcock* of a straw hat upon the side of his head, and a tin can under his arm. 'Tis what he had in the tin can, I tell you, was good sup of spirits, with a little poppy juice squeezed into it, to make them sleepy that would be after drinking it.—'Well and good, Minny, my child, he made towards the gentleman's house, and when he was passing the parlor window, he saw a beautiful young lady as fair as a lily, and with a fine blush entirely, sitting and looking out about the coun-

try for herself. So he took off his hat and turned out his toes, and made her a low bow quite elegant. 'I declare to my heart,' says the young lady, speaking to her servant that stood behind her, 'I wouldn't desire to see a handsomer man than that. If he had a better *shoot* of clothes upon him, he'd be equal to any gentleman, he's so slim and delicate.' And who was this but the gentleman's daughter all the while. Well, it's well became Mun, he went on to the stable door, and there he found the lads all watching the racer. I'll tell you the way they watched her. They had one upon her back and another at her head, where she was tied to the manger, and a great number of them about the place, sitting down between her and the door. 'Save all here!' says Mun, putting in his head at the door. 'E,' what are ye doing here boys?' says he. So they up and told him they were guarding the racer, from a great Kerry thief they expected to be stealing her that night. 'Why then, he'll be a smart fellow if he gets her out of that,' says Mun, making as if he knew nothing. 'I'd be for ever obliged to ye, if ye'd let me light a pipe and sit down awhile with ye, and I'll do my part to make the company agreeable.' 'Why tinen,' says they, 'we have but poor treatment to offer you for though there's plenty to eat here, we have nothing to drink—the master wouldn't allow us a ha'p'orth, in dread we'd get sleepy, and let the horse go.' 'Oh! the nourishment is all I want,' says Mun, 'I'm no way dry at all.' Well and good, in he came, and he sat among them telling stories until past midnight, eating and laughing; and every now and then when he'd stop in the story, he'd turn about and make as if he was taking a good drink out of the can. 'You seem to be very fond of that tin can, whatever you have in it,' says one of the men that was sitting near him. 'Oh, its no signify,' says Mun, slutting it up as if not anxious to share it. Well, they got the smell of it about the place, and 'tis little pleasure they took in the stories after, only every now and then throwing an eye at the can, and snuffing with their noses, like pointers when game is in the wind. 'Tis not any spring water you'd have in that, I believe,' says one of them. 'You're welcome to try it,' says Mun, 'only I thought you might have some objection in regard of what you said when I came in.' 'None in the world,' says they. So he filled a few little muggins for 'em, and for the man on the horse, and the man near the manger, and they all drank until they slept like troopers. When they were all fast, up got the youth, and he drew on a pair of worsted stockings over every one of the horse's legs, so they wouldn't make any noise, and he got a rope and fastened the man I told you was upon the racer's back, by the shoulders, up to the rafters, when he drew the horse from under him, and left him hanging fast asleep. Well became of him, he led the horse out of the stable, and had him home at his father's while a cat would be shaking his ears, and made up comfortably in a little out-house. 'Well,' says the old man, when he woke in the morning and saw the horse stolen—'if it was an angel was there,' says he, 'he couldn't do the business cleverer than that.' And the same thing he said to the landlord, when he met him in the field the same morning. 'It's true for you, indeed,' said the gentleman, 'nothing could be better done, and I'll take it as an honor if your son and yourself will give me your company at dinner to-day, and I'll have the pleasure of introducing him to my daughter.' 'E,' is it me dine at your honor's table?' says the old man, looking down at his dress. 'Tis just,' says the gentleman again, 'and I'll take no apology whatever.' Well and good they made themselves ready, the two of them, and young Mun came riding upon the racer, covered all over with the best of wearables and looking like a real gentleman. 'E,' what's that there, my child,' says the father, pointing to a gallows, that was planted right opposite the gentleman's hall door. 'I don't know—a gallows, I'm thinking,' says the son—'sure 'tisn't to hang us he would be after asking me to his house, unless it be a thing he means to give us our dinner first and our *desert* after, as the fashion goes,' says he. Well, in with them, and they found the company all waiting, a power of ladies and lords, and great people entirely. 'I'm sorry to keep you waiting,' says Mun, making up to them, quite free and easy, 'but time stole upon us. You couldn't blame the time for taking after yourself,' says the gentleman. 'It's true, indeed,' says Mun, 'I stole many is the thing in my time, but there's one thing I'd rather there than all the rest—the good will of the ladies,' says he, smiling, and looking round at them. 'Why then I wouldn't trust you very far with that either,' says the young lady of the house. Well and good, they sat down and they eat their dinner, and after the cloth was removed, there was a covered dish laid upon the table. 'Well,' says the gentleman, 'I have one more trial to make of your wit—and I'll tell you what it is—let me know what it is I have in this

covered dish; and if you don't, I'll hang you and your father upon that gallows over there, for stealing my racer. 'O, murder, d'ye hear this? says the father—and wasn't it your honor's bidding to steal her, or you'd hang us? Sure we're to be pitted with your honor,' says the poor old man. 'Very well,' says the gentleman, 'I tell you a fact, and your only chance is to answer my question.' 'Well, sir,' says Mun, giving all up for lost, 'I have nothing to say to you—although for the fox may go, he'll be caught by the tail at last.' 'I declare you have it,' says the gentleman, uncovering the dish, and what should be in it only a fox's tail! Well, they gave it up to Mun, that he was the greatest rogue going, and the young lady married him on the spot. They had the master's estate when he died; and if they didn't live happy, I wish that you and I may.'

'Amen to that, aunt. Will you lay this mirror aside for a moment—Ha, whose fault was that?'

'Oh, Minny, you have broken the mirror—O, my child, my child!'

'Why so—it is not so valuable.'

'Valuable! It is not the worth of the paltry glass, darling—but don't you know it is not good? It is not lucky—and the night before your bridal, too!'

'I am very sorry for it,' said the girl, bending a somewhat serious gaze on the shattered fragments of the antique looking-glass. Then by a transition which it would require some knowledge of the maiden's history to account for, she said, 'I wonder if Cormac was with the Knight, when he made the sally at the castle yesterday?'

The answer of the elder lady was interrupted by the sound of several voices, in an outer apartment, exclaiming, 'Cormac! Cormac!—Welcome, Cormac! it is Cormac!'

'And it is Cormac!' echoed Minny, starting from her seat, and glancing at the spot where the mirror ought to have been—'You were right aunt; she added in a disappointed tone, as she bounded out of the room, 'it was unlucky to break the mirror.'

'It might be for them that would want it,' replied the old lady, following at a less lively pace; 'but for you, I hope it will prove nothing worse than the loss of it for this night.'

She found Minny seated, with one hand clasped in those of a young soldier, dressed in the uniform of the White Knight, smiling and blushing with all the artlessness in the world. The young man wore a close fitting *trous*, which displayed a handsome form to the best advantage, and contrasted well with the loose flowing drapery of his mantle. The *biade* of green cloth, which had confined his hair, was laid aside, and a leathern girdle appeared at his waist, which held a bright scabbard and pistol. The appearance of both figures—the expression of both countenances, secure of present, and confident of future happiness, formed a picture—

'Which some would smile, and more perhaps would sigh at.'

A picture which would bring back pleasing recollections enough to sweeten the temper of the sourest pair that Hymen ever disunited, and to move the spleen of the best-natured old bachelor that ever dedicated his hearth to Dian and solitude.

The evening proceeded as the eve of a bridal night is supposed to do, with its proportion of mirth and merriment. The lovers had been acquainted from childhood; and every one who knew them felt an interest in their fortunes, and a share in the happiness which they enjoyed.—The sun had been already gone down, when Minny in compliance with the wish of her old aunt, sang the following words, to an air which was only remarkable for its simplicity and tenderness:—

I love my love in the morning,
For she, like morn is fair—
Her blushing cheek, its crimson streak,
His clouds, her golden hair;
Her glance, her soft and kind;
Her tears, its dewy snows;
And her voice, the tender whispering wind
That stirs the early dowers.

I love my love in the morning,
I love my love at noon;
For she is bright as the lord of light,
Yet mild as autumn's moon;
Her beauty is my bosom's sun,
Her faith my fostering shade;
And I will love my darling one,
Till even that sun shall fade.

I love my love in the morning,
I love my love at even;
Her smile's soft play is like the ray
That lights the western heaven;
I loved her when the sun was high,
I loved her when he rose;
But, best of all, when evening's sigh
Was murmuring at its close.

The song was scarcely ended, when Minny felt her arm grasped with an unusual force by the young soldier. Turning round she beheld a signat which filled her with fear and anxiety.—Her lover sat erect in his chair, gazing fixedly on the open casement, through which a strong

and whitish light shone full upon his face and person. It was an interlunar light—and Minny felt utterly at a loss to conjecture what the cause could be, of this extraordinary appearance.

'Minny,' said her lover, 'look yonder; I see a candle burning on the very summit of the rock above us. Although the wind is beading every tree upon the hill side, the flame does not flicker or change in the slightest degree. Look on it.'

'Do not look?' exclaimed the old aunt with shrill cry—'May heaven be about us; do not glance at the window. It is the Death Light!'

Minny clasped her hands, and sank back into her chair.

'Let some one close the window,' said the young soldier, speaking in a faint voice, 'I am growing ill—let some one close the window.'

The old woman advanced cautiously towards the casement, and extending the handle of a broomstick, at the utmost stretch of her arm, was endeavoring to push the shutter to, when Minny recovering from her astonishment, darted at her an indignant look, ran to the window, closed it, and left the room in deeper darkness than midnight.

'What was that strange light?' asked the young soldier, looking somewhat relieved.

With some hesitation and a few prophetic groans and oscillations of the head, the old story teller informed him that it was a light, whose appearance was commemorative with the rock itself, and that it usually foreboded considerable danger or misfortune, if not death, to any unhappy being on whom its beams might chance to fall. It appeared, indeed, but rarely—yet there never was an instance known in which the indication proved fallacious.

The soldier recovered heart enough to laugh away the anxiety which had begun to creep upon the company; and, in a little time, the mirthful tone of the assemblage was fully restored. Lights, of a more terrestrial description, than that which figured on the haunted rock, were introduced; songs were sung; jests echoed from lip to lip, and merry feet pattered against the earthen floor, to the air of the national *rinneadh fatha*. The merriment of the little party was at the highest point, when a galloping of horses, intermingled with a distant rolling of musketry, was heard outside the cottage.

'My fears were just,' exclaimed Cormac, stepping short in the dance, while he still retained the hand of his lovely partner; 'The Eagas has taken the castle, and the White Knight is lying for his life.'

His surmise was confirmed by the occurrence which instantly followed. The door was dashed back upon its hinges; and the White Knight, accompanied by two of his retainers, rushed into the house. The chieftain's face was pale and anxious, and his dress was bespattered with blood and mire. The three fugitives remained in a group near the door, as if listening to the sounds of pursuit; while the revelers hurried together like startled fawns, and gazed, with countenances indicative of strong interest or wild alarm, upon the baffled warriors.

'Cormac!' cried the Knight, perceiving the bridegroom among the company, 'my good fellow, I missed you in an unlucky hour. These English dogs have worried us from our hold, and are still hot upon our scent. I have only time to bid my stout soldiers farewell, and go to meet them,—for I will not have this happy floor stained with blood to-night.'

'That shall not be, Knight,' exclaimed the bridegroom; 'we will meet them or fly together. You were my father's foster child.'

'It is in vain—look there! He laid bare his left arm, which was severely gashed on one side. 'They have had a taste of me already, and the blood hounds will never tire till they have tracked me home. And yet, if I had but one day's space—Kavanaugh and his followers are at Killmallock, and the castle might be mine again before the moon rises to-morrow evening.'

'Kavanaugh at Killmallock?' exclaimed Cormac. 'Oh, my chieftain, what do you here? Fly, while you have time, and leave us to deal with the foe.'

'It were idle,' repeated the Knight, 'their horses are fresher than ours, and my dress would betray me.'

* lame man—idiomatically, heggar-man.