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

AN IRISH STORY.

(Continued from our last.)

"When Europeans meet in the field, it may then be called fighting, though, indeed, I have little doubt myself, but that in time the natives will so far improve in discipline and the art of war, that they will be enabled to defend themselves, and fight their own battles.

But, notwithstanding the advantage they may have derived from the assistance of the French, few instances have occurred, during the course of settlements in India, in which the company's troops have not been victorious.

"But, in the last engagements I was in, the advantages were evidently against us, as a very large party of French soldiers assisted the rajah Ahamed Abdallah, a prince of great eminence, who commanded a division of his army, whilst his son Timud commanded another. So circumstanced, a retreat became unavoidable—I, with a small number of men under my command, guarded the rear of the retreating party. At this moment, the troops under the command of the rajah's son attacked my small company, with a spirit and valour seldom evinced by Asiatic soldiers, we defended ourselves to the utmost; and, in the contest, it was my fate desperately to wound the rajah's son at the instant his father rode up with a reinforcement. On seeing his son fall, with a lion's fury he advanced on us—vain, now, was the unequal combat—several of my men were killed: and others, dreadfully wounded, made prisoners.

"The rajah, inflamed with a peculiar hatred and revenge against me, gave orders for me immediately to be conveyed to a distant palace of his, and to be closely confined, in a place he particularly mentioned, till his determinations respecting me should be further made known.

"Agreeable to his instructions, I was conducted to the palace, by painful marches, and immured in the dungeon ordered: and there left alone to ruminate on the calamitous state of my affairs.

"I had no doubt of an ample revenge being brought on the rajah for the loss and misfortunes of this day; but myself I gave up for lost, assured I should be considered dead, and that idea, I had every reason to suppose would soon be realised, as the rajah's tyranny and cruelty were well known, and, circumstanced as I was, I could expect no mercy.

"Life had but few charms for me; yet human nature recoils at death. In every shape he has horrors; but more particularly when he appears with sudden violence. I thought of my child—the tie to existence seemed more strong; but, recollecting the protection I had left her under, I found consolation: happy for me was it, that, in this respect, I was in ignorance.

"The sorrows of solitary confinement have been so often and so ably delineated, I will not here expatiate on them; I shall only add my testimony to those already recorded, that nothing can equal the dreary length of time an active mind experiences, in days, weeks, and months, passed without employment or converse.—Dreadful is it for man, habituated to social delights, and active exercises, to be cramped in a narrow cell, counting the unaltered hours of capacity, and wasting the prime of his years in unprofitable confinement. This certainly must strike every imagination as the most wretched situation; but how are its terrors magnified, when the ideas constantly present to you its only termination to be a cruel death, of lingering torture.

"Fortunately for me, I had, when taken, in my pocket two pencils: these I treasured with a miser's avarice; they afforded me the only miserable amusement I had. With these, by dismal light, admitted by a small hole in the thick walls of my prison, I marked the mournful calender of my days.

"The place of my confinement was a small, damp, and low room, from which there was a little outlet, which contained my miserable bed; yet, bad as my accommodations were, they were princely, compared to what the rajah's general fame gave me reason to expect. The scanty meal allowed me was boiled rice, with a pitcher of water to which were occasionally added some trifling refreshments peculiar to the country; but in quantities, so sparing, they would scarcely suffice an infant—the rice was, in fact, my principal support.

"Two years had worn away, in this heavy course, and to my inconceivable amaze, without the least change. What the rajah's intentions were respecting me, continually occupied my thoughts; but as all conjecture on this subject was vain, I frequently endeavoured to banish it from my mind.

"During these two years I had not uttered a sentence to mortal: the prison walls, indeed, often witnessed my soliloquies; but to the natives who attended me I never once spoke, as I will knew the utter impossibility of obtaining any satisfactory answer from them, even had I made the attempt; and so little pleasure had I in their appearance at the stated time, that I seldom looked up when they entered the place where I was confined.

"One day, as my provisions were depositing, by accident I lifted my head from the hand which was supporting it, and, to my joyful astonishment, beheld an European face—I started up in an exstasy, exclaiming, 'My countryman!'—but he instantly departed in the same silent manner his predecessors had done before.

"This circumstance had a wonderful effect on me; it was like electricity, and had caused a sudden revolution in the whole system of my ideas.—Here is, thought I, a man presents himself before me, who has known the enjoyments of a free country, and who, thongh now compelled by a variety of accidents (most likely) to submit to the tyrannic impositions of a despotic prince, will yet recollect, with a warm transport, the customs of his native country: he will feel for the oppressions the captive suffers, under unjust confinement; and, as far as the sympathy of consolation goes, will not withhold it.

"It was thus I argued with myself, and cheered my mind with a gleam of hope, to which it had so long been a stranger.

"The hours appeared to have acquired additional length, so impatient was I till the one arrived that my provisions were to be brought in.

"My heart palpitated with an unusal emotion, as the bars of my prison door fell; and joy rushed to my heart as I saw the same stranger enter, whose appearance the day before had given me so much pleasure.

"Though the darkness of the place might prevent his having a perfect view of me, my eyes, familiar to obscurity, distinguished his face with precision, and on it I plainly traced the board lines of candour and compassion, marked by the unerring finger of nature.

"I again attempted to speak; but, laying his hand on his mouth, and giving an expressive shake of the head, it spoke volumes to me, and instantly conveyed to my mind his desire, but want of power and opportunity, to converse with me. But my heart had received comfort from his looks; and though he left me as abruptly as before, yet his hope-inspiring countenance had conjured up a variety of fantastic chimeras, that amused me to reflect on till the hour of refreshment again arrived.

"At length the door opened; but how can I describe my disappointment when a black face presented itself to my view.—My heart sunk, in vain I stretched my eyes towards the dark entrance which had admitted him, the interesting face I sought appeared not: three days I mourned this deprivation, as though I had lost a long-loved friend; of such great consequence are the most slender ties to those torn from all which endears life; that even the death of a trifling, and otherwise disagreeable insect, the companion of their melancholy hours of seclusion from the world, as the only object of their amusement. has more than once been known to inflict the keenest sence of anguish and regtet on minds of firmest textures.

"It was thus with me, as I can truly say I neither enjoyed food or rest till the fourth day, when I was again revived by the sight I had so long and so ardently wished. He, as usual, brought my rice; and, whilst placing it on the bench before me, fixed his eyes on me with an expression which struck to my soul, and in a moment departed.

"I sat musing for some time after his departure—'This man surely interests himself for me,' said I: 'his look testifies it; but, poor fellow, he has it not in his power to render me any service, not even to speak—yet pity is a soother I have long been a stranger to, and that sentiment he evidently feels for me.'

"I now took my rice, and was very much surprised to find that but small quantity at the top was boiled, the lower part of the vessel being full of raw;—attracted by this phenomenon I turned it all out of the dish, and discovered a bit of paper rolled up amongst it. With a trembling hand, and beating heart, I took it up; and, drawing near the little light which remained, in a very bad hand, and worse spelling, read the lines which can never be obliterated from my memory, and were these—'Never despair! I cannot speak, being afraid of spies; I attended you many days before you noticed me; I thought you would never look up, and, when you did, I did not dare to say any thing; but I shall watch my opportunity, as I have many things to say of great consequence.'

"Eagerly did I long for the promised communication; but several days elapsed and I saw not my friend; and, as before, impatience and restlessness possessed me.

"One night, when oppressed nature had sank in a profound repose, I was roused and alarmed by the drawing back the bars of my prison. In horror, I started up, expecting assassination—but that dread was soon removed by the desired presence of my friend, who entered, bearing a lamp, the light of which strongly reflecting on his face, shewed to me a fresh, the pictured sincerity of a good heart.

"I immediately arose, and offered my hand, which heartily shaking, he said, in low accents—'never fear, I hope we shall yet be too cunning for these black rogues.'

"The sound of a human voice thrilled with rapture to my heart; and the peculiar accent increased the pleasure they gave me.

"'Ah! my dear friend,' said I, 'you are doubly my countryman—you are from Ireland.'

"'Indeed I am, sir,' answered he. 'Though it is long since I saw my native country, yet it is no less dear to me, and I shall be still more happy if I should have it in my power to serve a gentleman of my own kingdom.'

"'From what part are you?' returned I—'it is probable you may have heard of my family.'

"'I came from the county of Monaghan,' was his reply.

"'From the county of Monaghan,' I hastily answered, struck by a sudden recollection—'and your name.'

"'Patrick O'Brien,' he returned 'Great God! is this possible,' I exclaimed (clasping him in my arms, which the joy of the moment involuntarily caused me to do—'is it possible that my wretched, cheerless confinement has led to the discovery of one whom concurring circumstances must bind to my service:—but let us compose ourselves, to enter on detail.'

"'You will first need something to recruit your spirits, sir,' said he (Though he appeared much surprised at my sudden unexplained emotion), 'you have fared bad enough lately, God knows!—I have provided a small supply, which, I hope, will revive you.'

"He then opened a little basket, in which was a bottle of wine, and some other comfortable refreshments. I thanked him, with great warmth, for this kind attention, but my stomach had been so long unused to things of this nature, that it was with the greatest caution I at first partook of them.

"We now beginning to feel a little settled, seated ourselves as well as we could, and I gave him a minute history of all my own affairs. I told him of my knowledge of his brother—of his affection and regret for him---and that my only child was under his care.

"It is impossible to express the poor fellow's joy on hearing this intelligence---it immediately accounted to him for my behaviour; and he joined me in thanks to Heaven for this happy event.

"The time of his stay being now expired, he told me he must defer his adventures till our next meeting; then, taking a cordial and friendly leave, retired."

"And is it, indeed, possible, my dear father," said the attentive Georgiana, "that you have really seen the long-lost brother of the dear and worthy O'Briens?"

"I have not only seen him, but you, likewise, shall see him," answered the earl, "as he is now here with me, and you will be surprised at his great likeness to his brother; and I must add, my dear child," continued the earl, "had I not met with O'Brien, you would never have seen me, most assuredly."

"Then my obligations to him are infinite, indeed," and I shall ever truly regard him.---The recital of your sufferings fills my mind with sorrow, even though I know they are over. How happy I am I knew nothing of it at the time it happened, as no means to relieve you would have been practicable. But, my dear sir, continue your narrative, and let us know by what concurrence of fortunate and miraculous circumstances you were at length restored to us."

"Several days passed," continued the earl of Desmond, "before I again saw my preserver, as I may truly call him. In the middle of the night, with his former precaution, he again visited me, and time being very precious, he, without any preface, began an account of the events of his own life; which, as I am convinced, you will be anxious to hear, both from your regard to him on my account, and affection to the OBriens, I shall acquaint you with the particulars of as a concisely as possible.

"He said, that having imbibed from infancy a passion for a sea-faring life, he had long solicited his friends in vain to let him follow the bent of his inclination---that about his fifteenth year his father died—he then prevailed with his mother to let him go to sea. His heart was fixed on going to the East Indies, where he had heard people got fortunes very fast; and if he should be successful, he should soon be able to do something for his dear mother, and make her happy. Then recommending her to the care of his brother Dennis, he packed up his little wardrobe; and, with the trifling sum they could collect for him, set out on his travels on foot—with his whole stock of wealth over his shoulder.

He pursued his way to Dublin---took shipping for London---and when arrived there, determined to enter on board the first East India ship which would take him.

Whilst attending at the India-House for this purpose, he was observed by a gentleman, who, coming up to him, enquired his business. Patrick frankly told him his story and expectations, with that genuine simplicity which makes its way to the heart.

"You know, my lad, I suppose," said the gentleman, that it is a time of war---have you considered what a dreadful thing it is?---Do you think you have courage to face the enemy?---Have you sufficiently considered these things?"

"I have considered," answered Patrick, "that I must always do my duty, in whatever station I am in."

The gentleman appeared struck by this reply; and after a moment's consideration, said---"My lad, would you like to go to sea with me?---I am an officer in the Company's service---your appearance pleases me, and your manners and sentiments make me wish you well.---If you can be a faithful servant to a master who will protect you, call at my lodgings at ten to morrow morning." Then giving his address, he left the astonished Patrick in a transport of joy.

True to the appointment, he the next morning waited on captain Netterville, who, being himself a native of Ireland, felt a greater degree of partiality to Patrick on that account. He had for several days observed him with pity---supposing him some poor youth destitute of friends and provision, he resolved to enquire into the particulars of his situation.

(To be continued.)

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