

choking and struggling, emerged into the castle cellars—a vast range of semi-subterranean chambers, many of them unvisited for centuries by their owners, and more useful in the wars of the old times than in the housekeeping of the new, which extended along the whole length of the castle. An occasional breath of air, through narrow port-holes in the rock, just saved the atmosphere from deadliness, but left it reeking with the must of ages and with the damp humours exhaled from the limestone floor—a fit home for the troops of rats which scampered away hideously at the first glimpse of light in their foul dominions.

They were brave men, both, but they shuddered many a time and shook under an unknown dread, in their passage through the inky caverns. It required little of the imagination that was theirs in abundance to picture a hell in every reeking chamber.

In one of them, Mat Hannigan caught his companion's arm, and whispered :

"Here's the treasure I was tellin' you about. Will we onairth it?"

"Wait till we onairth *my* treasure fust," was the reply, and Tade Ryan pushed on sturdily through several other cellars until they came to a stone staircase, which at last enlarged them from the dungeons.

Mat Hannigan was first apprised of his return to earth by finding himself in a large stone corridor, through which a strong breeze blew from mouldering windows and ancient port-holes. They were in the western wing of the Castle, in the basement corridor.

"We must turn off the light, or somebody will notice it," said Tade, carefully veiling the lantern till the barest glimmer was visible.

The moon just risen supplied a ghostly substitute to light their way. Moonbeams struggled in through the gloomy openings and laid their sickly forms on the floor, turning into every variety of weirdness the carved figures over the doors, and over the crumbling relics of furniture; and combining with the close smell and the cold air to give flesh and blood to all imagination.

"The Lord betune us an' all harum!" and sundry such prayerful exclamations passed Mat Hannigan's lips, as he followed his brisk guide through a perfect maze of corridors, stair-cases and chambers, all filled with the overpowering odours of age-long decay. It was the lowest and gloomiest, as it was the oldest, part of the Castle. The moths and mice were its only tenants for generations: the old furniture was

mummy, the stairs creaked, slime covered the walls, damp and discomfort had it all to themselves.

Three storeys high, they ascended in this fashion, Tade picking his way with ease through the oppressive gloom. At last he turned into a narrow spiral flight of steps, which led in profound darkness to a little iron door. Here Tade knocked, in way of signal three times with his knuckles. After a few moments delay a heavy bolt was withdrawn, and a lock started, and then the door swung open and left the visitors in the presence of Gerald O'Dwyer Garv!

The three years since we saw him last left their marks on him. A deep brown supplanted the clear colour on his cheeks; the lines of his mouth under their shelter of moustache were firmer and more closely set; and the frank boyish gaiety that used to be the expression of his face gave place to a deep spiritual earnestness that made his eyes seem unfathomably clear. The boy, physically and morally, had grown into the man: the fruit ripened: the morning grown into noon.

The chamber was a small square one immediately under the roof of the western tower. The tapestry on the walls (it was a lady's boudoir long centuries before) had utterly perished; but some few articles of faded luxury remained, and were comfortably arranged, a merry little fire in the corner sending a cheery glow over all. The crevices in the walls and the two narrow windows were carefully stuffed, to prevent the reflection of the light outside, and a trap-door in the roof did duty at once as ventilator and chimney. The only other conspicuous objects in the room were a pair of loaded pistol on the table, and an old woman who bent over the fire. This latter was Tade's mother and Gerald O'Dwyer's old nurse, Biddy Ryan, who officiated as housekeeper in this strange retreat, and was now rocking herself professionally over a brewing of *meadher* in a pot of appetising fragrance.

"Hallo, Tade, come at last!" the young lord cried, gaily. "Kitty will never forgive me for robbing her of your company another night. Hallo! what's this? A stranger! Mat Hannigan, as I'm a sinner!"

The blacksmith staggered forward into the light. His greeting was a strange one. He pinioned Gerald's two hands in a grip of agony, and shook them ten several times without word or comment: only the light that fell on his eyes disclosed two blinding tears there.

"Masther Gerald! Masther Gerald! Masther