

ST. JOHN, N. B., SATURDAY, AUGUST 19, 1899.

BACK TO HER PEOPLE.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE DAUGHTER OF A THIEF.

Sheeny Mike's Saving Ways and The Reason Therefor—The Education of His Daughter and the Incident that Ended it Told by a Prison Character.

The day looked so lovely from the second gallery of the main hall of the penitentiary, with the swaying trees sending fantastic shadows across the dawn, and a robin hopping saucily over the flower-beds; the contrast was so alluring of sunshine, crisp air, and verdure, with white-washed gloom and pent, acrid atmosphere, that the old Colonel was constrained, despite his dread of curious sight-seers, to avail himself of the doctor's permission to take an hour's exercise in the prison-yard.

Up and down the flagging by the main building marched the old Colonel, fifty paces this way fifty paces that. On one side extended the gray, stone structure, broken by high-grated windows; on the other side beyond the lawn, the uneven line of the shops, sending forth a whirl of industry, not unpleasing. At one end of the walk stretched the prison wall, running back to the canal, with a guard rifle, on shoulder, standing at the angle. At the other end where sundry small offices, the kitchen, the boiler-room, and a one-storied affair, which some one had told the Colonel was the shoemaker's shop. But overhead, arched the blue, unconfined, limitless; and, as the old man raised his eyes, his thoughts, too, became free from duress. He threw back his shoulders and stepped out briskly and with a military carriage. He was far away, in both time and place, back in the old days, when men had been anxious to see him, because they had been anxious to do him honor.

The sound of flat, meaningless laughter brought a quick end to pleasant reverie. Down by the doorway of the furthest shop was a mass of bright colors. Evidently a party of visitors were about to return to the main building. In another moment they would notice him, the one grotesque figure in the yard. In another moment, they would point and question, as heedless of his agony, as if it were a wax form in a chamber of horrors. With one startled glance, the old Colonel fled precipitately, a black and gray streak, to the nearest doorway, and plunged headlong into the little shop where Donald the shoemaker was sewing a pair of shoes which he was surreptitiously making for an opulent Italian.

Donald, a citizen of the nether world, was a character in his way. An offspring of the Manchester jail and a graduate of the four English prisons, he had followed his wits wherever they had led him, and had put a girdle of criminality around the world, a task, by the way, which had taken him forty years, for his detentions had been many. His speech which at times showed traces of education, betrayed few native or local peculiarities; for the most part it was a cosmopolitan jargon, the survival of the unfittest. His face was round and ruddy, with tiny bright eyes, having a sideways glance, and cunning lines around the mouth. Under any and all circumstances, he was good-natured, an attribute which had often gained for him some mitigation from the bench. That this quality was generally deemed imprudence by the prison officials made no difference to Donald; he would continue to be good natured if he got bread and water for it.

The man was singularly persistent in his purposes, which were commercial. Somewhere concealed in the folds of his dirty blue shirt was a leather bag, half filled with small coins, which in one way or another he had collected during his term. He was continually trading and bartering among the men. His sharp eyes would detect decent shoes, a gaudy handkerchief or a stout pair of suspenders belonging to a newcomer, and by hook or by crook, unmoved by rebuff or delay, he would get that particular article for half its value, soon to be parted with for the twice the price paid. He was skilful at his trade which he never practised except under duress, and could patch up a hopelessly bad pair of upper in a way to gladden the heart of an economical. Hence, he was retained in his office, despite repeated infractions of any and all rules, and to his high content; for his freedom to pass in and out of the buildings and about the yard afforded many chances to offer and dicker.

'Sure, this is an honor, Colonel,' pro-

tested Donald, as he dusted off and tendered a three-legged stool. 'I was watchin' you through the dure, and I said to meself that not since I was in the British Army had I seed such a step. Not but that your shoes ain't a bit stiff; that off one must rub, I'm bettin'. How would you like, now, to give me fifty cents and take these gaiters? I got them off peg-legged Johnnie, before the sawboneses had their sport with him.'

'I shouldn't like to at all,' said the Colonel.

'Of course not; you gentlemen are all alike; you care more for your inside than your outside feelin's. You must excuse me, Colonel; it's only me way, you know. And what I do, when I went out, if I didn't have me little bag of savin's; d'ye think them folks you sprinted from would give up a fardin on me behalf, except by way of reward for me apprehension?'

'I'm afraid not,' said the Colonel.

'I'm sure not,' reiterated Donald. 'And that's why, Colonel, there's nothin' in reform for an old lag but wind and tracks. Of course, it's diff'rent with you; you're a one-timer instid of an old-timer. Gentlemen like you never come but onct; and when you did come, it was the all firedest surprise of your life, now, wasn't it, that such a thing could have happened to the likes of you? But even so, when you do go out, pardoned and all that, the recollection of your defection intirely wiped away, you'll find you have more former friends than old ones, now mark me. By the way, Colonel, that neckercher you're wearin' is all coffee spots on the ends; it's the rale stuff you git up there in the 'ospital, not bootleg like the rest of us poor devils. Now, what do you say to tradin' for two cottons I got off the laundry woman—she nipped them from the old man's wash—and a pair of laces for good measure?'

'I don't care to entertain the proposition,' said the Colonel somewhat austere.

'Of course you don't,' agreed Donald heartily. 'I might hev known that the old leddy sent it to you in the last box. Well, sir, to continuo our highly divartin' conversation, as I was sayin' there ain't no future for an old-time but a repetition of his past. As soon as folks cease to fear him they wonder why he don't go and die. He's like them pariah I seed in Ingy; a poor devil until he comes near you, and then you want to shoot him. And his childer? Why you turn one of them loose on a respectable block, and the woman shoo in their little uns as if the pistilence that walketh be noonday had jest reached the karner below. And that reminds me, Colonel, speakin' of respectable quarters, what would you say to givin' me fifteen cints for a plugged twenty-gve cint piece?'

'I should say, no,' said the Colonel.

'Of coore you would,' Donald went on affably. 'I forgot you had retired from the barkin' business on a 'ansome competency. Now, Colonel, between you and me, I don't blame society for not buggin' every old lag to its bezzom. Not unless his hands was tied leazwise. But it takes big resks, it does, when it snubs the childer; let me tell you, there's somethin' in their blood that rebels when they're ill treated, and when they figt back, it's for keeps. Set still for a while yet, Colonel, and enjoy yourself, and I'll tell you a case in pint:

'Over in Lunnon, years ago, I used to work in with a likely looking Irishman we called Sheeny Mike. He was about the top notch of the light fingered gentry; a bloke that could go through a crowd and not leave an ivory button and then start the hue and cry ag'inst some innocent party. Speakin' of buttons, Colonel, if that stud of yours is gold, as I think it is, I'll give you a bottle of ile, a razor, and four packages of chewin' for it.'

'I don't care to sell,' said the Colonel; 'it is one of a set, and the Deputy was kind enough to let me retain it.'

'Of course you don't,' rejoined amiable Donald; 'and it's fine you'll look the day you go out with the tree of them stuck in your bran'-new dickey. But to go on with Sheeny Mike. He had one queer thing about him, Colonel, he was clus-fisted; that's how he got the name. Everything he prigged was melted down or hocked or sold through a fence, but what he did with the kine. I didn't know, except he didn't blow them. Some of the boys was cold on him; but we kept thicker'n ever. It's wise to cotton to a man that's got buried swag, Colonel; some day you may come across it.'

'Well, one Sunday, when we was in Manchester, he brought up the subject himself. 'Donald,' said he, 'do you really want to know why I hang on to the shiners and don't throw them to the pigies in the mud, like the rest of you bloomink asses? Come now, and I'll show you.' And, blast me, Colonel, if he didn't lead the way into a swell church, up in the gallery, where we sat with half the liveried sarvents in town a'inkin' up their noses at us, as if we were wuss than hanimasted duremats. Say, Colonel, if you want a strip of carpet to make your bachelor quarters more invitin', I've got jest the ticket over in that karner, which you kin have for two bob.'

'Thank you,' said the Colonel; 'but I am as comfortable as needs be under the circumstances.'

'Of coore you are,' assented Donald heartily; 'it's better than you got in the army, I'm thinkin'. Ah, that's the ru-time that gave you the narve to take your bit like a little man. Well, for a time, Colonel, I was so impressed with the fly people, the bang-up women, the music, the processions the byes in white petticoats, and all that, I clean forgot why I was there. Say, but there was diamonds, there, Colonel; the hull output of the mines of Goldonyer, I should say. I was jest thinkin' how it would be for Sheeny Mike and me to raise the cry of 'Fire!' and then rush down stairs, and pick them off gintly as the wimmin ran screamin' through the vestibule, when he plucked my arm. 'Look there,' he whispered.

'There was another percession a comin' down the aisle, Colonel. First, a half-dozen frowsy old dames, with giglamps and green veils, reglar vinegar-sweeteners; and then, two by two, the prettiest lot of bloomin' young gals you ever see. My, but it was a sight to make an old man leery and a young man crazy. Fifty boarding-school gals, all in the full blush of innocence, dressed in white, like angels with their wings tucked in. 'There's a flower garden for you, Sheeny,' I said; 'exceptin' the withered vegetables in front'; and then I stopped; for there was a look in his face I had never seed there before, a sort of soft tremblin' as if he wanted to cry and didn't quite know how. 'See that young gal in the fourth row, Donald,' says he, 'the one with the pale face and the big black eyes? That's my darter.'

'Well, if Sheeny Mike had said that the ree'er was his mother, I couldn't have been more taken off my feet. It was a good thing I was a settin', Colonel, rally it was. Of all the bang up ones that gal was the bang-apest. Tall and slight, like a poplar, with beauteous features, and the complexion of a pearl, you'd swear that a queen had been her wet nuss. Proud? I never seed such a haughty keridge. Thinks I to meself, thinks I, 'young woman, if you knowd what I know, you'd be doin' the double back flip-flap over the pews in amzeement.' And yet, somehow, I could see a resemblance to Sheeny Mike, as he had looked a moment before. Speakin' of likenesses, Colonel, how would you like to buy an elegant album for the phottergraphs of your loved ones?'

'I have no occasion to make any such purchase,' replied the Colonel.

'Of coore not,' said Donald, rubbing his hands gleefully; 'a gentlemen like you would have minatoors on hovy, no doubt. Well, Sheeny Mike gave me another nudge. 'Come on,' he said; 'let's dust. I don't want her to see me in any such company'; so we stumbled over the footmen's calves, and got by their glances of arrogance without frezin', and so out into the street, and back to the inn. 'Any such company,' I repeated. 'I'll have you know, Mike, and your darter, too, that I'm just as fly a hand at the business as you are seven days in the week.' 'Hush,' he said, entreatin' like, 'She doesn't know. She thinks I'm a furrin marchint. Come, I'll stand a wet for onct, and tell you the hull story.'

'So, over our glasses, Colonel, he explained. It seemed that twenty years before, Sheeny Mike had been running with a handsome barmaid. He liked her so well that they were spliced good and reglar, and if she helped Mike in the biz, she was as straight as a string, it was hands off with the swell mob. Well, when the baby was born, a little gal the doctor he said that the missus must die.

'I remember well,' said Mike, to me, with the tear's a runnin' down his cheeks, 'the night she called me to her bedside, lyin' there all white and weak like a broken

lily. "Mike, you've been a good square man to me," she whispered, "and I loves you for it. You've got your graft, and its not for the likes of me to say that you should give it up; but the little one, Mike, my little tender flower, keep her unspotted from the world. Let her never know her father's crimes, nor her mother's shame; and if you must keep on priggin', spend the stuff on her, and then some good may come from it." And then, it seems, Mike swore by all that's good and holy that never should the little gal know of her parent's peculiar liveli-hood, but should be brung up akile the leddy her mother ought to have been. And his missus smiled and closed her eyes and died.

'All this Mike told me, as we set over the drink, and then he said: "So you see, Donald, why is it they call me Sheeny; but never you peach a word of it, man, or I'd drive a knife through your black heart. Speakin' of knives, Colonel, here's a broken-handled one, but pure Brum-magem, as you kin see for yourself, that I'll let you have, seein' it's for you, for two and six. Come, now, wadder you say?'

'The one that I have is all that I require replid the Colonel.

'Of coore it is,' said Donald, with an air of supreme satisfaction. 'There's nothin' like a good old friend, especially if you ever have to open it in your pocket. Well, Colonel, I appased Mike quickly enough by sayin' fust that I had no consarn to turn meself into a puncusion on his account, and secondly, I'd go considerably out of my way to keep from harm so pritty a young cretur'. And I meant it, too, Colonel; if I had the dispising power this earth would be an Eden; but what's the use of dreamin' it's a scramble, that's what it is, and the man that tries to keep his hands clean, keeps them empty, also.

'Well, Colonel, Mike softened at onct. 'I know'd you would be square, Donald,' said he; 'you're the only man of the push I'd hev told; but you've got imagination, and sentimental ideas, that's what you hev'. It is a rigular flower-garden, isn't it,' he went on; 'for all the old sorrel-tops in the lead, and my gal is the sweetest of the lot. They don't let them wear diamonds, Donald, but did you mind the fineness of that white stuff she's wearin' and the rale old lace on it? She thinks I'm in the South American trade, and so do they all, a bonny-fide marchant prince. I've had her down to Bournemouth every summer when the gang's on the Continent, and b'long to a club there and have a pew in church. I'll marry her, Donald, to a swell. One of them frosty-faces told me that already there's a curate a makin' eyes at her, that one with his vice in his boots, and in the white gown; and there'll be fifty thousand pund for them to go house-keepin' with, and that's what it means to be called Sheeny Mike.'

'Well, Colonel, it was the next summer, and biz was slack, and I was down in the mouth. One day a newspaper reporter whom I knew, and who, wuss luck, know'd me, met me, and said, says he, 'Donald, what kind of a graft is Sheeny Mike workin' down at Bournemouth, anny way, movin' in upper suckles, with a young dutchiss for a darter? 'I don't know what y'are talkin' about,' I answered as innocent as you please. There's a twenty pund note in it for you,' he continued, 'and I'll protect you when I write it up, takin' all the responsibility on meself, sayin' I copped it by accident, as I did, you know, except a few trifling details.' I was hard up, you see, Colonel.'

'You surely didn't betray your friend?'

'Well, betray is hardly the word for it; but if you had a chance to trade a few trifling details for a twenty-pund note, you wouldn't be so salt as to let it go by, now would you? And speakin' of trading, Colonel, I'll give you four books for them suspenders.'

'Under no consideration,' said the Colonel curtly.

'Of course not,' rejoined Donald, with a grateful grin; 'thim braces is probably your own bimpiration. Well to g'wan with me story. That fall, Colonel, the Manchester Daily Press, a rather flash sheet given to sensations, came out with the hull 'orrible tale; the life and career of Sheeny Mike, and his impostures on society; a detailed account of the boardin' school and how poplar his darter was with the highest toned of the gals, a pictur' of the old young curate and his leddy mother; and the views of several of the leadin' citizens on the scandal; all worked up in the queen's taste; as if the reporter had been pipin' the lay for mont's with nobody to thank but his own bignuity.

'I may as well tell you at onct, Colonel,

how the best people in Manchester treated this poor little ewe lamb. The old screw at the head of the school med a violent attack on her in the chancel, and sint her to her room to pack up her duds; with twenty four hours' grace before bag and baggage she was put out on the sidewalk. Many of the people sint for their darters; at onct, lest they should be contaminated, and the curate's mother wrote a letter all filled with abuse, to which he added a line sayin' as how he was goin' to pray for her. I tell you, Colonel, whoever it was called charity a stay-to-hum, know'd what he was a talkin about.

'Me and Sheeny Mike was in Lunnon when the catastrophe occurred, and he was at fust wild to go down and clean out the hull town, never suspectin', Colonel, about those trifling details to which you seemed to take exceptions. But the more he talked and thought the more ca'm he grewed. 'Them are good folks,' he said; 'and they love me darter. Surely in her distress and grief they'll love her more. Perhaps some of them will adopt her; I'll agree to turn over the rock at onct, and never see her agin, that I will. I'll wait, Donald, until they write and tell me the bist course they've decided for the child; but, oh, man, it will be hard to part with her forever.'

'We were a settin' alone in the tap-room of a quiet jint where we hung up, with the sperrits between us. Mike laid his arms on the table and his head on his arms, as if he had jest pleaded guilty, and I was a turnin' of some consolin' words in me mind, when the dure opened, and in walked his darter, with her cheeks gaskly pale and her two eyes shinin' and snappin' like Guy Fawkes' day. 'I've come to my own people,' she said; and her vice rang out as proud and as clear as a Lite Guard's trumpet; and blast me, Colonel, if she didn't slip open a reddeculc she wore at her pritty waist, and dump out afore us the watter, lace pins, and wallets of the hull school. Arter that, there was no use for Sheeny Mike to h'xpostulate; 'you'll take your mother's part, my dear,' he said; and away they went on a dashin' career, in which you can bet that young divil of a gal didn't take the hindmost. And so you see, Colonel, and here Donald's voice took a whining tone; 'there's no hope for an old lag like me unless g'intlemen of your sort who have the heart and the means and the understandin' give him a lit against the day of his goin' out. Anythin', Colonel, that you have, snivelled the old cadger, 'will be most welcome—'

'I'm sure, Donald,' interrupted the Colonel patronizingly, his breast swelling with old-time sensations; 'I am always glad to held the unfortunate. I have a small sum of money here with—'

Alas for Donald! the shoemaker's glistering eyes, and eager palm! The door burst open with a kick, and the warden, the old man himself, entered.

'Go to your cell at once and stay there,' he said sternly to the Colonel; 'I swear if it doesn't make me resolve never to grant another privilege when the best of you use them so.' The poor Colonel, abashed and disillusioned, crept silently away. 'And you, Donald, continued the warden, I don't know what to do with you. Sometimes I think you are crazy.'

'I'm sure I am, your shner,' protested the shoemaker cheerily, 'and I'd be the most miserabilist men alive, if I thought you lay me calamities up against me.'

A DESPERATE RIDE.

He Braved the Storm of Bullets and Saved the Regiment.

'That is one of the bravest men I ever knew,' said General Rosecrans, pointing out his inspector general, Arthur C. Ducat. 'I saw him coolly face almost certain death to perform a duty. Three on the same duty had fallen before his eyes, and he had to run the gauntlet of a thousand muskets, but he did it.'

The words were spoken to James R. Gillmore while on a visit to 'Old Rosey's' army at Murfreesboro, who records them in his 'Personal Recollections.'

General Rosecrans referred to Ducat's behavior at the battle of Iuka. The inspector general had observed that a regiment of General Stanley's division was about to be overwhelmed by a much larger force of the enemy.

'Ride on and warn Stanley at once,' said Rosecrans as Ducat reported the danger. An acre on fire and swept with bullets lay between him and the menaced regiment. Ducat glanced at it and said: 'General, I have a wife and children.'

'You knew your duty when you came here,' answered Rosecrans coolly.

'I'll go, sir,' said Ducat, moving his horse forward.

Stay a moment. We must make sure of this,' said the general, beginning to write dispatches, the paper resting on the pommel of his saddle. He wrote three; gave one to each of three orderlies and sent them off at intervals of about 60 yards over the bullet swept field. Then he looked at Ducat, who had seen every one of the orderlies fall lifeless or desperately wounded. Without a word he plunged into the fire, ran the gauntlet in safety, got to Stanley and saved the regiment, but his clothes were torn by minie balls, and his horse received a mortal wound.