

THE
EARL OF DESMOND;
OR
O'BRIEN'S COTTAGE.

AN IRISH STORY.
(Continued from our last.)

The colonel, convinced of his brother's corporeal substance and identity, joyfully returned his embraces, though still in the greatest amaze at this wonderful circumstance. The first emotions, however, in a degree subsiding, he entreated his brother to inform him by what miracle he had arisen from the grave, and where he had so long concealed himself.

"Of these particulars I shall most undoubtedly give you a most circumstantial account," said the real earl of Desmond—"but it is equally miraculous to me to find you living, of whose death I could not entertain the least doubt."

"I, likewise," answered the colonel, "have much to relate; but you must gratify my anxiety by the first relation, as my death was only conjecture, whilst your's was corroborated by every possible circumstance."

"My narrative you shall have immediately; but first tell me, my dear Frederic, how fares my dear Georgiana?—her, I hope, you found according to your wishes?"

"Far otherwise," answered the colonel, with a deep sigh—"personally and mentally, indeed, she more than answered my expectations; but I found her the wife of Francis Fitzhugh."

"Amazement!" returned the earl—"Did love or ambition guide my niece?"

"Neither," rejoined the colonel, "but a scene of deception altogether, which at some future time I will explain. I shall only now observe, as death has made void that tie, I will endeavour to forget it ever was."

"Let it rest, my dear Frederic," said lord Desmond, "as it is now past—I rejoice to hear of my niece's health, whom I long to embrace—and now, banishing all past sorrows, let us look forward to future peace and happiness."

The colonel now informed his brother of the family he had at present with him; and said, how greatly their interests would be excited for him when they knew who he was; he should therefore desire him to defer particulars till they were all assembled; and as he recollected it would be some time before that happened, he altered his first resolution, and determined to acquaint his brother with his adventures first.

But remarking now the earl's uncomfortable dress, which till this moment had escaped his observation, he asked him if it would not contribute to his comfort to change his dress. This he for the present declined, declaring his wish, above every thing, to know what had befallen him during the years of their separation.

With this desire the colonel instantly complied; and had scarcely finished his story, when lord Seymour, Georgiana, and Edmund entered.

An explanation immediately took place, and all joyfully congratulated him on his miraculous return to his family, the causes of which they expressed an unanimous impatience to be acquainted with; and lord Desmond, equally desirous to satisfy them, communicated it to them in those words:—

"The fatal catastrophe, which befel me the morning I was shooting, is too well known to you all to require a repetition."

"One of the wretches, who that morning attacked me, seemed inflamed with the diabolical design of murder only, as I in vain offered my watch and purse—these were paid no attention to; but aiming a blow at me, which I could not ward off, he struck me deeply in the breast. In my struggle to defend myself, I received also a dreadful wound in the hand, which you may perceive is cut entirely across."

"Overcome by loss of blood, I fell apparently lifeless. The ruffians believing me dead, imagined their work complete; for my poor faithful servant I saw fall before me, and, no doubt, immediately made their escape."

"How long I lay in the inanimate state they left me, it is impossible for me to form any conjecture; but, on coming to myself, I found I was stretched on a hard and miser-

able mattress, with several of the most fierce and brutal-looking men about me I ever saw."

"I shrank with horror from them, conceiving I was still in the power of my murderers, who would certainly not terminate the work they had begun."

"I was as yet too exhausted to speak, though I made several efforts. One of the men, observing my ineffectual attempts to articulate, got a cup, with some strong spirits in it, and pouring some down my throat, said—'Now, I'll warrant, you will be able to speak.'"

"Violent as the application appeared to me at that time, and improper as I have no doubt, it was, yet it greatly contributed to restore me, as I was faint, even from want of nourishment. I attempted to thank them, but the words died on my tongue—yet I succeeded in my endeavour to make them understand I was grateful for kindness."

"One of them, who I then thought, and afterwards found, was well skilled in surgery, examined my wounds, to which he applied proper dressings; and by his care, though I cannot say tenderness, I was, after a great length of time, restored to health."

"During the progress of my cure, I had frequent opportunities of observing my entertainers—I found the habitation, in which we resided (though sufficiently commodious for the rough beings who inhabited it) was only a cavern in a mountain, made as convenient for their use as its situation and structure admitted of. I had never observed any addition to the number I first saw, which was ten; neither had I ever seen a female amongst them."

"You may easily conjecture, my dear friends, how dreadful my present situation was to me.—I, who had ever been indulged in every luxury and delicacy, throughout my life, which fortune could furnish, now languid and weak—suffering under the wounds inflicted by the hands of assassins—poor, forlorn and destitute—the inhabitant of a cold and dismal cave—partaking of the most homely and uncomfortable fare, and associating with the lowest and most abandoned outcasts of society—yet, under all these circumstances, it has pleased Heaven to restore me to my family in perfect health—my brother and myself will ever be memorable examples of the few real wants man has, and how little we are aware of what we can undergo, till the iron hand of affliction presses heavily upon us, and brings us to a just sense of the equality Nature has established in all her works; and that the prince and the peasant are born with the same capabilities of enduring pain, hunger, and all the variety of evils men is subject to."

"It was impossible for me one day to remain in ignorance of my new friends' profession; but as hitherto they had treated me with all the humanity in their power, and much more than I could have conceived them capable of, I made no open remarks; and asked no question whatever concerning their way of life."

"One day, as we were sitting at dinner, the surgeon, as I always called him, who was seated near me, asked me, with much good-humour and archness, if I did not wonder who and what they were, and whether I had not a great curiosity to be informed."

"I replied, I had experienced so much kindness from them, I should ever consider myself their debtor, as, but for their humane assistance, and his particular skill, I should have been long since dead, but that I should never take the liberty of enquiring into any of their affairs, or wish to know what they might think proper to conceal; and that being now in a condition to travel, I wished to be no longer burthensome to them, but gratefully to take my leave, and return to my former occupations."

"No; no, my friend, replied the surgeon, there goes two words to that bargain; and though you are so free from curiosity, we do not boast that virtue—my companions and myself therefore beg you will let us know who you are—what are your plans—and by what means you came in the wretched situation we found you."

"I had seen and heard too much, since my residence with them, to dare confide to them who I really was—I was likewise uncertain what had become of the body of my servant—whether they had observed the lively—buried it, or left it in the situation

they found it. These circumstances, which I had often reflected on, rendered me extremely fearful of saying any thing which might not correspond with their observations, or that might tend to raise a jealousy or suspicion in them of any deception on my part. I hesitated a few minutes; but recollecting myself, told them that I was a singular man, who inherited a sufficient sum to support myself with economy—that having a relation, who resided in Naples, I had a wish to pay him a visit; and, as my residence was not many leagues from that city, I had determined to walk there, as I could not afford any other mode of travelling—that a short time before I was attacked, I had overtaken a gentleman's servant, in a livery of blue and silver, who was going a few miles on the same road; and that, whilst we were conversing together, two ruffians, with marks on their faces, had suddenly darted on us from behind a fence, who wounded me in the manner they had witnessed, and had undoubtedly killed the unfortunate servant, my fellow-traveller, as I saw him fall, before I received the wound which deprived me of sensibility."

"This, I said, was my simple history; and, consequently, had it not been for their good offices, it would have been finally concluded by my death."

"They seemed particularly attentive to my discourse; at the conclusion of which the surgeon, who always appeared the principal person, said—I am greatly surprised—it is a strange story which you relate. It is mysterious who in these parts, which we are so fully acquainted with, could have used you so; yet of the fact there can be no doubt.—You are not, I presume, by your accent, a native of Italy—has your residence been long in this country—and from whence come you?"

"I am an Irishman, I answered, and I have been a resident in this country many years."

"The Irish are a brave and enterprising people," he replied, and, as such, we respect them—but you say there was another man with you, who was killed—of him we saw nothing—what could have become of him?"

"Though this was a question asked, they well knew I could give no answer to, as the state of utter incapacity they found me in must convince them."

"After many conjectures on this subject, I ventured to ask them if they would condescend to relate to me the manner in which they found me."

"As you seem, said another, to be a quiet, orderly person, and are now destined to pass your remaining days with us, for none, who ever once enter our society, are permitted to quit it, except for some extraordinary occasion, which is evidently beneficial to the whole community, I see no reason why we should seek to conceal ourselves, or our pursuits, from you.—We are a set of brave and desperate men, who, breaking through the common-place bonds which bind little minds together in civilized societies, have entered into a covenant of honour, which nothing but death can dissolve—to stand by each other on all occasions—to plunder the rich, and to help the poor—to revenge, to the last drop of blood, insult, information, or any other offence committed against any one of our party—Therefore beware—let this discourse banish from your mind all idea of leaving us—let it impress on your remembrance your duty to us—for you may rest assured we are no triflers."

"Having thus far signified our unanimous sentiments, I shall proceed to inform you the particulars you request to know."

"One morning early, happening on our return from an excursion we had been making, to observe the body of a murdered man lying at a little distance from the road, we drew near to observe it more accurately—actuated by that irresistible impulse which all feel on such occasions. At first we supposed it some one who had justly fallen by resistance to some of our party—but, as in a few moments we were all collected, we found all equally unacquainted with the transaction. Whilst expressing our surprise at this circumstance, a deep sigh from the body gave testimony of remaining life; and we were attracted by a variety of motives to endeavour to restore animation, and a little longer suspend that spirit, which appeared just on the point of abandoning its confinement."

"One of the principal reasons of our thus acting, was to discover whether or no any other association was forming in our neighbourhood, which your account would confirm or disprove. Another, almost equally strong, was a subject to practice surgery on, an art in which it is absolutely necessary we should be proficient, as we are subject to so many accidents."

"What has taken place since your residence, need not here be reverted to—what we have further to add is, that, as soon as your health is sufficiently established, you must take an oath of fidelity towards us—to assist us in all our enterprises, and never to quit our establishment, but on such good and substantial reasons as shall be satisfactory to all parties.—This is the tenor of our compact, to which you must conform."

"Having given my assent to comply with whatever conditions they thought proper to propose, which the necessity of my situation entirely prevented my making any objection to, they appeared perfectly satisfied, and considered me, in every respect, as one of themselves."

"For two years I continued an associate with these wretches, without any particular deviation from their usual round of employment. The depredations which they committed during that time were numerous, cruel, and lucrative to them. Fortunately for me, my long-continued weak state of health occasioned them, in general, to employ me in some domestic offices, and I was seldom called on by them to join in any of their excursions; and, the few times I have attended, I thank Heaven I never witnessed any scenes of blood."

"At the expiration of the two years, another person was admitted of our party—one who had long been distinguished by our society, but who, till now, had declined becoming one; but some peculiar advantages offered, had induced him to waive his scruples.—He was a Scotchman, of a most gigantic stature—his high cheek-bones evidently bespoke his country—his red and fierce eyes conveyed no expression but ferocity—his bushy hair, of the most fiery colour, proclaimed the vehemence of his disposition; and the characteristic dress of his country, which he never would relinquish, gave him, altogether, an appearance so terrific, that the most undaunted might be awed by his presence. Our gang paid him much respect and attention; and, as for me, I never could turn my eyes on him without being horror struck—and yet, strange as it may appear, it was through this man I resigned my liberty—by his means I now enjoy the supreme blessings of this society."

"He had been with us but a few days, when he appeared to shew me a greater degree of civility than I could have supposed him capable of; and one day, when partaking some meal, he addressed me in English, asking some trifling questions, and adding some remarks on the proximity of our countries. Our party were anxious for this discourse to be interpreted, which he very faithfully did."

(To be continued.)

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