



THE

SEA AND SHORE SERIES

NO. 1.
MARCH
1888.

ISSUED QUARTERLY

SUBSCRIPTION PRICE,

\$1.00 PER YEAR

IRISH MONTE CRISTO

OR

THE TREASURE OF THE LAKE

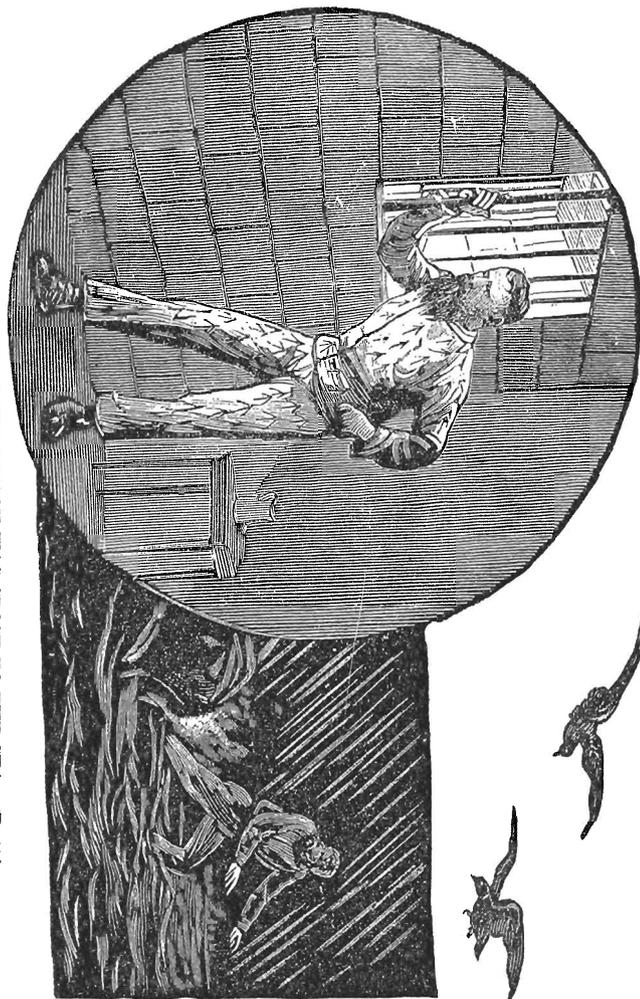
BY JOHN SHERMAN

NEW YORK

STREET & SMITH

PUBLISHERS.

REDMOND KNEW THAT HIS PRISON WAS CLOSE TO THE SEA.—(P. 11.)



THE SEA AND SHORE SERIES—No. 1.

ISSUED QUARTERLY.
SUBSCRIPTION PRICE, \$1.00 PER YEAR.

MARCH, 1888.

Entered at the Post Office, New York, as Second-Class Matter.

AN IRISH MONTE CRISTO;

OR,

THE TREASURE OF THE LAKE.

A TALE OF STRANGE ADVENTURE.

By JOHN SHERMAN.

NEW YORK:
STREET & SMITH, Publishers,
31 Rose Street.

2547

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1888,
By STREET & SMITH,
In the Office of the Librarian of Congress, at Washington, D. C.

AN IRISH MONTE CRISTO.

CHAPTER I.

RIVALS IN LOVE AND WAR.

About twenty years ago all the young men in Ireland were in a state of fearful excitement over the prospects of a rebellion.

Many Irish-American officers who had served in the great civil war had been visiting their old homes and training the Irish patriots in the use of arms, as well as instilling in their minds a love of freedom.

Several spirited young Irishmen had also entered the English army for the purpose of gaining a knowledge of military life, and with the view of afterward using that experience against the enemies of their country.

The Irish had more than enough of men for a successful revolution, but they were fearfully short of arms, and every effort was being made to smuggle rifles into the country.

Among those who thus entered the English army was Redmond O'Connor, the only son of a gentleman residing in the south of Ireland, who came of a family long noted for their hatred of the English rule in Ireland.

Mr. O'Connor lived near the sea-shore, and he was the owner of a swift and beautiful yacht, in which his son delighted to make excursions whenever he could procure a leave of absence from his regiment.

Redmond was just twenty at the time, but he was an accomplished sailor, and he held the rank of lieutenant in a rifle regiment then stationed at a large town a few miles from his father's home.

As young Redmond held strict notions of honor, he did not take a single step against the English government while in the service, as his intention was to throw up his commission and join the patriots when the first outbreak of any importance occurred.

He knew that the young men in the neighborhood were in the habit of drilling in the mountains at night, that secret clubs were forming, and that other preparations were going on, but young O'Connor held aloof from all such movements, though it was well known that he was thoroughly in sympathy with the patriots of the land.

Redmond was a tall, strapping young fellow, and a splendid athlete, but he was never known to raise his hands in anger at school or college, save when provoked to the utmost.

On one occasion, when at school in the town, he nearly killed an opponent who forced him into a fight, although his rival was the bully of the class and much bigger and older.

That opponent's name was Charley Blake, and he was now a captain in the same regiment to which Redmond belonged.

Commissions in the English army could be purchased in those days, and as young Blake's father was a wealthy landholder, he could afford to push his son ahead in the service.

Although Captain Blake was an Irishman by birth, he was an English aristocrat at heart, and he sneered at all his countrymen who desired to govern their own land.

As they were often thrown together as officers in the same regiment, Redmond O'Connor had reason to know

that Charley Blake never forgot the beating he had received in their schoolboy days.

That hatred on Blake's part was still more intensified when he learned that young O'Connor was paying court to a fair girl whom he had marked out for his wife.

The young girl's name was Celia Latimer, and she was the only child of a poor French gentleman who had settled in Ireland when he was driven from his own country after taking part in a revolution in Paris.

While Captain Blake hated his fellow-officer, he always met him with a smiling face and fair words, and young O'Connor was too open-minded to imagine that treachery and venom lurked in the breast of his old schoolmate.

One day early in May, Redmond received positive information that the Irish rebels were out on the hills in force, and he at once sent in his resignation as an officer in the English army.

The young man had just returned from a long cruise in his yacht, and his little vessel was lying in the bay near his father's house.

On the same evening he rode out of town to visit his father and his promised bride, in order to bid them farewell before taking to the hills with the patriots.

Celia Latimer and her father were on a visit at Mr. O'Connor's house that evening, and the young people were soon strolling out on the margin of a beautiful lake and talking of the future.

Celia was a charming, dark-eyed creature, lively and witty, and full of spirits, but her female friends declared that she was a coquette, and very ambitious as well.

"And so you are going to join the rebels, Redmond," she said, with a sigh.

"Yes, I am, dear girl. I always said that I would be a rebel when my fellow-countrymen arose in arms, and my father approves of my purpose.

“Then you will be likely to encounter Captain Blake, as he asserts that he will be glad of a chance to fight the cowardly rebels, as he calls them.”

“Captain Blake may soon discover that we are not all such cowards. When did you see him last, Celia?”

“He paid us a visit last night.”

“Indeed! I saw him in town to-day, and he did not mention it.”

The young girl smiled in a playful manner, as she rejoined :

“He was not proud of his visit, I imagine, as he asked me to be his wife.”

“The mischief you say, Celia! And what answer did you make him?”

“I told him that I had promised to be your bride. Then he used some very ugly language, and vowed that I would never be your bride, Redmond. I thought it best to warn you that he is your bitter enemy.”

“Why, the mean fellow was as sweet as possible to me to-day. However, I can defy his hatred, and I hope to meet him soon on the field of battle. Who comes here in such haste, I wonder? Why, it is Denny Lane.”

A country lad of eighteen, who acted as a stable-boy for Mr. O'Connor, ran down the path at the moment in a very excited manner, and when he reached the young pair he blurted forth, in cautious tones :

“Oh, Master Redmond, Master Redmond, cut for it at once, as the peelers are at the house after you. I'll steal the horse out to the mountain to you.”

“The peelers after me, Denny? What in the mischief have I done as yet?”

“They were down on the boat first, sir, and they found a lot of guns there in a box. They say you brought them over from France to fight the English with, and that is what they want to take you to prison for.”

“Confound the rascals! I hadn’t a single gun on board except my fowling-piece. There’s some treachery at work against me!”

“To be sure there is, sir,” cried Denny, “but they found the box of guns on board anyway, and you had better cut and run for it. ’Tis little they care about transporting or hanging an innocent gentleman in these times.”

“That is very true, Denny, but I would like to face my accusers.”

“’Tis better to face them with some of the boys at your back, sir. If they take you now, you won’t be able to join in the fight.”

“I think you had better take Denny’s advice, Redmond,” said the young girl, in sad, sorrowful tones. “You were an English officer, you know, and it is a serious crime to be caught smuggling arms in here, whether you are guilty or not.”

Redmond looked in the direction of his father’s house, which was about half a mile away, as he asked the lad:

“Are they waiting there to take me?”

“Some of them are, and more of them are out in search of you, sir. The rascals may be here at any moment. Do cut for it, sir, before they come. Get up to the mountain, and I will take your horse up to the gap as soon as I can to-night.”

“And the rifle and revolvers in the loft of the stable also, Denny. Cut back to the house now, and I will start up the mountain at once. Please tell my father that I did not put the guns in the yacht.”

“He told the peelers that himself, sir, but they wouldn’t believe him. They said they had the information to-day from one who helped you to get them aboard in France.”

The lad darted away again, and Redmond O’Connor seized Celia’s hand as he said:

“My dear girl, I cannot say when we will meet again.

Be true to me, and I will make you my wife when the war is over."

"Can you doubt me, Redmond? Fly! fly! I see some dark forms coming along the path."

One kiss, and a clasping of the hands, and the young man darted up toward the mountain, while five mounted policemen dashed toward the lake at the same time.

The policemen saw the flying form, and they started up the hill in pursuit. But Redmond was a fleet runner, and he knew every path on the mountain, so that he had little trouble in effecting his escape.

In reaching a certain retreat, the young man met a party of over a hundred rebels, who received him in the warmest manner, and they at once made him captain of the band.

Denny Lane was as good as his word, as he rode up to the mountain that night on the young man's best horse, bringing with him a splendid rifle and two revolvers.

As the rebels were short of arms, it was resolved to sally down and attack a police barrack in a neighboring village on the following night, and then to march to join the patriots who were out on the hills of Kerry.

Redmond led the attack, and the barrack was taken after a sharp struggle.

Having secured all the arms and the horses, Redmond sent his men on their way to the mountains, while he rode to pay a last visit to Celia Latimer.

As he was approaching the old Frenchman's cottage, which was on the outskirts of the village, the young man was suddenly set on by a party of English soldiers lying in ambush, and, before he could raise a hand in his own defense, he was knocked senseless from his horse by the blow of a rifle.

It was Captain Blake who had struck the blow, and who had also planned the ambush for his rival's capture or death.

When Redmond O'Connor recovered his senses again, he found himself a prisoner in the guard-house of the regiment to which he had belonged, and he was told that he was to be tried by court-martial on the following day.

On that trial it was proved that he had smuggled arms into Ireland for the rebels while in the service of the queen, and he was sentenced to imprisonment for life in one of the convict prisons of the English government.

On the very night of his trial, the unfortunate young man was smuggled to Cork harbor and placed in solitary confinement in the strong prison on Spike Island.

Redmond was not allowed to see or communicate with his father or any of his friends after his arrest, and as his trial was held in secret, none of them were aware of his fate.

Captain Blake kept in the background during the trial, but he was the moving spirit in the whole business, and he was much disappointed when sentence of death was not passed on his rival.

If the English officers had been aware that young O'Connor led the attack on the police barrack, death would have been his doom.

CHAPTER II.

THE PRISONER FOR LIFE.

Who can realize the feelings of a brave and spirited young man consigned to a dreary prison cell for life at the time when his heart was beating with love and hope for his native land?

Redmond O'Connor was prepared to meet death on the field of battle, but he never dreamt of a lingering life in solitary confinement on that rock-bound island.

Day after day, month after month, and year after year went by, and the poor prisoner never saw a friendly face or heard a single word of intelligence from his friends in the outer world.

The convict prison at Spike Island is one of the most desolate places in the world even for those convicts who worked in the stone quarries and at picking oakum.

By a special order of the government, Redmond was placed in a cell in that portion of the prison reserved for unruly convicts sentenced to solitary confinement, and for five long years the only human being he saw was the surly keeper who gave him his food.

That food consisted of a piece of brown bread and a jug of water each day, with an occasional bowl of gruel in the evening.

At first, Redmond endeavored to draw some information from the surly keeper, but the man plainly informed him that he was instructed to give the prisoner no information whatever, and the poor fellow stopped his questions.

Pining day by day, and eating his heart away, as it were, Redmond was continually thinking of escape in the mean-

time, and when the dreary five years had passed he was almost a skeleton in appearance.

During that time he had formed a hundred plans of escape, not one of which did he get the least chance of putting into execution in the well-guarded prison.

Redmond did not even know the name of the place in which he was confined, and of course he could not realize that if he did manage to get outside of the strong stone walls, he would have to run the gantlet of the armed guards stationed along the shores of the island, and then swim a long distance in rough water.

The young man had been a student of history and of the literature of the day, and he had read of many remarkable escapes from the great prisons of Europe.

In many of those famous escapes Redmond could remember that the prisoners were assisted by true friends outside, and that the keepers were often bribed to aid them.

But he had no means of communicating with his dear friends, who were actually ignorant of his fate; and how could he bribe the surly jailer, who treated him more like a wild animal in a cage than as a human being?

The only opening from the dark cell was through the strong iron door, which was only opened about every three days, as the keeper generally handed in the rations through the small grating, which moved with a spring slide.

Redmond knew that his prison was close to the sea, as he could sometimes inhale the salt breeze, and he could hear the roaring of the waves against the rocks on stormy nights.

As the sea was his favorite element, the poor prisoner would often say to himself:

“Oh, if I could only once reach the waves I would battle through them for dear life. Weak and worn as I am, I feel that the salt water would give me life and strength again.”

As the young man was bereft of all occupation he spent much of his time in building castles in the air, weaving romances for his future life that surpassed the most glowing accounts in history or fiction.

He would think of his father, of Celia, and of the dear friends of his boyhood, and he would sometimes ask himself :

“ Could Charley Blake have anything to do with putting the guns on board the yacht? He was the only real enemy I ever had in my life, and he swore to Celia that she would never be my wife. Oh, when I get out won't I pay him back, if he has played a treacherous part with me!”

Then Redmond would fix his mind on the latest plan of escape uppermost therein, while he would ponder and ponder until his poor brain would grow dizzy, and then sink into a restless slumber.

At other times he was almost tempted to pray for death as a relief to his terrible sufferings, but he would soon banish the dark thoughts from his mind, and hopefully exclaim to himself :

“ I must never give in. I will yet escape from this place, and then for a glorious life in the great world outside.”

One stormy night in early spring, while Redmond was listening to the sound of the waves beating against the rocks, he heard an unusual commotion throughout the prison.

Springing to his feet, he ran to the iron door and listened attentively, while he muttered :

“ What can be the matter? I hear rifle-shots and cries, the stamping of heavy feet, and the banging of the doors. Oh, can it be a revolt of the prisoners?”

It was a revolt of the prisoners, and the unfortunates had gained the upper hand of the guards and the keepers for the time.

Aided by friends outside, some of the political prisoners

had secured files and a few revolvers, and on that stormy night about a dozen of them succeeded in breaking loose from their cells to attack their keepers.

Having overpowered the men over them, and secured their arms, the desperate convicts hastened to open the other cells with the keys taken from the jailers, while the outer guards were mustering to quell the revolt.

Redmond O'Connor could scarcely breathe from the excitement roused in his mind as he stood at the door of the cell, kicking away at it with the utmost frenzy, while he gasped, aloud:

“Here, here, in Heaven's name, and let me out to join you! Oh, I am a soldier, and I can show you all how to fight for liberty!”

The tramping of the feet came nearer and nearer, the yells and rifle-shots resounded through the prison, and Redmond could barely stand on his trembling limbs when he heard a key in the lock and his cell door was flung open with a bang, while a rough voice yelled out to him:

“Come out, if you are a man, and fight with us for your life!”

Seizing the tin cup containing a little water, Redmond drained it, and then staggered out into the passage, crying:

“Give me a weapon of some kind, and you will see that I can fight!”

“Follow me and grab what you can get,” cried the convict who had opened the door. “We are going to make a dash at the guards.”

Some forty of the desperate men were soon formed together in a yard, but not more than a third of the number had yet secured weapons of any kind.

The guards were forming in an outer court, boats were hastening to the island from the war-ships in the harbor, and some of the keepers who had escaped capture were firing at the convicts from the windows above.

Redmond O'Connor was still fearfully confused when he reached the yard, but the cool rain beating in his face served to refresh him, and he seized a shovel and raised it aloft, crying to the others:

“Have at them out there at once, or we'll be shot down here like dogs. Where are we at all, boys, I'd like to know?”

Some of the convicts looked at the speaker in surprise, while one of them cried:

“You're on Spike Island, of course. The poor devil is out of his mind.”

Redmond still acted more like a madman the next moment, as he waved his shovel again, and rushed at the guards, as he yelled, in fearful tones:

“We're on Spike Island, are we? Then we must take to the sea, boys. Clear the way for freedom! Fire, and at them!”

And the half-frantic man dashed in among the guards and beat them down on all sides with his shovel, while his fellows crowded on with him, yelling aloud like so many escaped lunatics.

The guards held their ground for a time, however, using rifle and revolver with deadly effect on the convicts, but they were forced to give way before the fury of the desperate men fighting for life and liberty.

Redmond did not receive a scratch in the dreadful melee, although he was ever in the thickest of the struggle.

When the young soldier saw the guards giving way on all sides he seized a rifle and cartridge-box, and yelled to the others:

“Take all the arms you can and burst out to the shore. We must take the boats and away with us before they get help from the ships.”

The convicts then made a dash for the gate and forced it open.

When Redmond O'Connor heard for the first time that he was on Spike Island he realized that their chances of escape were desperate, indeed, unless they could procure boats to convey them to the mainland.

Even if all the convicts were released and armed to the teeth it would be impossible for them to hold the island for an hour against the force that would be landed from the war-ships in the bay.

Redmond knew the location of the island well, and he at once reasoned, even in the fury of the strife, that they could only escape death or recapture by at once taking to the water in boats or by trusting their bodies to the waves.

And none but the most desperate, indeed, would venture into the rude waves on that night of storm and rain.

Out from the gates and down toward the boat-houses burst the furious convicts, while up from the war-ships in the harbor arose the brilliant rockets to light the way of the boats already nearing the island.

The guards and the keepers were rallying and firing again, and before the poor convict wretches could reach the boat-houses, several of them fell dead or wounded on the strand.

When the boat-houses were reached a yell of dismay burst from the convicts, while one of them cried aloud in agony:

“No oars—no oars! Heavens alive, the sailors are firing on us now!”

“Scatter along the rocks, lads,” cried Redmond, as he saw the poor fellows falling around him, with the sailors closing on one side and the guards on the other. “I’ll take to the waves for it. Follow me who likes. Down on the ground or you’ll be shot down like wild beasts.”

As the desperate man uttered the last words he dashed into the waves, while the surviving convicts fell flat on the ground and cried to their merciless butchers for mercy.

CHAPTER III.

THE STRUGGLES OF A BRAVE MAN.

Redmond O'Connor was not betrayed by his hope when he anticipated that a plunge into the salt water would give renewed vigor to his frame and fresh courage to his mind.

Being accustomed to sea-bathing from his early boyhood, he was always at home in the wild waves of the coast, and he had learned to swim, float, and dive as well as the best water-dog along the shores.

Even in that moment of wild excitement, while dashing into the waves, the young man had formed a plan of action.

By the light of the rockets he could see that several of the war-boats had touched the shore, while others were moving from the ships in rapid succession, and he dived beneath the surface as he said to himself:

“There's no chance for me outside, and I'll make for one of the boats coming in.”

Striking out boldly, and only once rising to the surface to take an observation, Redmond was able to reach the stern of one of the incoming war-boats without being observed by the sailors or those on shore.

Seizing the rudder with a light hand, the brave man scarcely raised his head above the water to breathe, while he kept his body concealed under the stern of the boat, even when the bow struck the landing-place.

Redmond remained in that position for over half an hour, and he soon learned from the sailors in charge of the boat that the revolt was over, and the surviving convicts taken.

None of the unfortunate wretches had followed Redmond

into the sea, and it was reported that the madman who led the last attack on the guards had perished in the waves.

The young man still clung to the rudder as the boat pushed back to the frigate, and he was then favored by the darkness, as the war-vessels had ceased to illumine the harbor with the rockets.

When the boat reached the frigate to which it was attached, Redmond made another dive for the anchor-chain of the ship, and he was soon resting in the darkness, with his eyes fixed on the lights in the villas along the pleasant shore, as he muttered to himself:

“It would be almost impossible for me to reach the shore with the tide running out as strong as it does. Then I would be seized in those convicts’ clothes before I could find a place of shelter. I must have courage, however, and I thank Heaven for favoring me so far on this terrible night of strife.”

The young man then cast his eyes down at the lights in Queenstown harbor, and he continued to mutter:

“Would I were safe on board some steamer bound for America; but I am dying to know what has become of father and Celia in all those long years, that appear as a century to me.”

The wind was still blowing a gale, and the rain was falling in torrents, with the cold water chilling his body to the bones, yet Redmond kept clinging to the anchor-chain, forgetful of his sufferings in the bright hope of regaining his freedom.

Oh, for even the rags of a beggar at the moment! and the brave fellow would take to the waves again, and try to battle to the shore lying across the harbor from that fearful inland prison.

While thus meditating as to his future movements, the tide changed, and the waves swept in toward the River Lee.

After pausing some minutes, Redmond fixed his eyes on a light in a large mansion on the shore, and then dived away from the frigate as he said to himself:

“I will trust to the waves and to fortune on the friendly shore. Who knows but I may meet some kindly soul who will take pity on the escaped convict?”

After a very severe struggle, Redmond did succeed in reaching the shore at a point about midway between Queens-town harbor and Cork City, and then he crawled up into a small grove in front of the mansion where he had seen the guiding light he had marked from the frigate.

Flinging himself on the ground he peered anxiously around the house, in the hope of seeing a servant to whom he could appeal.

Mustering more courage, the young man then stole up behind the shrubbery until he gained the rear of the mansion, where he saw a large stable in which a lantern was burning.

With another careful glance around, Redmond stole to the smaller door of the stable, as he said to himself:

“I may at least get up in the hay-loft, if there’s no one in here to see me, and hide in the hay for some time.”

There was no human being in the stable at the time, and the escaped convict cast a glance at the row of fine horses, as he said to himself:

“With one of them I could reach home in four or five hours if I only had some other clothes to wear.”

He then looked around for some old garments, but he could only see a well-worn frieze coat, a Scotch woolen cap worn by the stableman when cleaning the horses, and a pair of oil-cloth overalls, such as was worn by coachmen in stormy weather.

Having examined the articles, he gathered them in a heap and stole up with them into the hay-loft, as he muttered;

“They may do on a pinch. I hate to play the thief, but I must get home, and I can make restitution hereafter.”

The old garments would do to cover the convict's suit, but what a queer figure he would cut in them on horseback, as it was his firm purpose to take one of the good animals from the stable and ride away to his father's house in the darkness of the night.

Having put on the clothes thus secured, Redmond stole down into the stable again, and he then peered out to examine the premises.

He could see a light in the kitchen of the mansion, and stealing over to the window he beheld a man and a woman seated before the fire as if enjoying a rest after a day of labor.

“That is the stableman,” thought Redmond, “and he has fed the horses. He is taking his comfort, and I can slip a horse out in the storm without his hearing me.”

Returning to the stable again, the young convict saddled and bridled the best horse he could select and led him out into the yard.

Following the carriage path, they soon came to a gate leading out on the road, and Redmond opened it quietly, as he muttered:

“Now for a bold push through the city, and then away to my home. I wonder if poor father will know me? I must have changed wonderfully in these long years, with my beard so long and my hair like a wild man's.”

While the other convicts on the island were regularly treated by the barber, the young soldier sentenced to solitary confinement for life had been neglected, and he did present a wild appearance as he dashed through the beating storm on horseback that night.

Drawing the rough coat up over his ears and the cap down to his eyes, Redmond rode on fearlessly, however,

having prepared a suitable reply should he be stopped and questioned by the police in the city.

Being still favored by the storm, he was not troubled by the police, and he kept along the southern road leading from the city, with his heart beating at the prospect of reaching his old home in safety.

As Redmond knew almost every foot of the long road before him, he had little or no difficulty in reaching the village near his father's home just before the day was breaking.

Turning the weary horse into a field, and hiding the bridle and saddle under a hedge, the eager man skirted the village and made his way to the lake, on the banks of which he had parted with Celia Latimer on that eventful night, five long years before.

Standing on the very spot where he had last embraced his promised bride, Redmond O'Connor looked down at his old home, as he said to himself:

“Is it possible that poor father did not know what had become of me all these long years? Oh, it must be so, or he would move heaven and earth to see me, and to get me out. I wonder if Celia is true *to me* yet? It seems like a dream to me to be standing here at the break of day, after all my days and nights of cruel suffering. Oh, what am I like at all?”

Redmond bent over to look down at his reflection in the clear lake, but at the first glance he caught of his countenance, he started back, exclaiming:

“Heavens and earth! Can that be my face? I look just like a wild man of the woods. Oh, what a picture I am to visit my father, or Celia! Who will believe that I am myself at all?”

The young man drew back from the edge of the lake, as if fearful of gazing at his reflection again, when he was startled by the sudden appearance of another human face

coming from under the water, and the next moment a man of even wilder aspect than himself stood on the bank before him.

The uncouth stranger did not perceive Redmond until he had dashed the water from his eyes, and he then uttered a cry of rage, and drew a knife from a sheath at his side, as he cried, in broken English:

“Dogs! you watch me, and I kills you!”

The young Irishman sprang back several feet, and brandished the heavy riding-whip he had taken from the stable, as he replied:

“Don’t try to touch me, whoever you are, or I will strike you down. Heavens alive! are you a numan being at all?”

The stranger appeared to be an old man, but his form was tall and muscular, and he was dressed in the tattered garments of a sailor, with a red skull-cap on his matted gray locks, while a huge white beard fell down on his breast.

After glaring at Redmond for a few moments with fierce and flashing eyes, he crouched down as if to make a spring at him with the sheath-knife, as he cried:

“Ha, ha, ha! Me not human, but one demon, and me will kill you, dogs!”

The strange being darted at Redmond on the instant; but the young man sprang back still farther, crying:

“Whether you are a man or a demon, keep away from me. Confound it all, you must have it, whatever you are!”

The old stranger was rushing on with all the fury of a wild beast, when Redmond dealt him a sharp blow on the wrist, and knocked the knife from his grasp.

With another wild yell of rage, the old fellow then closed on his young opponent, and clutched him by the throat, crying:

“Me will have your life before you gets my treasure, dogs of a spy!”

CHAPTER IV.

THE OLD SPANISH SMUGGLER.

Redmond O'Connor was not in a fit condition for a desperate hand-to-hand struggle, as he felt the effects of his long years of inaction, as well as the fearful exertions he had recently encountered in his escape from the prison.

Believing, however, that he either had a madman or a demon to contend with, he exerted all his remaining strength, and broke away from his assailant, dealing him a blow on the head with the heavy end of the whip at the same time.

That blow was powerful enough to send the old sailor to the ground; and Redmond then sprang for the knife as he cried:

"If you come at me again I'll have to draw a little of your blood. Who and what in the mischief are you?"

The old sailor lay prostrate on the ground, and glared up at the uncouth face of the young man, as he hissed forth:

"You are one pirate. You kill me, but you no get the treasure."

Redmond was panting for breath as he stared back at the old fellow, while he muttered aloud:

"He must be an old madman. What in the mischief was he doing down in the lake, and what treasure does he allude to?"

The old stranger heard the last muttered words, and he cried out:

"Me know, but you not. You spy on me, but 'tis no good."

"Look here, my friend," cried Redmond, forcing a

kindly smile to his rough face, "it is evident you are a stranger here, and I don't want to quarrel with you. What you are talking about is all a mystery to me, and you cannot blame me if I did take you for the demon of the lake."

The old fellow's eyes glared with a sort of fiendish joy, as he cried:

"Certain! Me the one demon of the lake, good man. Go ways, and I go back to my home below. Ugh!—it is day, and more will see me. Go ways, go ways, and me will give yous one gold piece."

As the prostrate old man made the offer, he drew a gold piece from his pocket and flung it at Redmond, who eagerly picked it up and examined it, as he muttered:

"It is an English guinea, but the old man is a Spaniard or a Portuguese, I think. The mischief take me, if I don't see into this business. How could he stay down there in the lake so long?"

The old sailor was still lying prostrate on the ground, and Redmond could see that he was crawling toward the water as he cried out again:

"'Tis gold—good English gold! Go away to one wine-shop and drinks wine and brandy plenty." Come back agains, and one demon of the lakes gives you more."

And the old fellow laughed and grinned in a hideous manner, while he pointed down toward the village, which looked out on the small bay beyond.

Although Redmond O'Connor had enough of his own private affairs to think about, he felt strangely interested in the old sailor.

What was he doing there in that strange garb, and what treasure was he talking about in such a wild, incoherent manner?

The old fellow kept gliding to the edge of the lake, as he kept his glittering eyes fastened on Redmond, while he again cried:

“Go ways, wild man. Me one demon goes back to him home again.”

And the old fellow was about to plunge into the water, when Redmond sprang forward and seized him by the shoulder, crying:

“Hold up a moment, my friend. You are a human being like myself, and I want to have a talk with you. No nonsense with me now, or I’ll give you a taste of this steel.

And Redmond dragged the old sailor away from the edge of the water, brandishing the knife above his head at the same time.

The old stranger screamed with terror as he beheld the gleaming weapon, while the wild appearance of his assailant, together with the harsh tones of his voice, served to add to his consternation.

Dragging the old man into the center of a grove about twenty yards from the edge of the lake, Redmond spoke in more gentle tones, saying:

“See here, my friend, I am not a robber or a wild man, but I am a gentleman in disguise, and on my sacred honor, I do not wish to harm you at all. Just stand there and listen to me.”

The old sailor cast a longing, frightened glance at the lake, and he then bent his search on his captor, as he pleaded:

“Oh, good sir, what you seize me for? I do no harms to you?”

“Confound you! Didn’t you just try to kill me with this knife? But I don’t bear you any ill-will for that. Just tell me who you are, and what you are doing here.”

“I be one poor Spanish shipwrecked sailor, good man, and my name is Sancho.”

“Well, Sancho, what were you doing down in that lake? I have a right to know, as this is my father’s property.”

The old fellow glared at the uncouth speaker for a mo-

ment, and then burst out into a fit of laughter, as he exclaimed:

“That lake your father’s property? Oh, you are one big liar!”

“I am not surprised at your thinking so, my Spanish friend, but what would you say now, if I had also just escaped from a shipwreck!”

The sailor shook his head as he gazed at the wild, pallid, unshorn face of the young man, and he muttered:

“Mad-house—dungeon!”

Redmond heard the muttered words, and he promptly responded, with a deep sigh:

“You are right, my friend. I have just escaped from a dungeon, where I was kept in anguish for five long years. Look at the convict’s garb beneath this coat.”

Redmond opened the old frieze coat and displayed the prison garments beneath, as he continued, with another weary sigh, pointing down in the direction of his father’s house:

“There is my home down there, and I am afraid to go near it in day-time in this trim. I am faint and hungry, but I dare not seek food or shelter until I get other clothes.”

A pitying smile appeared on the face of the old stranger, and he drew a small flask from his pocket, saying:

“Good brandy, and drink some. Me long years in dungeon, and me know what it is.”

Redmond did swallow some of the liquor, and he was handing the flask back when the old sailor cried:

“No, no! Keeps it for yourself, as me can gets more. What you do?”

“You mean what I was put in prison for? Well, I was what you call an insurgent.”

“Yes—yes. Me understand. You no pirate, no brigand, no smuggler.”

“No, indeed, friend. How long have you been in this neighborhood?”

“Not long. Only last night.”

“Don’t think I am too inquisitive, but I would like to know what brought you here, and what you were doing down in the lake?”

A terrified expression appeared on the face of the old Spaniard again, as he replied:

“Me one prisoner, too, and me escape from one English dungeon. Me did bring wines and brandies from Spain, but that no wrong to you.”

“You were a smuggler, then. Faith, no. I don’t look on that as a crime.”

“But me fight the English ship long ago, and they fire and sink our craft. Then we get captured and put in dungeon—oh, so long, many years ’tis past!”

“I understand you. You fought an English revenue cutter, your vessel was sunk, and you were taken prisoners. You were kept in an English prison many years, but you escaped at last. That is all clear enough, but why did you come here to Ireland after your escape, and what were you doing down in the lake there?”

Redmond could see that the old smuggler was trying to evade all reference to his present movements, and he was determined to bring him to the point without any subterfuge.

The young Irishman knew that the little bay in front of them had been a rendezvous of the French and Spanish smugglers in years gone by, and he then remembered that his father had often told him about a sea fight which had been witnessed by him when a very young lad.

That sea fight resulted in the sinking of a famous Spanish smuggler by an English revenue cutter, as well as the capture of the crew of the former.

“Can it be possible,” Redmond asked himself, “that

this old man was one of that crew? What treasure did he allude to when I surprised him coming out of the lake? What is the meaning of his being here at all?"

The old sailor was pondering to himself, keeping his wistful eyes fixed on Redmond, as if meditating a suitable reply to his question.

"Come, come, old fellow," grumbled the young man, impatiently. "We are *brothers in misfortune*, and you should be more candid with me. What were you doing down there by the lake?"

"Me was looking for pearls," answered the old man, with a childish smile.

"Pshaw! Don't try to tell me such nonsense. There are no pearls in the lake, as I know right well. What treasure did you allude to when I surprised you coming out?"

The terrified expression appeared on the old fellow's face again as he cried:

"You say you no robber, and what you want to play brigand to me for?"

"See here, my friend, I am not a robber, but I am human, and I am curious. You will tell me what you were doing down in the lake, or I will find out for myself."

"How you find out?"

"By forcing you to go down with me. I am a splendid diver, and I think I can stay down as long as you can. As my father owns the lake, I think I have as much right to any treasures found down there as you have."

Thrown off his guard for the instant, the old smuggler exclaimed:

"But he no put it there, and me did. Me did fight and slay for the gold. 'Tis mine—'tis mine now only. All the rest dead."

"Well, I think I understand you now," said Redmond, with a candid smile. "When you were here smuggling

years ago you hid some gold there in the lake, fearing the English vessel outside would capture you and take it from you?"

"That's it, that's it, good wild Irishman, but it was but a little."

"Little or much, sir, if it is yours I don't want any of it. Here's the piece you gave me, as I don't want it."

The old Spaniard stared at Redmond in sheer astonishment, and pushed back the gold piece, as he exclaimed:

"Oh, no, no! You keeps that and some more to keeps my secret. Me gives you one, two hundred, and you be silent."

"I'll be silent without giving me a single piece, my friend, if the treasure is honestly yours—if you placed it there. I have something else to think about at this moment."

"Will you swears one solemn oath to be silent?" eagerly asked the old man, as he grasped Redmond's hand, convulsively.

"There's no occasion for me to take a solemn oath in the matter, as my word is just as binding. Believe me, my friend, that I do not care at present for all the gold in California, as I am only thinking of the dear friends who must think that I am dead."

"But gold is great, and you wants good clothes now," said the old Spaniard. "The officers takes you to prison once more if you appear like that."

"Very true; but how did you escape arrest coming here?"

The old fellow pointed toward an island to the west, as he replied:

"Me come from there. Me stay with the people you call the Capers."

"I see—I see. You found a refuge among the fishermen of the island, and you came over here last night in search

of your gold. Well, I would advise you to get other clothes, also."

"Me will—me will. Me gets you some also, if you keeps my secret. You one honest man, and me takes you as one comrade."

"Much obliged to you. If you will do me a favor, take this cap of mine, go down to the village and get me some clothes. I will settle with you for them as soon as I can see my people."

"Sure—sure. Me go right off. Me see you want to fool the officers."

"That is it, my friend. You can tell the people of the village that you are from the Cape Island, and they won't suspect anything, as plenty of the Capers come here to sell their fish, and they are half-Spanish. Away with you now, and I swear to you that I will not trouble about the treasure."

The old Spaniard seized Redmond's hand and kissed it fervently as he cried:

"Me believe you, and you are one honest man—me can see the truth—brave truth—in your good eyes. Me come back soon."

Placing the Scotch cap on his head, the old smuggler hastened away toward the village, while Redmond gazed after him in from the shelter of the grove as he muttered:

"What a queer adventure, and what a strange old customer! It is not possible that he could remain down in the lake all the time I was standing meditating. Well, well, I won't bother my poor head about that now. Oh, how am I going to approach the old home—and how will I find my father? Will he know me in this trim? I must have changed fearfully in all those horrible years of suffering. It seems just like a dream to me now, to find myself so near home, and not able to fly to it at once."

The poor, weary fellow then flung himself on the ground,

and kept gazing wistfully down at his old home, while a thousand pleasant memories flocked to his mind.

Closing his eyes for the time, to ponder over his peculiar position, he soon fell into a sound slumber, during which he had confused dreams about Spanish pirates, treasures in the lake, and the late fearful struggle on the convict island.

When Redmond O'Connor opened his eyes again, he found the old Spaniard seated beside him in the grove, with a plain meal spread before him on the grass, and a bundle at his elbow.

"You good sleep, comrade," said the old man, in pleasant tones. "Now, you eats, and we talk a little for our good."

Redmond was hungry, and he proceeded to eat the bread and meat placed before him, as he asked:

"Did you get me the clothes?"

"Oh, yes. You my size, and I bring you things to make one fisherman for you. That is good to escape the officers."

"You are right, my friend. Why, I must have slept a long time?"

"'Tis almost night again; but that is best for us. The officers in the village there look for one horse-thief. Is it you—eh?"

"Yes; I borrowed a horse to escape with after I got out of prison. And so the officers are on my track already?"

"That's nothing now," answered the old fellow, with a confident, assuring smile. "You pass for one fisherman from the cape when you puts these clothes on, and I have the little boat."

"This is a clever old fellow," thought Redmond, as he examined the clothes; "and I am wild-looking enough to pass for a fisherman in them. I don't think there is any danger of any of my old friends around here knowing me. The best plan for me will be to go down to the village with

him and make some inquiries about my father. Who can tell what changes have occurred in these long years?"

Having satisfied his appetite, the anxious man hastened to cast aside the convict's suit, which he requested the old sailor to fling into the lake with a heavy rock, as he put on the garb of a fisherman.

When thus attired, Redmond stole down to the lake and stared at himself again, while he exclaimed, with a shudder:

"Gracious goodness! I look like a man of forty, and no wonder. The wonder is that my hair is not as white as snow, after all the agonies I suffered in that prison pen. Ah, well, there's a new life before me now."

Redmond felt very much impressed with the old Spaniard, and they talked together for some time before starting for the village.

The old smuggler, who was a keen judge of human nature, appeared to be attracted by the honest eyes of the man who had refused his gold, and who seemed to be altogether absorbed in thinking of his friends and of the home of his youth.

Having arrived at a mutual understanding, the two men left the grove and proceeded toward the village, while Redmond conversed with his strange friend in assumed tones, so that his voice might not be recognized by any of the old acquaintances he might encounter there.

It was quite dusk when they entered the village tavern, and Redmond at once recognized the landlord, whose son went out with him when they made the attack on the police barrack on the night of his arrest.

Putting on the rough manner of the fishermen from the island, Redmond took a seat at a table with his friend, who had also purchased a rough suit of clothes for himself, and which were not quite so foreign in appearance as those worn in the morning.

After calling for two pewters of porter, the anxious young man addressed the landlord in his roughest tones, saying:

“Tis many a long day, sir, since I was in your house before. Let me see now, but it must be near six years ago.”

The landlord cast only a casual glance at the fisherman, as he rejoined:

“There’s many a change about here since then, me man. I don’t mind ye at all, but there’s lots of the cape people here every week.”

“The last time I was here, afore I went away to America,” continued Redmond, “I took a fine lot of fish up there to Mr. O’Connor’s, and a fine man he is, to be sure.”

“He was a fine man and no mistake,” replied the landlord, with a sigh; “but you’ll never serve him with the fish again.”

Redmond felt his heart rising to his mouth as he asked, in gasping tones:

“Why is that, sir?”

“Because the good gentleman is dead and gone nearly five years. He died over in an English prison—some say of a broken heart for the loss of his brave son, and more say it was from the cruel, bad treatment he got there. What ails you, man?”

CHAPTER V.

DEAD TO ALL SAVE ONE.

Redmond O'Connor's hand was trembling violently as he raised the pewter to his lips to cover his agitation, and he gulped down a mouthful of the porter with a great effort, while a cold, deathly chill passed over his frame, as he stammered forth, making a splendid effort to suppress his emotion:

"Nothing much ails me, sir, only I caught the chills out in America."

The unsuspecting landlord cast a pitying glance on the fisherman, as he remarked:

"You do look badly, poor fellow! Sure, a little good liquor would be best for ye."

"Yes, good liquor; me pay all," said the old Spaniard, coming to the aid of his new friend when he noticed his fearful agitation.

The landlord hastened to serve some of his best whisky, and Redmond forced himself to swallow a glass of it, as he groaned to himself:

"Good Heaven! and so my poor father died in an English prison! Oh, I must control myself, and bear the worst!"

Redmond did control himself in a noble manner, and he addressed the landlord again without displaying any emotion, saying:

"It gave me a little start to hear of the death of Mr. O'Connor. And what was he put in prison for at all?"

"Because some perjured villains swore that he was out

with the boys here in the attack on the police barracks one night."

"And wasn't he at all?" asked Redmond.

"Not he. No one doubted that he was heart and soul for his country; but on the night of the attack on the police he was spending the evening with Mr. Latimer, the French gentleman that lived here in the village, and his daughter, until near midnight."

"Then why didn't the French gentleman testify to that on the trial?" asked Redmond.

"Because the poor gentleman wasn't to be found when the trial came off, and he hasn't been seen about here ever since."

"Then he must have been spirited away by some enemy of Mr. O'Connor."

"That's just what was said at the time, my man, and poor Mr. O'Connor was sentenced to fourteen years in an English prison for doing a thing he had no more to do with than you had. 'Tis no wonder he died of a broken heart, and his fine lad of a son to die in another English prison before him."

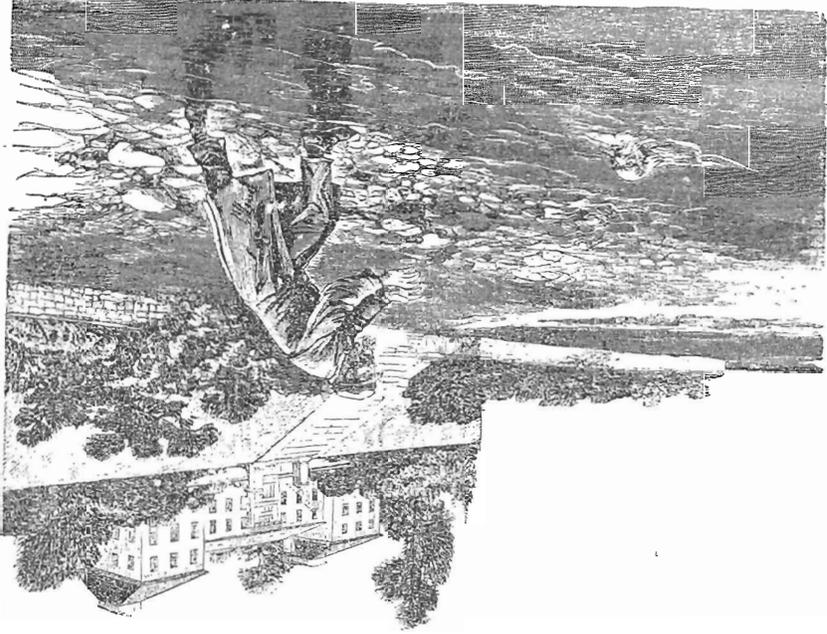
"Do you mean the young gentleman that was an officer in the English army?"

"That I do, as he had only one son, who was the pride of his heart. Oh, but Master Redmond was the fine, noble, brave, free-hearted lad, and there wasn't the like of him for daring in the whole county. When the rising took place, he threw up in the English army, and he was going to join the lads on the mountain, but he met with foul play, and the English killed him."

"How did they kill him?"

"No one knows at all for certain. Master Redmond disappeared on the night of the attack on the barracks, and he was never seen after. Some say he was secretly put to death for bringing arms over from France in his yacht, and more

REDMOND WAS STARTLED BY THE APPEARANCE OF A HUMAN FACE.—(P. 20.)



whispered that he died in prison of starvation, while it was also rumored that the poor fellow was driven mad and put an end to himself. Oh, but it was a sad business all out."

Redmond re-echoed the sentiment with a deep sigh, and he then asked:

"Was any one suspected of being an enemy of the O'Connors at all?"

"There's no one could be suspected but the two peelers who swore they saw the old gentleman in the attack on the barracks, and they were strangers around here then—the villains!"

Redmond was silent for a few moments, and then he asked:

"And who lives up at Cloverfield House now at all?"

"There's no one living there now but a few servants in charge, as Colonel Blake only spends a few months in summer there."

"And who is Colonel Blake at all?"

"Sure you must be away from the cape a long time, or you'd hear of him, man."

"As I told ye, I only just came back from America, after being five years away."

"That accounts for it, to be sure. Well, Colonel Blake is a great man now, and high up with the English government, though I mind his ould father when he went about here long ago, with only a peddler's pack on a donkey."

"But how did Colonel Blake come to get the O'Connor's place?" asked Redmond, who felt that he was growing warm on a certain scent he was trying to trail.

"That's what puzzled all about here," answered the landlord, with a sly wink. "'Twas said that ould Blake lent Mr. O'Connor some money, and what should the son do—who was a captain at the time—but put in a claim on the estate, and it is his own now. Ah, there was great treachery

against the brave O'Connors somewhere, but it won't thrive in the end, mark my words."

The old Spaniard had been listening to the conversation with intense interest, and he then asked the landlord with much eagerness:

"Is one old Blake alives yet?"

"To be sure he is, the ould villain, and a more conceited upstart of a tyrant is not to be found in the three kingdoms. 'Tis well I mind when he got his first big start in life, and when it was whispered that he was hand-in-glove with the foreign smugglers that used to land goods below in the bay."

"What his name, you know—all his title?" eagerly asked the old Spaniard.

"Oscar Blake, to be sure. Did you ever run across him in your young days, old man?"

"Oh, no—no! Me no knows one old Irishman titled Oscar Blake at all," replied the old Spaniard, hastening to gulp down some of the porter.

Redmond had his observant eye on the old fellow, and he said to himself:

"He did know old Blake in days gone by, and I can see that he has some cause of hatred against him. Well, well, what will I hear next? How can I learn what has beccme of Celia Latimer?"

Turning to the old landlord again, he asked:

"I think I mind serving the ould Frenchman with fish. Didn't he live in the woodbine cottage out on the new road, and didn't he have a fine young lady for a daughter?"

"That he had, indeed, and it's a fine, beautiful lady she is to this day. It would do your heart good to see Mrs. Blake drive past here in her carriage with her little daughter on a summer's evening."

"Mrs. Blake!" gasped Redmond. "What has the French-

man's daughter to do with Mrs. Blake, I'd like to know, at all?"

"Why, man alive, the Frenchman's daughter is Mrs. Colonel Blake herself. When the old Frenchman made off at the time of the O'Connor's trial, his daughter went away with him. About a year or so after that Captain Blake brought his grand wife to Cloverfield House, and who should she turn out to be but Miss Celia Latimer, the old Frenchman's daughter, and the pride of our village. Ah, it was then we all prayed for the brave O'Connors again, for poor Master Redmond doted on Miss Celia, and it was said that they were engaged."

Redmond O'Connor pressed his hands to his burning forehead and staggered toward the door, as he gasped forth:

"The fever is on me now and I must get the fresh air. Come on, me friend."

"The old Spaniard hastened to settle with the landlord, as the latter remarked:

"The poor man is in awful suffering, and he looks as if he wasn't long for this world. Heaven help him!"

"Him little sick, but he gets well soon," replied the old Spaniard, as he hastened out after his new friend, who was striding away toward the lake again.

The old smuggler followed the heart-broken young man in silence until they were again standing on the edge of the lake, and he then grasped Redmond's arm with a vise-like grip, as he hissed into his ear:

"You's the one dead young soldier?"

"Yes, yes," groaned Redmond. "I am dead to all the world but you now, my strange old friend. You alone know my secret."

"And you will knows my one grand, great secret!" exclaimed the old fellow, in tremulous tones, looking cautiously around as he pointed to the lake. "You dead to all save me, your heart-friend, your one new father to be. Oh,

signor, signor, me cast into dungeon also by one wicked, base traitor, for years not to count. Me now rich—fabulous rich—and you my son, my heir, you say in this country.”

Redmond kept his eyes fixed on the excited old stranger, while he grasped his right hand with great fervor, as he asked:

“Who was the base traitor who cast you into the dungeon, sir?”

“Old Oscar Blake. He, the vile dog, was my trusted agent here long agos, and he betrays me to the English officials for the bribe. The one bad father betrays me, the one wicked son betrays and robs you for certain, as you will know soon.”

“I believe you,” replied Redmond, with intense bitterness; “but, oh, won’t I pay him for it yet, if it is so!”

“Yes, yes! You pays the son in vengeance, and I pays the base father. Oh, I’m so rejoiced I hails you here by the lake, for you are one brave, noble, good man, and I will make you wealth, power, wisdom, to grind the pirates to the dust. You think I am one madman now, eh?”

Redmond smiled bitterly, as he replied:

“I think we would be both taken for a pair of madmen now, my friend.”

“Oh, yes, I understand. We both suffers plenty, but we not mad. You do not believe I holds immense wealth, eh?”

“Why, I can readily imagine, sir, that you did secrete some gold here before you were captured by the English revenue cutter.”

“Yes, yes, very much. Me surprises you very soon. You one grand diver, you say?”

“Yes, I was a good diver.”

“Very good, my heart-son. You likes me a fittle, eh? You have penetration eyes, and you see I not speak lies to

you when I say I adore you. You crawl inside my breast when you refuse the gold, and you have no money."

"I thought then I would soon have plenty of money," said Redmond, with a sigh. "Well, sir, you may be certain I will not take your gold, but I can honestly say I like you, as you were the first to speak a kind word to me in five long years."

The old man flung his arms around Redmond's neck and burst into tears, as he sobbed forth in pleading tones:

"My son, you must share the treasure with me. You will be my comrade, my friend, my only one to love. Wife, daughter, comrades of the past, all gone. Poor old Sancho alone now. He finds his treasure this morning and he meets you. 'Tis fate, 'tis Providence, and 'tis for good to come. You share my soul, you share my treasure? Refuse, and I plunge into the lake to die in despair. Accept, and we plunge in together, when I show you all our treasure. You consent, you consent!"

"But, my good friend," protested Redmond, "I have no claim on your treasure."

"Have I not the claim to give to you what is mine—the treasure I did fight for and take from the English robbers?"

"Then the treasure you allude to was taken from the English?"

"Certain. The English great brigands and pirates and me rob them. Me tell you all betimes. Place your hats in the trees and take off the big coat to plunge in with me to see the treasure."

"But if the treasure is at the bottom of the lake we will require a diving apparatus to get it up, sir."

"Oh, no, no! 'Tis not at the bottom of the lake, my son," replied the old Spaniard, with a sly smile. "It is in one secret cavern what I can find alones. That is the one grand secret to show you. No living man knows the way

but me. Drink one more little brandy, and prepare for the dive."

Redmond O'Connor was almost-heart-broken over the mournful intelligence he had received, yet he became intensely interested in the words and actions of the old Spaniard.

Something whispered to him that his new friend was destined to play an important part in his future life, and that the old man was both earnest and truthful.

"In any case," said Redmond, to himself, as he drew back to the grove to prepare for the dive, "a dip in the lake will not injure me, and I know the old man means me no harm."

Having put aside their heavy coats and hats, the old smuggler seized Redmond by the hand and led him out to the lake, as he said, with a merry chuckle:

"We baptize our great friendship for the future, my son. Stand now here with me one minute, my hand clasped to yours and we look up to the sky. Will you love me one little if I makes you rich, powerful, and happy as you are good?"

"I will care for you hereafter, my good friend," replied Redmond, fervently, "if it were only for your great kindness to me to-day."

"Yes—yes; I see the kind look in your honest eyes as you turn them up to the skies. Those eyes are sharp, and see that no spy watches us now."

Redmond did cast a cautious glance around, but no human being met his gaze, and he replied:

"No one sees us, my friend."

"Then I grasp your hand yet, and down we go together. Do not release me until I gives the order."

"I will not sir."

"Then the demon of the lake invites his son down to

the magic cavern, and you will behold the treasure. Come."

The signal was scarcely uttered when the two wild-looking beings plunged headlong into the lake and the clear water soon closed over them.

CHAPTER VI.

A PRECIOUS PAIR.

It was just after the close of the great Franco-German war, and London was crowded with French and other refugees.

In that fearful struggle, which ended with the capture of Paris by the Germans, the money-making English merchants reaped a rich harvest out of the combatants.

Among those who *doubled their* fortunes during the war was a certain old Irishman named Oscar Blake, whose son was a colonel in the English army.

Old Blake was nearly seventy at the time, and he resided with his son and daughter-in-law in a fashionable neighborhood at the West End of London.

The old fellow was purse-proud and vain of his son and his beautiful daughter-in-law, and though he was rich in land and gold, he was as grasping as when he started out in life as a poor peddler.

Colonel Blake was also vain and ambitious, while it was rumored that he was more unscrupulous than his father.

Old Blake was a banker and a money-lender, and it was said that he had large mortgages on several Irish estates.

On a certain evening the father and his son were seated in the library of their mansion, and the old fellow was chuckling to himself in high glee, as he said:

“Well, Charley, my boy, you see everything thrives with us. You’ll soon be elected a Member of Parliament, and I hope to see you prime minister before I die.”

“You are good for twenty years, father, and I don’t see what is to hinder me from going to the top of the ladder,” answered the soldier, with a proud smile.

“Nothing at all, sir. Well, well, how I laugh when I think of what I am now and what I was. Who’d believe that I once traveled around Ireland with a peddler’s pack on a donkey, but it is true.”

“You didn’t get your first start in life from the pack, father?”

“That is true, too, Charley. I got my first start out of the smugglers on the coast, but that is a dead secret.”

“There was money in smuggling in those days, I believe.”

“Heaps of it. Did I ever tell you the truth about Sancho, the Spaniard?”

“I think not, father. You told me he was captured by an English revenue cutter, and that was all, I think.”

“He was captured *off* the bay, the mad fool! Ha, ha, ha! I laugh to this day when I think of the trick I played on him, and he trusting me so much.”

“Whatever became of him, father?”

“He died in prison, of course, before you were married. By the way, you don’t think there’s any doubt of the death of young O’Connor?”

“Not the slightest. He was shot in the harbor while attempting to swim from Spike Island on the night of the revolt.”

“And the father died in Portland Prison, the old fool! Ha, ha, ha! Charley, my son, we know how to deal with our enemies, don’t we? But it was I put you up to the game. I tell you it takes an old smuggler to work a clever dodge. And you are certain Edmond is dead?”

“I am certain of it. Why do you ask the question so often, father?”

“Because I dream of the young rascal all the time. I am certain about the father, because I saw him lying dead in prison.”

“And I am just as certain about the son lying at the

bottom of the sea. But about the old smuggler—are you certain he died in prison? Those Spaniards are very vengeful, you know, father.”

“To be sure; he’s as dead as a herring, my dear boy. Not one of the crew of the smuggler escaped that morning, as I know well.”

“And you kept the cargo, father?”

“To be sure, and a nice penny besides I got from the government for giving the information that led to the capture of the crew after the vessel was sunk. Sancho was a clever rascal, but he wasn’t able for me, by a long shot. Ha, ha, ha! Do you ever think of your old father-in-law, Charley, and how we got him caged?”

“Hush on that subject, for goodness’ sake, father, or my wife might hear you. She would never forgive me.”

“The mischief she wouldn’t! What can she do now? Ha, ha, ha! The old Frenchman must have died in prison also before now.”

“We are not sure of that. Since the fall of Louis Napoleon most of the political prisoners have been released, and old Latimer may turn up here in London any day.”

“What if he does, me boy? How is he to know who smuggled him over to Paris?”

“He may suspect when he hears of the death of old O’Connor in prison, as his evidence would have cleared him.”

Old Blake chuckled to himself again, as he replied:

“And who’s to prove that we had anything to do with convicting old O’Connor or his son, I’d like to know? Who’s going to take any trouble about them now?”

A dark scowl passed over the face of the soldier, as he replied:

“My wife would, if she once got a hint of the truth, father, as I know she cared a great deal for Redmond. Put that subject aside for the present, however. Didn’t you

tell me that Sancho, the Spanish smuggler, had something to do with the capture of an English treasure ship?"

"I suspected he had, but I never could find out for certain."

"What made you suspect him, sir?"

"Well, I will tell you. Two nights after the treasure ship was taken off Kinsale Harbor, I saw Sancho, who was a young man then, with four others from the smuggler, burying two heavy chests in the grove near Lake Una. That's our property now, as you know."

"Did they see you, father?"

"Not at all. On the following night I went to the grove with a spade to dig up the chests, when I saw the smugglers coming from their ship again with two more heavy boxes, that they buried in the same place."

"Then you found out what the chests contained, of course, father?"

"I didn't, confound me! as I made a little noise that alarmed them the second night, and I had to fly for my life, as they'd think nothing of killing me."

"But you went there again?"

"That I did; and the very night of the morning after the smugglers were sunk out in the bay, but the mischief a sign of the four chests were there, and no trace of them either from that day to this."

"Maybe they took them on board the vessel again the second night, father?"

"Not a bit of it. Three days after Sancho was put in prison in Kinsale I went to see him, not pretending, of course, it was I informed on him. He then gave me a hint that he would be a rich man if he could only escape from the prison."

"But did not any of those taken with him ever escape at all?"

“Not a single one, as I made it my business to keep track of them. Sancho was the last to die ten years ago.”

“Did you ever look for the treasure thereafter at all, father?”

“To be sure I did. I looked for it until I was tired, night after night, about the grove near the lake.”

“Was there much on board the treasure-ship, think you, father?”

“There was millions in British gold, and it was going to the Spanish government at the time. Don Carlos was fighting for the throne of Spain that year, and the money was going to oppose him.”

Colonel Blake was silent for some moments, with his hands pressed to his forehead, and the old rogue kept watching the son with deep attention, as he said:

“I suppose you think I was a great goose to let all the gold slip out of my hands?”

“What reason had you to believe that the Spanish smugglers captured the English treasure-ship at all, father?”

“From what I saw and the hints Sancho dropped in prison. I could have got more out of him, but he commenced to suspect me of betraying him. I’m satisfied that the English gold is still hidden near the bay at Cloverfield House, and that it will be found one of these days, Charley. I see by you that you have something in your mind on the subject.”

“I have, father.”

“Then what is it?”

“Why didn’t you ever tell me the particulars about the gold before?”

A cunning smile passed over the old man’s face, as he replied:

“I was afraid you would laugh at me.”

“No, you were not, father, but you were afraid I would find it.”

“Sure that is nonsense, Charley. Won't you have all when I am gone? Come, now, you have a notion of your own where the gold is hidden? Won't you trust me, my son?”

The son gave a cunning grin in return, as he replied:

“I have a notion where the Spaniards may have hidden the treasure, and I will tell you where it is on one condition, father.”

“The mischief you say, Charley? But if you know where it is why make any conditions at all with me? All I have will be yours after I am gone. Come now, out with it.”

The old fellow spoke in very eager tones, while he fixed his avaricious eyes on his son as if he would read his inmost thoughts.

The keen son was not to be humbugged so easily, however, as he replied:

“I can't speak out, father, unless you promise me one thing.”

“What is that now?”

“Make over the estate of Cloverfield to me at once, and then I'll open my mind on the subject of the treasure.”

“Make over the O'Connor estate to you before my death!” exclaimed the old man, in suspicious tones. “Come now, you young rogue; what put that into your head? Are you not my only child, and won't you have all when I am gone? What do you mean?”

“See here, father, you know how close you are with me sometimes when I want money?”

“Bad cess to you, you young villian, don't you and your wife live in great style? Don't you have the use of Cloverfield House in the summer and this place in the winter? Do I stint you in money at all, to keep up style in the army?”

“That is partly true only, father, as I am often short of funds, and I have not an acre of ground in my own right.”

“What do you want it for now, when you will have all when I am gone? Then as to the O'Connor estate, why do you pick on that above all others? Oh, dear, dear, I think I see your game now!”

“What is it, sir?”

The old man groaned to himself and cast another glance at his son, as he replied:

“You sly fox, you think the gold from the treasure-ship is hidden somewhere on the Cloverfield estate.”

“I do, father.”

“Come, now, where do you think it is?”

As the old man asked the question he seized his son eagerly by the hand while tears of anxiety appeared in his eyes.

The hopeful son smiled in a peculiar manner, as he replied:

“You have just called me a sly fox, father, and I believe I am a chip of the old block. Yes, I believe the Spanish treasure is concealed somewhere near the lake.”

“Oh, where is it at all, my boy? Tell me where you think it is now and I will give you half of it. Sure, you can trust your own old father?”

If Colonel Blake meant to reply to the appeal he was interrupted at the moment by a male servant, who announced, in loud tones:

“A Mr. Latimer desires to see Mr. Blake, sir.”

The father and son both started from their chairs on hearing the name of the old Frenchman, and the latter exclaimed:

“Where is he? Is he an old man?”

“He is in the parlor, colonel,” answered the servant, “and he appears to be a very old gentleman.”

Before the servant could say any more the excited old

Frenchman burst into the library and stared at the younger man, exclaiming:

“Are you Colonel Blake?”

Motioning the servant to retire, the soldier advanced to salute his father-in-law, saying:

“Yes, I am Colonel Blake; and if I mistake not you are my wife’s father.”

The old Frenchman bent a piercing glance on the soldier as he asked:

“Did you wed Miss Celia Latimer, sir?”

“I did.”

“Where is your wife at present?”

A beautiful woman rushed into the apartment at the moment, and flung herself into the old Frenchman’s arms, as she exclaimed:

“Oh, father, is it you? I have mourned for you as one dead.”

The old man pressed his daughter to his breast, and bent his flashing eyes on her husband, as he replied:

“And I have been as one dead for years, my dear girl. Three days ago I was released from prison in Paris, where I was confined by the order of the usurper. How is it that I find you married to this gentleman, when you were engaged to young Mr. O’Connor?”

The young woman gave a deep sigh, as she replied:

“Young Mr. O’Connor is dead, father.”

“And his noble father?”

“He died in prison also, sir.”

Old Blake and his son were very uneasy during the foregoing dialogue, but the latter motioned to a chair at the moment, as he said:

“You are welcome here, Mr. Latimer, and I trust this will be your home hereafter.”

The old Frenchman drew himself up to his full height

and bent his scrutinizing eyes on his son-in-law, as he rejoined:

“Colonel Blake, five years ago I was treacherously beguiled to Paris by a false tale. I was then cast into prison by the agents of Louis Napoleon. Since then I have been dead to the world. The active treachery was instigated by a private enemy in Ireland. Can you inform me who that enemy was?”

A slight flush appeared on the face of the soldier, but he answered in calm tones:

“I could not tell you, sir.”

The old Frenchman then turned to his daughter, as he asked:

“Who informed you that I was dead, my dear girl?”

“My husband, sir. I also read it in the paper at the time.”

“That account was false. Did you follow me to France at the time?”

“I left Ireland to hasten after you, sir, but when I reached Southampton I saw an account of your death in the paper. The account also stated that your body was not found. Oh, I am so glad you are alive and well, and we can now be all happy together.”

As the young wife spoke she turned an appealing glance on her husband, who very promptly responded:

“Yes, Mr. Latimer, we are all delighted to see you alive and well. This is my father, who will also welcome you here to his home.”

Old Blake advanced with outstretched hands at the moment, as he said to the Frenchman:

“It is a great surprise to us, sir, to see you alive and well, when we all thought you were dead. Make yourself at home, sir, as your daughter is mistress of this house.”

The old Frenchman bowed coldly as he replied:

“I have a duty to perform ere I can rest anywhere. I

must discover those who beguiled me from Ireland. Before I break bread in this house I must be assured that you have been my friends."

As the old Frenchman spoke, he hastily embraced his daughter again, and then turned abruptly to leave the house, saying:

"I will see you again."

Celia Blake was about to follow her father into the hallway, when her husband caught her arm and drew her back, as he whispered:

"This is unbearable. Why, he acts as if he imagined that I had something to do with his imprisonment in France."

Old Blake chuckled to himself, and gave a sly wink at his son, as he remarked:

"Bedad, I think he is touched in the head, and it is in the mad-house he ought to be."

The young woman cast an indignant glance at her father-in-law, as she exclaimed:

"My dear father is not mad. If he has been cast into prison by means of treacherous enemies in Ireland, I will assist him in punishing them, whoever they may be."

The young woman then bounced out of the room, while old Blake winked at his son again, and drew him aside, as he said, in cautious tones:

"The mischief take me, if I don't smell a nice ruction on foot. What a nice time you will have with her if she ever finds out the truth."

A fearful scowl appeared on the soldier's face, as he rejoined:

"Yes, we will have a nice time. Why didn't the old fool die in prison, or remain there forever?"

At that moment the door-bell gave a violent ring, and old Blake exclaimed:

"Who in the thunder can that be?"

One of the servants hastened to the door, and he soon appeared, bearing a sealed letter in his hand. Handing the letter to old Blake, the servant turned away again, saying:

“The messenger said there was no answer, sir.”

Old Blake looked at the letter, which was addressed to him in a strange hand, while he remarked, in impatient tones:

“Who the devil is this from?”

“Open and see,” remarked the son.

The old man did open the envelope, which contained a large sheet of letter paper.

Then a frightful exclamation escaped from the old rascal, and he sank on his chair, crying:

“What in the fury will happen next?”

Colonel Blake saw that his father was pale with agitation, and he asked:

“What alarms you, sir?”

The old man handed the paper to his son, as he gasped forth:

“Look at that!”

The son started in turn, and then glanced at the paper, on which was written the following words, in a bold, clear hand:

“OSCAR BLAKE--this is to inform you that Sancho is alive and in London. He is aware of your treachery to him long years ago in Ireland, and he desires to inform you that a true Spaniard never forgets an injury!”

CHAPTER VII.

WHO WILL APPEAR NEXT?

If old Oscar Blake had received a dynamite bomb he could not have been more terrified than he was on the receipt of that short letter.

As his son was a braver man, he treated the affair in a calmer manner, and examined the letter carefully again ere he remarked:

“Pshaw! This is the work of some practical joker from Ireland, who heard that you were connected with the Spaniards in years gone by.”

The old man looked anxiously at his son, and his face brightened a little as he asked:

“Do you really think so, Charley?”

“To be sure I do. Was it such a great secret that you were connected with the smugglers?”

“Some of the boys knew it long ago, but I thought it was all forgotten by this time. Oh, what a relief it would be to me if it was only a joke. If I was sure Sancho was alive, I never would sleep an easy wink again.”

Colonel Blake continued to examine the writing, as he rejoined:

“If the old pirate should be alive, what can he do against you, sir? Can we not have him put in prison again as a smuggler and a pirate?”

“That is true, my boy. To be sure, we can have the old rascal hung, for that matter, if we can only prove that he was engaged in robbing the treasure-ship. But he can't be alive at all. It is impossible!”

“If he should be alive, father, you may be certain that he has paid a visit to Ireland in search of the treasure.”

The eyes of the avaricious old man gleamed again, as he rejoined:

“That’s it. I see it all now, Charley. The old Spaniard is dead, but he managed to let some relative of his know about the treasure and my treachery, and this man is coming at me now. Where do you think the gold was hidden?”

Before Colonel Blake could respond the door-bell rang again, and the old man cried:

“Bad cess to whoever this is! I wouldn’t be surprised if we saw a ghost to-night.”

“Do try and keep quiet, father,” said the soldier, who saw that the old man’s agitation was increasing, and who drew a revolver, as if to defend himself from a coming enemy.

While the son was attempting to calm the old man, the servant entered the room again bearing a telegraphic message, which was marked “important and in haste,” and which was addressed to old Oscar Blake.

With trembling hands and glaring eyes the old man took the message and read it, *his face growing paler the while.*

“What is it now, father?”

“Worse and more of it. What do you think this is at all, Charley?”

“How can I tell, sir?”

“Oh, bad cess to me if I don’t think the world is coming to an end. We must be off to Ireland at once.”

“Why should we go to Ireland, sir?”

“Because my lawyers in Dublin inform me in this message that a gentleman named O’Connor had just laid claim to the estate of Cloverfield.”

“This is news indeed, father. Who and what is the gentleman?”

“That’s all they say. We must go over and see what this robber is up to.”

As if to still further increase the alarm of the guilty pair, the door-bell rang more violently than before.

“Goodness gracious!” exclaimed old Blake, “who can this be at all?”

In reply to the question, the servant entered the room again, announcing:

“Mr. Victor Gonzales.”

A tall gentleman, of very dark appearance, and wearing a full black beard, passed the servant into the library as he saluted Colonel Blake with a cold bow, saying:

“Colonel Charles Blake, I presume.”

The stranger appeared to be a man of forty years at least, and he spoke with a slight foreign accent, while he bent his piercing eyes on father and son.

“Yes, I am Colonel Blake. What is your pleasure with me, sir?” replied the English soldier, in cold and pompous tones.

“My name is Gonzales, and I am from South America. I have a friend named Darcy O’Connor who comes from the same place, and who claims the estate now held by you in Ireland.”

Old Blake gave a fearful groan, and then started up from his seat, crying:

“Nonsense, man. If your friend has any claim against the estate in Ireland the lawyers there will settle the business!”

The stranger smiled in a bitter manner, and turned to Colonel Blake, as he rejoined:

“This is your father, I presume?”

“Yes, sir, this is my father. As he has informed you, the law will settle any claim your friend may have against our estates in Ireland.”

The tall stranger kept facing Colonel Blake, and there

was a peculiar smile on his features as he rejoined, in stern tones:

“I did not come here in reference to law matters, as my friend has already placed the business in the hands of his lawyers in Ireland.”

“Then what are you here for?” demanded old Blake.

“To settle with your son on another matter. My young friend has a very serious charge to make against Colonel Blake here.”

“Pshaw! What charge can a stranger from South America have against me?”

“He makes the most serious charges against you. Darcy O’Connor accuses you of causing the death of his uncle and cousin in Ireland, and he challenges you to mortal combat.”

“Thunder and lightning!” cried old Blake, “is it another madman after us?”

Colonel Blake flushed, and then grew pale, while he blustered forth:

“Your friend must be mad to make such a charge against me, sir. I had no more to do with the death of the O’Connors than you had.”

The dark-faced stranger smiled in a scornful manner, as he rejoined:

“My friend has been investigating the affairs of his relatives in Ireland, and he is convinced that your father robbed them of their property, while you were the means of consigning father and son to an untimely grave. As you claim to be a soldier, my friend offers you the trial by battle. If you decline, he requests me to state that he will brand you as a coward, a robber, and a murderer.”

As the stranger uttered the last words in the most scornful tones, he flung his card on the table and moved toward the door.

Colonel Blake picked up the card and glanced at it, as he fumed forth:

“You will soon hear from me, sir.”

“The dark-faced stranger merely bowed in the coldest manner, and then turned to leave the house, muttering to himself :

“Yes, and you will soon hear from me again, you infernal wretches.”

That stranger was Redmond O'Connor, but he was so changed in appearance, voice, and manner, that even his wicked enemies of former days did not know him.

It is a question whether even the girl he loved so well would recognize the dark-faced foreigner as the bright, open-minded Redmond O'Connor.

The front door closed on the stranger with a bang, and old Blake turned his terrified face on his son once more as he gasped forth:

“Is the world coming to an end? One would suppose that all the demons of the lower regions came up to haunt us to-night.”

The bold, dashing soldier was also fearfully alarmed by the unexpected events of the evening, yet he put on a brazen face and turned on the old man with a sneer, as he remarked:

“Would it not be well to make Cloverfield over to me now?”

“I will, I will, if you will only promise to keep the villains away from me, my brave boy. I see that there is a conspiracy on foot to rob me of all I have, and I will die a beggar yet.”

And the old rogue covered his face with his hands as he groaned in agony.

Colonel Blake also flung himself on a chair, and pressed his hands to his temples, as he muttered aloud, with a fierce imprecation:

“Yes, there is a fearful conspiracy against us, but we will get the best of the wretches. Father, you must place

a large sum at my disposal, and I will employ the ablest detectives in London to trace this business out."

"To be sure, I'll give you money, Charley, and plenty of it. We'll get rid of all the villains who are troubling us now. Do you think that old Latimer is in with them?"

"I shouldn't wonder if he was, as it is evident that he has been instigated against us in some way. Yes, yes, there is a deep conspiracy.

"But we are rich now, my boy, and we can baffle them all. I have plenty of brains left in my old head yet. Can Sancho be really alive?"

"Hang Sancho, father. Let's pack up our traps and away to Ireland."

"What to do there at all?"

"To fight the battle out there like men, and to find the gold from the treasure-ship."

The mention of the treasure aroused the avaricious old man again, and his eyes gleamed with cupidity, as he asked:

"Where do you think it was hid at all?"

Colonel Blake's voice was lowered to a whisper as he grasped his father's arm, saying:

"From what you told me I think the Spaniards flung it into the lake."

The old man sprang up two feet at least, and clapped his hands with childish glee, as he cried:

"Charley, my boy, you have a wonderful head. I never thought of that before. As sure as I am a living sinner, the gold is at the bottom of the lake. Let us away to Ireland, and to the mischief with all the foreigners in the world."

In less than an hour after that father and son were on their way to Ireland, and they were both armed to the teeth.

Just three nights after, two muffled figures stole out

from Cloverfield House, and made their way to the margin of the lake.

At the same time two persons having all the appearance of old fishermen were seated in the grove, from whence they commanded a full view of the waters before them.

“It is slow work, my son,” said one of the old fishermen, “but we will get it all out in time.”

“We have enough now, old friend,” replied the other, “and more than enough to beggar our enemies and punish them as they deserve. Who comes there at this hour of the night?”

The speakers were Redmond O’Connor and the old Spanish smuggler, and those approaching them along the lake were old Oscar Blake and his infamous son.

The new-comers advanced until they stood right in front of those concealed in the grove, when old Blake, speaking aloud, said:

“This is the spot, my boy.”

The old Spanish smuggler grasped his companion’s arm convulsively at the moment and drew a dagger from his side, as he hissed into his ear:

“It is the brigands themselves. Let’s out and slay the dogs.”

“No, no,” returned Redmond. “They must live to suffer as we have suffered. The hounds can never find the treasure, let them try as they will.”

CHAPTER VIII.

AFTER THE TREASURE.

While Colonel Blake was preparing to go down into the lake, old Sancho was in a state of feverish excitement.

Redmond O'Connor, on the other hand, was not excited at all.

The young man was delighted to find that his enemies were after the treasure; as he would then be able to add to their punishment by baffling them in an enterprise not contemplated by him before.

While the old Spaniard's intense hatred of old Oscar Blake inspired him to dash out and slay the traitor on the instant, Redmond felt that such punishment was not sufficient for either father or son.

The Blakes had conspired to wreck his own life, and to send his good father to death in an English prison, and he would plot to crush them in their dearest hopes, to humble and degrade them in the dust, and then, at their last hours, he would show them that he was the cause of the fearful retribution that had fallen on them.

With such thoughts uppermost in his mind, Redmond clutched his old friend by the arm, as he whispered into his ear:

"Be patient, good friend, as it is all for the best that they have scented the treasure. You know that they cannot find it without our aid. Let them search."

The old Spaniard reflected a few moments ere he responded:

"Very true, they cannot find it, but is it not wondrous that they should seek it there after all those years?"

“It is strange; but it is all for the best that it should happen so. The old rogue must have got an inkling of the treasure long ago, and he has only recently told his son about it. It is well as it is.”

The old Spaniard clutched his dagger again, as he responded:

“I now remember the spy we heard here in the grove the night we buried the treasure. It was that old traitor.”

“I believe it was, my friend. He searched for it after, when you were captured by the English, and he did not find it.”

Old Sancho chuckled to himself in a fierce manner as he replied;

“No, he did not find it, but he will, if you agree with me. What think you if we show some of it to the dogs at last?”

“Hush, and speak in whispers. Yes, it would be a fitting ending for the wretches if they were put to death in sight of the treasure, but they must live a while and suffer.”

“Oh, yes, they shall suffer ever so much. He is going down now.”

Having taken off his clothes, Colonel Blake seized the end of a rope and dived into the deep lake, while his father clutched the other end of the line, and watched his son going down, as he muttered aloud:

“Oh, won't it be grand if we should get the treasure after all? The old thief of a Spaniard must be dead, of course, but I'd like to know the villain who is trying to frighten me now. Here he is up again. What luck had you, my son?”

Colonel Blake arose to the surface puffing for breath, and he crawled out on the bank ere he responded:

“No luck at all. We must get a diving suit ere I try again.”

Old Blake groaned aloud as he asked:

“Didn’t you feel or see the chests down there at all, Charley?”

“I felt nothing but rocks and weeds, and what could I see? I tell you, sir, we must get a diving suit.”

“But it will take time for that, Charley, and who knows but the old thief of a smuggler told his secret to some one before he died, if he’s dead at all.”

“Nonsense; he’s dead, father. Didn’t I make certain of that to-day?”

“To be sure you did. Then you won’t go down again to-night?”

Colonel Blake was putting on his clothes as he replied:

“What is the use? I must get a diving suit and search the bottom of the lake all around here. It is not likely, now that I think of it, that the smugglers would throw the chests in near the very spot where you caught them burying them.”

“True enough; but they were very heavy, and they wouldn’t be likely to take them far away. Oh, dear, why didn’t I think of the lake when I was young and strong, and a fine diver besides.”

And the old miser groaned at the thought of having lost the use of the treasure for so many years of his scheming life.

The watchers in the grove heard every word uttered by father and son, and the old Spaniard chuckled to himself again as he hissed into his young friend’s ear:

“Yes, yes; they must see some of the treasure before they die—the dogs! What a vengeance we will have, dear youth.”

“A bitter one for them,” responded Redmond. “I am rejoiced that we caught them here to-night, as the knowledge we have gained will aid us in our scheme. Now they are moving away, and I will prepare to go down.”

“Will I not go with you?” asked the old Spaniard, as he watched his departing enemy.

“It will be best that you watch, as they may return again. We cannot be too careful here now, father.”

“That is true, my son,” responded the old man, as he embraced Redmond in the most affectionate manner. “Oh, I am so rejoiced that I found such a son. You will be so rich and happy, when those dogs will be beggars and dead. It will be one grand triumph!”

They watched their retreating enemies until they were out of sight, and Redmond O'Connor then descended into the lake, while old Sancho kept watch against all intruders.

The young man paid three visits to the secret hiding-place that night, returning each time with a supply of precious gold.

Early on the following morning Colonel Blake hastened to the nearest city to procure a diving suit, and his wicked old father kept a strict watch on the lake, fearing that some friend of the old smuggler's would appear there in quest of the treasure.

During the day old Oscar Blake received a visit from his lawyers, when he was informed that serious proceedings had been instituted by Darcy O'Connor, for the recovery of his uncle's estate.

The young man making the claim appeared at Cloverfield House soon after the lawyer, and old Blake trembled a little when he saw that he bore a family resemblance to those who had been sacrificed through his instrumentality.

Darcy O'Connor, the young South American, was a tall, dark-skinned young man of twenty-eight, with a heavy dark mustache, weak eyes shaded by green spectacles, and with a voice decidedly foreign in its tones.

Old Oscar Blake was cunning enough to receive the young man with civility, but he said to him:

“It is all nonsense for you, sir, to try to get this estate, as it is mine by right and law.”

The young South American bestowed a grim smile on the cunning old wretch, as he replied:

“We will see about that, sir. I have good reason to believe that you obtained this property by fraud, and that you and your son were the means of putting my relatives to death, and that your son is a vile coward. If he will not meet me as a gentleman, I will treat him as he deserves.”

Old Blake then flew into a rage, and pointing to the door, he cried:

“If you come here to threaten me and my son, I will take the law on you. There is your way out, and don't ever darken these doors again.”

Darcy O'Connor cast a scowl at the old fellow as he retreated to the door, saying:

“I will soon have the pleasure of kicking you and your son out of this house. You are an usurper and a cheat, and your son is a base dog.”

The young foreigner then turned as if to leave the house, when he wheeled around again, suddenly, saying, in meaning tones:

“By the way, Mr. Blake, do you remember one smuggler who was known as Sancho?”

The old rascal trembled in every limb and hesitated a moment for a reply, but he faltered forth, in tremulous tones:

“What do you know of him, young man?”

“I know that he is alive, and that he has a good memory. You will hear from him ere long.”

Darcy O'Connor then strolled out of the house, while old Blake staggered to a chair as he gasped forth:

“Thunder and fury, what is the meaning of this at all?”

Can it be possible that the old Spaniard is alive after what Charley told me yesterday?"

The old rogue then sprang to the window and watched Darcy O'Connor as he walked down the lawn, while he ground his teeth with rage as he said to himself:

"The young villain has got hold of the story of the old smuggler in some way, and he wants to frighten me through it. It was he sent me that letter in London, and I'll have him arrested for it. Thunder and fury, are we going to be frightened now, and by a dandy from foreign parts?"

The old fellow then called a certain Tom Doyle, who was a bailiff on the estate, and he sent him to watch the young foreigner.

That Tom Doyle was one of the policemen who had testified against old Mr. O'Connor regarding the attack on the police barracks, and the fellow was looked upon in the neighborhood as an infamous scoundrel.

The spy thus sent out soon returned to report that Darcy O'Connor had gone on board a small yacht lying in the harbor, and that the little vessel soon after put out toward one of the Cape Clear islands.

Tom Doyle also reported that the young claimant to the estate had been spending money in the village with a lavish hand, and that he had already secured the goodwill of many of the tenants on the estate.

When Colonel Blake returned from the city that night with the diving suit, he found his father in a high state of excitement.

When the young man heard about Darcy O'Connor's doings he became a little excited also, and cried:

"If that fellow comes here again set the dogs on him, or get Tom Doyle and his fellows to duck him in the lake. I believe he is an impostor who has got hold of

some of our family secrets, and he is working on them to blackmail us."

The arguments of the defiant soldier had their effect on the old man, and he endeavored to banish all foolish ideas from his mind.

Toward the hour of midnight father and son left the house again and made their way to the lake, the young man bearing the diving-suit.

Old Blake carried a dark lantern, as the night was bleak and gloomy, while the young man had a diving-lamp attached to his suit.

On reaching the spot from whence Colonel Blake had dived down on the previous night, they proceeded to adjust the diving-suit on the young man, and with all due care.

While thus engaged the rays from the dark-lantern fell on a bright object on the ground, and the old fellow clutched it with intense eagerness and held it to the light, as he exclaimed:

"See there, will you, Charley? Oh, heavens and earth, some villain has been here before us."

It was a golden guinea the old fellow had thus picked up, and it had been dropped by Redmond O'Connor during one of his trips from the secret hiding-place.

Colonel Blake stared at the gold piece for a few moments, and then exclaimed:

"Let me see the date, father."

The young man examined the piece carefully, and he then cried:

"You are right, sir, this piece was made more than fifty years ago. Could it be possible that it has been lying there ever since the smuggler stole the treasure from the English ship?"

The old man tore his hair in rage, and he fairly foamed at the mouth, as he gasped forth:

"Not at all, not at all! Some infernal villain was here

after the treasure since we were last night, and he has taken it away. Oh, Charley, Charley, the young foreigner has something to do with this, I'll be bound."

And the old fellow danced with rage as he glared at the gold piece; and he then peered down into the lake, as he continued:

"But sure there may be a lot of it down there yet, as he couldn't take it all away in one haul. Down with you, my boy, and try your luck."

Colonel Blake was also fearfully excited at finding the gold piece, and his young eyes had also detected strange footsteps on the edge of the lake near where they were standing.

Casting a cautious glance around, he clutched his father by the arm, as he said:

"Keep quiet, sir, as they may be watching us at this very moment."

"Who may be watching us?"

"Our enemies. Let us draw aside here into the grove and consult awhile."

Their enemies were watching them at the time, as old Sancho and Redmond O'Connor were concealed in the grove at the very moment.

The two friends had witnessed the scene on the edge of the lake, and they drew silently back into the grove as the father and son entered it, while Redmond O'Connor whispered to the Spaniard:

"They have taken to the bait, and we will draw them still farther on."

Old Sancho chuckled with glee as he responded:

"Yes, yes, my son; we will draw them on until we wear their hearts out. Oh, the dogs! they will see some of the treasure at last."

Old Blake and his son consulted together for some time, and the man then concluded to descend into the lake in the diving suit.

Having received instructions as to the use of the apparatus, the venturesome soldier was successful enough in the use of it, and he remained in the bottom of the lake for some time.

When he ascended again the old miser groaned aloud on hearing that his son had not met with success in finding the treasure.

Again and again Colonel Blake descended into the lake, until he had searched the bottom on all sides around the spot where the gold piece had been found by his father, but he did not meet with the slightest success.

Very much discouraged, but still hoping for ultimate success, father and son returned to the house, while the old man said:

“We will have to put a strict watch on that spot by day and by night, and we will have to be on the lookout for the young villain of a foreigner.

When the coast was clear, Redmond O'Connor descended into the lake again; and when the two friends returned to their yacht that night they bore another good share of the treasure with them.

On the following morning, Tom Doyle and some of his fellows were set to watch the grove near the lake, with instructions to arrest or shoot any prowlers caught around there.

Old Blake pretended that poachers were at work on his property, as he was too cunning to give any of his underlings a hint about the treasure.

On that same day the tenants on the estate gave notice that they would not pay their rents to old Oscar Blake until the claim set up by Darcy O'Connor was settled.

On the evening of the same day, Colonel Blake's young wife arrived at Cloverfield House with her father, and she at once sought an interview with her husband and the old man.

Speaking in tones of suppressed anger, and while her venerable father stood beside her, Celia said:

“Colonel Blake, I have learned enough to convince me that you have acted the most treacherous part to my father and myself. I will not go into particulars now, but I wish to state that I never will reside under your roof again.”

The blustering soldier flew into a rage at once, and demanded, in furious tones:

“What have I done, madam, to be treated by you in this manner?”

The old Frenchman interposed on the instant, and his eyes flashed with indignation as he cried:

“Base dog! I have learned that you enticed me away to France, where I was cruelly imprisoned for five years, so that I could not remain here to testify in behalf of my noble old friend, Mr. O’Connor.”

Colonel Blake stamped with rage, as he cried:

“That is a vile calumny, and I know who has instigated it.”

The old Frenchman was moving to the door with his daughter as he turned and replied, in the most vehement tones:

“It is not a base calumny, as I will soon prove before the world. You and your vile father will soon suffer for your misdeeds, and will be spurned by all honest men.”

The young wife cast a withering glance on her husband, as she cried:

“I am satisfied that you are the basest of men, and I will die ere I would live an hour under your roof again. Adieu forever!”

Father and daughter then left the house, and Colonel Blake turned to his old parent, saying:

“This is terrible, father. I fear that our misery has but commenced.”

The old rogue laughed in a scornful way, and he then clutched his son's arm as he said:

“Nonsense, my boy! If we never find the treasure, we are rich. Let the woman go to blazes! There are plenty of fine creatures in the world who will be glad to have you. Have courage.”

Colonel Blake gave only a sigh in reply, as he was sincerely attached to his beautiful wife, and he realized that he had lost her forever.

On the following day a certain statement appeared in a prominent paper published in a neighboring city, in which old Blake and his son were alluded to in very severe terms. The editor called on the Blakes to contradict the statement if possible; but they did not accept the offer thus made.

When old Blake and his son appeared in public again, all their old acquaintances refused to recognize them, while the officers of the neighboring garrison cut Colonel Blake in the severest manner possible on all occasions, and he was soon compelled to send in his resignation as an officer in the army.

The tide of hatred had set in with tremendous force, and it was already bearing father and son to moral destruction.

In the mean time Darcy O'Connor often appeared in the neighborhood of the home of his ancestors, and he was already recognized by the people as the rightful owner of the estate.

CHAPTER IX.

FIGHTING AGAINST FATE.

Old Oscar Blake and his son remained some time at Cloverfield House in almost complete isolation, while they spent many nights in searching the lake for the hidden treasure.

The old fellow endeavored to frighten the tenant into paying their rents by threatening to turn them out of their farms; but he soon raised such a storm around his head that he was forced to fly the country and seek shelter in London.

Colonel Blake accompanied his father to London, and threw himself into all sorts of dissipation, in the hope of drowning his grief at the loss of his beloved wife, and the degradation that had fallen on him.

The soldier took to gambling with his father's money, and he lost very heavily.

He attended the race-courses, and wagered his money freely, but luck was against him in that field also, as he scarcely ever struck on a winning horse.

Old Oscar Blake was equally unfortunate in all his financial transactions, as he soon lost heavy sums by the failure of houses with whom he had large dealings.

Both father and son soon felt some secret evil spirit was pursuing them, but they could not discover that the old Spaniard and Darcy O'Connor were dealing the crushing blows aimed at them in quick succession.

Colonel Blake often encountered Victor Gonzalez in London, and the haughty Spaniard always treated him with the utmost contempt.

He also met young Darcy O'Connor in the city, and he

was enraged to find that the young South American was received into the best society, and that he was fast becoming one of the lions of the day.

Colonel Blake soon found, on the other hand, that he was snubbed by all the respectable people whom he visited in other days, until at length the only persons who would receive him into their company were the gamblers and horse-jockeys who preyed on him.

One night Colonel Blake paid a visit to a certain gambling-den in London, where he encountered Darcy O'Connor, accompanied by a venerable old Spaniard, who also hailed from South America.

Charley Blake was a little put out on seeing his enemy in the saloon, but as O'Connor did not seem to take any notice of him, he turned to the gambling-table, and commenced to play with great spirit, betting heavily the while.

Fortune seemed to turn in favor of Colonel Blake that night, as he won a large sum of money before the hour of midnight.

Most of his winnings were obtained from a young English lord, who was leading a very fast life at the time.

While they were still engaged at the card-table, and playing for a very high stake, Darcy O'Connor approached the young lord, and addressed a few words to him in an undertone.

The young lord sprang up from the table on the instant, and, speaking to Charles Blake in an angry tone, he said:

“My friend here asserts that you have been cheating me all the evening.”

The accused man sprang up also, and glared at his accuser in a threatening manner, as he cried:

“It is an infamous lie!”

Darcy O'Connor confronted his enemy on the instant, and grasping his left arm he shook it violently, as he cried:

“There is my proof.”

The spectators uttered cries of indignation and contempt as they saw three cards dropping out of the sleeve of the accused man, who became as pale as death on the instant.

Charley Blake then uttered a cry of rage and broke away from O'Connor, drawing a pistol at the same moment, as he yelled:

“This is some infamous plot, and I will have your life for it, you scoundrel!”

The enraged gambler fired at O'Connor as he spoke, but the old Spaniard struck up the weapon, and the ball lodged in the ceiling.

Darcy O'Connor then dashed in on his enemy, and, clutching him by the throat, he flung him on the floor with great violence.

Planting one foot on the breast of the prostrate man, and dragging the pistol from his grasp at the same moment, Darcy O'Connor began to belabor him with a walking-cane, as he cried:

“Stand aside, gentlemen, and I will punish this rascally cheat as he deserves.”

The spectators did stand aside, and O'Connor belabored his old enemy until he was black and blue from head to foot.

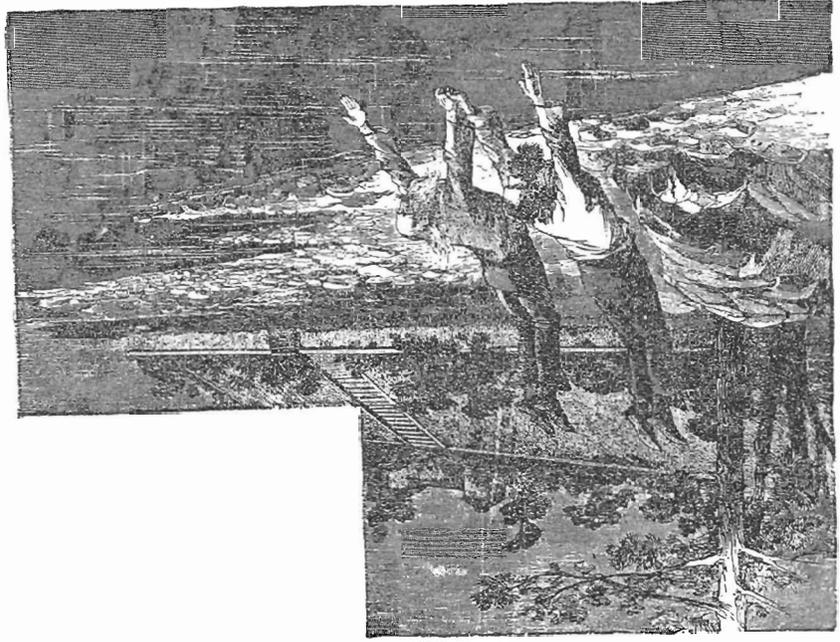
The disgraced victim made several attempts at regaining his feet, but his assailant hurled him back on the floor with comparative ease, as he cried:

“The cowardly dog would not fight me as a gentleman, and I thus punish him as I would the vilest ruffian on the streets.”

When O'Connor was satisfied with the punishment he had inflicted, he turned his victim over to the proprietors of the gambling den, who restored to the young lord the money he had been cheated of.

Colonel Blake was then kicked into the street by the

THE TWO WILD-LOOKING BEINGS PLUNGED HEADLONG INTO THE LAKE.—(P. 42.)



male attendants of the place, being warned never to appear there again.

The disgraced soldier was still in a fearful rage when he reached his father's house and aroused the old man from a troubled slumber.

When old Oscar Blake heard of the last disgrace that had befallen his son, he flew into an awful rage also, and he cried:

“Heavens and earth, but I believe that young divil of an O'Connor is at the bottom of all our trouble. I'll spend the last pound I am worth to put him out of the way forever.”

Father and son then set about concocting a plot for the destruction of young O'Connor, and they resolved to summon Tom Doyle from Ireland to aid them in carrying it out.

Tom Doyle, their head bailiff, was a thorough scoundrel, and a bold, cunning, avaricious fellow as well.

He had spent some years as a policeman in London, and he was acquainted with some of the worst scamps who infested the lowest haunts in the city, particularly in the Seven Dials.

Old Blake became very much interested in the old foreigner who was with Darcy O'Connor in the gambling-den, and he rubbed his head in a puzzled way, as he said to his son:

“Are you sure and certain, Charley, that the old smuggler died in prison last year?”

The young man gave an impatient shrug as he answered, in sullen tones:

“Don't be making a fool of yourself, sir. I suppose you will say next that this old fellow is your friend the smuggler?”

“Bedad, but I would like to get a look at that same old

fellow, as I can't get it out of my head that Sancho is not still alive."

The young man gave another impatient grunt, as he rejoined:

"If you keep on in that way we will never be able to do anything with this O'Connor. In fact, your troubles are getting you out of your mind, sir, and no mistake."

The old fellow gave his son a cunning smile, as he responded:

"Never you fear but I will have more sense in my head than you in the long run. You will see how I will down that O'Connor when I get fairly at him. If he is not a dead man in a week from now, without any suspicions being cast upon us, I will give you leave to put me in the mad-house."

Having settled their affairs for the night, the two rascals adjourned to rest.

On the afternoon of the following day, while old Oscar Blake and his son were returning from the banking-house in the city, they saw Darcy O'Connor in company with the old Spaniard.

After scrutinizing the old foreigner as well as he could in the street, Oscar Blake turned to his son, saying:

"I was a fool, Charley. That old chap can't be Sancho at all, as he does not look a bit like him, good or bad."

The rascally bailiff hastened to London with all speed, and he at once entered into the plot for the destruction of young O'Connor.

Another week went by and the affairs of the Blakes were going from bad to worse. Some of the London journals published articles in reference to the family, which had the effect of driving all respectable people from the old rogue's banking-house, while his son fell lower and lower in the social grade every day.

Old Oscar Blake made every effort to stem the tide that

was bearing them downward, but all his struggles appeared to be in vain, and he heaped imprecations on the head of young O'Connor, whom he accused of being the cause of all his misery.

Darcy O'Connor and the old Spaniard resided in a handsome mansion in one of the suburbs of the city, the apartments of which were fitted up in the most elegant manner.

On a certain night, soon after the two friends had returned from the opera, the door-bell rang in a violent manner.

When the male servant opened the door, five men pushed into the hall-way, the leader of whom said, in pompous tones:

“I want to see your master, on the instant!”

The old Spaniard had just retired to bed, but Darcy O'Connor was in the library, and he stepped out to the intruders at once, saying:

“What do you want with me, sir?”

“The leader of the party clapped his hand on the young man's shoulder on the instant, saying:

“I am a detective, and you are my prisoner!”

The others sprang on the young man at the same moment, seizing his arms, and placing a pair of handcuffs on his wrists, before he could offer the least resistance.

They then hustled him out of the house, pushed him into a carriage in waiting, and two of the detectives sprang in and took a seat beside him, clapping a gag on his mouth at the same time.

The carriage then drove off at a rapid pace, while the leader of the band hissed into the ear of the prisoner:

“If you offer to budge, we will put an end to you at once!”

Darcy O'Connor was taken by surprise at the assault, but as the carriage rode along in the direction of the country,

he realized that he was in the power of his private enemies, and he said to himself:

“This is the work of the Blakes, and I think I recognize this rascal beside me.”

The rascal beside him was Tom Doyle, and he was carrying out the plot instigated by his master.

When the prisoner realized his position he became quite calm, and watched for an opportunity to turn on the rascals in the carriage.

Working quietly at his wrists as they moved along, young O'Connor succeeded in slipping them through the handcuffs.

Then turning suddenly on the two rascals in the carriage, he dealt them blows with each hand as he cried:

“You rascals, I know what you are at, and I will settle with you.”

One of the blows knocked Tom Doyle through the carriage door, and young O'Connor sprang out after him a moment after and gave him a fierce kick on the head as he cried:

“You can't come that game on me. Now we will see who is the master of the situation.”

As the young man spoke he stooped down and secured the pistol from the insensible wretch beneath him.

CHAPTER X.

THE IRISH MONTE-CRISTO IN FULL PLAY.

When Tom Doyle was hurled out of the carriage by Darcy O'Connor, the driver pulled up his horses, crying:

“What is the row there now?”

The late prisoner pointed the revolver to the fellow's head, as he replied:

“Get down from your seat and you will see what the row is, you rascal.”

The fellow grumbled a little to himself, and Darcy O'Connor could see that he was trying to slip his hands into his pocket as if in search of a weapon, when he advanced a step or two nearer, as he cried:

“Up with your hands and down out of your seat. Your fellows here are badly hurt, I think.”

The driver felt that he had a determined man to deal with, and he sprang from the carriage, as he cried:

“What is the game anyhow?”

“I know your game now,” replied O'Connor, “but I can tell you that it won't work. See to that fellow in there.”

Tom Doyle and his companion in the carriage were helpless for the time, as the blows they had received from O'Connor were dealt with tremendous vigor, and they were given straight out from the shoulder.

As the driver of the carriage examined the man inside he kept eying O'Connor as he muttered to himself:

“Blow my eyes if I don't think we have caught a tartar. I'll have to play that it was only a chance fare for me.”

Tom Doyle soon recovered a little from the effects of the blows and kicks he had received, when the rascal then rea-

lized that he was in the power of the man whom he had plotted to destroy.

Before either of the prisoners had fully recovered their senses they were safely secured with cords and huddled into the carriage.

Darcy O'Connor then disarmed the driver, ordered him back to his seat again, and gave him directions for proceeding to a certain place.

Holding his revolver ready for use, O'Connor then took a seat in the carriage, so that he could keep his eye on the driver, and the vehicle rolled back into London.

The Irish Monte-Cristo did not address a word to his prisoners on the return journey, and when they reached his own dwelling he ordered them from the carriage and made them enter the hall-way before him.

The old Spaniard and some of the men attached to the house then took charge of the prisoners, while the carriage was taken care of at the same time.

After the old Spaniard and his young friend held a brief consultation, Tom Doyle was led into a room on the second floor, where he was confronted by the young South American and old Gonzales.

The prisoner was quite crest-fallen by this time, and when he cast a sly glance at the dark and stern features of the young South American, he muttered to himself:

“This is a great man, and I was a fool to be up and down with him. What in the mischief can he be up to now with me?”

Tom Doyle was not a coward by any means, but he felt awed under the glance of the piercing eye of the man who had turned the tables on them so effectually, and he felt that the young stranger had the power of effecting still greater surprises.

Pointing to a chair, the young foreigner addressed the prisoner in his deep tones, saying:

“What was your object in making me your prisoner to-night?”

Tom Doyle hesitated a few moments, and then stammered forth, with a cunning smile:

“Sure, it was only a joke, sir.”

“A joke, indeed! That joke will cost you your liberty for many years to come, if not your life.”

The young foreigner bent a more piercing glance on the prisoner, as he demanded:

“Were you not a police officer in the south of Ireland about six years ago?”

A visible tremor stole over the frame of the rascal, as he replied:

“Not at all, sir.”

“No lying with me, you scoundrel, as I know that you were. Your name is John Doyle, is it not?”

The ex-policeman was as cunning a rogue as ever lived, and he saw at once that his best plan would be to make a full confession to the strange man before him, so he replied:

“My name is Tom Doyle, sir. I see there is no use in trying to keep anything from you.”

“You will know that better ere long. If you expect any mercy at my hands, you will speak the truth.”

“To be sure I will, sir.”

“Do you know who I am?” asked the young foreigner, as he cast a peculiar glance at his old friend.

“To be sure, sir. You are Mr. Darcy O'Connor, cousin to the young gentleman who died on Spike Island.”

A fearful scowl appeared on the face of the questioner, as he said:

“And nephew of the innocent old gentleman whom you helped to send to an English prison through your false swearing. Where is the scoundrel who was your companion at the time? I mean the policeman who falsely testified with you against old Mr. O'Connor.”

“He is dead, sir,” replied the prisoner, with a tremor, “and I almost wish that I was in the grave with him.”

The old Spaniard here interposed, saying:

“You are one vile brigand, and it is death that you deserve, but your captain was worse.”

A gleam of hope appeared in the eyes of the prisoner as he turned to the old Spaniard, saying:

“That is true, old gentleman. It was old Blake made up all the diviltry.”

The young foreigner then addressed the prisoner again, saying:

“It was old Blake who put you up to kidnapping me to-night, I presume?”

“It was the pair of them, sir.”

“And they intended that you should murder me, I suppose?”

“Not so bad as that at all, sir. I was only to take you out to a certain country place they have, and they were to deal with you themselves after.”

The old Spaniard and his friend exchanged significant glances, and the young man continued to question the willing prisoner.

At the conclusion of the questioning, Tom Doyle came to a thorough understanding with the two foreigners.

The other prisoners were then interviewed with the desired effect, and they were disposed of for the night to the entire satisfaction of Darcy O'Connor and his old friend.

About nine o'clock on the following morning old Oscar Blake and his son were consulting with Tom Doyle in the library of the old banker.

The old rogue was in high glee at the news brought to him, and he patted the ex-policeman on the shoulder as he said, with a merry chuckle:

“Well done, Tom Doyle. Keep on with me, and I will

make a great man of you yet. And so the infernal young rogue is awfully cut up, you say?"

Tom Doyle grinned with delight, or for some other cause, as he replied:

"He took it awful hard, indeed. And isn't it queer that he has you down for the trick?"

Both father and son laughed merrily, and the latter rejoined:

"It would be awful queer if he didn't, the infernal impostor, and he trying to swindle us out of our Irish fine estate."

At that moment the door was opened, and a servant announced, in loud tones:

"Mr. Victor Gonzales."

Then into the room strode the tall Spaniard who had brought the challenge to Colonel Blake from young O'Connor on a former occasion.

Both father and son were astonished at the appearance of the man who claimed to be a friend of Darcy O'Connor, but the old fellow soon recovered his presence of mind, and he advanced to meet the foreigner, as he asked, in impertinent tones:

"What in the mischief brought you here again?"

The dark-faced foreigner cast a threatening scowl on father and son, as he replied, in hoarse tones:

"I came to look for my friend, Mr. Darcy O'Connor, who was taken from his home last night."

The two Blakes broke out into scornful laughs, and the old fellow cried:

"What in the blazes have we to do with your friend, I would like to know? Mr. Doyle, keep an eye on this chap, as I think he is mad."

Tom Doyle did slide over toward the foreigner, as if to seize him on the first violent demonstration on his part.

Casting another fierce scowl at each of the Blakes, Victor Gonzales cried:

“It is you who have kidnapped my beloved friend, and I am here to call you to an account for it. Produce him at once or I will have satisfaction.”

Father and son burst out into shouts of laughter again, in which they were joined by Tom Doyle, who cried:

“’Tis a strait-jacket this chap wants. Will I call in the police, sir?”

The tall Spaniard turned on Tom Doyle with a fierce frown, as he cried:

“Dare to molest me, wretch, and I will slay you. I want Mr. Darcy O’Connor.”

“Then go to blazes and find him,” cried old Blake.

“Let us kick the fellow out of the house,” cried Charley as he advanced toward the tall foreigner in a threatening attitude.

Tom Doyle laid his heavy hands on the stranger at the same moment, as he cried:

“Out with the foreign thief, as I think he came here for no good at all.”

Victor Gonzales flung Tom Doyle aside as he would a child, and as Charley Blake caught him by the shoulder he dealt the soldier a blow between the eyes, as he cried:

“You cowardly dog, touch me not.”

Young Blake fell on the floor as if he had received a blow from a bludgeon, while his father danced around the room with rage, as he yelled:

“Murder—police! The divil of a foreigner will kill us all.”

The foreigner turned on his heels at the moment, casting a scornful smile at the old rogue, as he cried:

“You will hear from me and see me soon again. I will not rest until I find my young friend.”

The tall foreigner then strode out of the hall and into the street.

Old Blake watched him from the window, and he saw him entering a magnificent carriage, drawn by as fine a pair of horses as he had ever seen in his life.

Seated in that carriage was the old Spaniard whom Oscar Blake had seen in company with Darcy O'Connor; and as the old fellow turned away from the window, he ground his teeth with rage, as he said to himself:

“We will have to put that pair where the young thief, O'Connor, is now.”

When the old fellow turned his head from the window, his worthy son had regained his feet, and he was rubbing his bleeding nose as he hissed forth:

“That infernal Spaniard strikes like a prize-fighter. See here, Doyle, you must get on his track also.”

Tom Doyle grinned to himself, as he replied:

“To be sure, colonel. Sure it will be an easy matter to go after him, as I know where he lives already.”

“Where does he live?”

“In the house with young O'Connor, to be sure, and it is in grand style they live at that. The finest carriages and horses in London to-day, and their house is fitted up in a manner that would be fit for a king.”

Old Blake gave a malicious smile as he asked:

“Then they must be awful rich?”

“Rich is no name for it, sir, as they appear to be fairly rolling in riches. I heard it said this morning that the Spaniard just here and his old father have a lot of gold and silver mines off in South America, and that they spend more money in a week than the richest earl in the country could spend in a year.”

An uneasy smile passed over the face of the old rogue as he rejoined:

“If that is the case, it is almost a pity that we quarreled

with him at all, as we might make a fine haul out of them if we were friends."

Charley Blake gave vent to a fierce imprecation, and clenched his right hand in a threatening manner, as he cried, in furious tones:

"Hang the foreign scoundrel! If he had all the gold in the world, I would not be friends with him now, and I will have his life before long."

The old rogue patted his son on the back with an approving smile, as he said:

"That is right, Charley, my boy. I glory in your pluck, and I'll back you to the bitter end. We were able to floor young O'Connor last night, and we will floor these infernal Spaniards also. You are with us, of course, Tom Doyle, as I can see by your face."

"To be sure, sir. I am with you, forever and a day, as I always was."

The treacherous rogue chuckled to himself in great glee, as he mentally exclaimed:

"May I never die on my bed if it is not worth a fortune to humbug the old thief. 'Tis little he knows what is in store for him before he is much older, and what a wonderful man he has to deal with."

The three rascals then arranged about paying a visit to Doyle's prisoner that night, and the ex-policeman was sent out to make certain inquiries about the two rich Spaniards.

Tom Doyle returned in the afternoon, and gave a glowing account concerning their wealth and magnificence, as well as the great liberality of the two foreigners, who had recently appeared in London.

The ex-policeman also reported that there was considerable excitement over the disappearance of their young South American friend, Darcy O'Connor, but he assured them that he had succeeded in throwing the detectives off the right track, and concluded by saying:

‘The foreign fools tried to get the detectives in Scotland Yard to be after you, but they would not listen to such a thing at all. It is now believed that young O’Connor was made away with by some London rogues; and sure the detectives are not far out there.’

And the cunning rascal gave a sly wink at his fellow-conspirators.

CHAPTER XI.

IN THE LONE COUNTRY HOUSE.

About nine o'clock that night the two Blakes and Tom Doyle left London in a closed carriage, and drove out to a lone country house which the old banker had purchased on speculation a short time before.

The driver of the carriage was the same rascal who had been conquered by Darcy O'Connor on the previous night, and seated on the box with him was the man who had felt the young South American's fist.

When the old farm-house was reached Tom Doyle led the way in, saying:

"It is as still as death here, and who could suspect that we had the young buck they are making so much fuss about in London?"

Old Blake chuckled in high glee, as he rejoined:

"Certainly not. How could any one suspect us except that suspicious thief of a Spaniard? Let us go down and have a talk with the young buck."

Tom Doyle produced three pieces of black crape from his pocket, as he said:

"Put on your masks first, sir, as we don't want him to know us if we can help it."

Having covered their faces with the crape, Tom Doyle led the two Blakes down into a cellar, and from thence into a strong vault, which was secured by a heavy door and stout bolts.

The ex-policeman carried a dark lantern in his hand, and when they entered the vault he flashed the light therefrom on the prisoner, who was stretched on the floor and secured to a heavy post.

Darcy O'Connor's arms were bound behind him, and there was a gag in his mouth.

Staring up at his visitors the prisoner raised himself to a sitting position, while Tom Doyle proceeded to remove the gag as he remarked, in jocular tones:

"I brought a couple of friends to see you, sir."

The prisoner stared at the masked men in turn, and his eyes then rested on Charley Blake as he said:

"I cannot understand the meaning of this outrage. Why have I been brought here and treated in this rough manner?"

Old Blake chuckled again as he rejoined, disguising his tones as well as possible:

"We will soon tell you what you have been brought here for, my young buck, and you may be certain we won't stand any nonsense either."

The prisoner then turned on the speaker as he asked:

"What do you want with me? If you are common robbers, let me know at once the amount of ransom you demand for my release."

Old Blake chuckled again and pinched his son as he replied:

"We are not exactly common robbers, but we are on the track of a rascal who would like to rob decent people out of their own."

"How does that concern me?" asked the prisoner.

"We will soon show you. You put in a claim against a certain estate in Ireland, didn't you?"

"I did."

"While you know at the same time that you have no right or title to that estate whatever."

"I don't know anything of the kind. I have a just right and title to the Irish estate of my ancestors, and I will maintain it until I die."

Old Blake chuckled aloud again, and his voice became quite stern, as he replied:

“You will change your tune on that point before long. Now listen to what I have to say to you.”

“Go on, and I will listen.”

Old Blake hemmed and hawed a few moments ere he commenced:

“Aren't you rich enough without the Irish estate that now belongs to a decent man?”

“I am rich enough without it, but it is my right and I will have it.”

“You will never have it. Supposing that we were common robbers, what would you be willing to give to be set free now?”

“What do you ask?”

“A hundred thousand pounds.”

The prisoner stared at the old fellow in amazement, and he then exclaimed:

“A hundred thousand pounds! Why, that is a big fortune. Where do you suppose that I could get that amount in ready cash?”

“Couldn't you get it from your rich Spanish friends, providing you couldn't tell us where to get it yourself?”

“My rich Spanish friends would not pay such an amount to any stranger.”

“Not if you gave them an order and wrote that you would lose your life if it was not paid?”

“Not even then. They would have the messenger arrested, and they would use all the police force in London to find me besides.”

Old Blake then turned to his son, and they conversed a few minutes in low and earnest tones ere the old rogue turned to the prisoner, saying:

“How much money could you raise on your own account?”

“A few thousand pounds, perhaps.”

“That will never do us, and we will put you to death if you can’t do better.”

As the old fellow spoke he drew a revolver and pointed it at the prisoner’s head, but his son interposed, saying:

“Let me try him a little.”

The prisoner pretended to be very much terrified at the sight of the deadly weapon, while Charley Blake continued, saying:

“Can you not raise five thousand pounds in cash to your order?”

The prisoner hesitated a few minutes ere he replied:

“I may raise that much.”

“In order to save your life would you not be willing to sign a paper resigning all claim to the Irish estate of your ancestors? Remember, if you refuse you will be put to death.”

As Charley Blake made threat he also drew a revolver and pointed it at the head of the prisoner.

Tom Doyle drew a similar weapon and presented it at the prisoner, as he cried:

“If you refuse, confound you, we will put three bullets in you in a jiffy.”

The prisoner stared at the three masked men, while he appeared to tremble in every limb, as he faltered forth:

“I consent. I will sign any paper you please, if you spare my life.”

Old Blake chuckled in a joyous manner as he drew forth a document and pen and ink, while he said to Tom Doyle:

“Release his right arm while he signs the paper. I see he is a man of sense after all.”

Charley Blake then interposed, saying:

“One moment, if you please. Will you also swear to leave this part of the world without making any fuss about this matter, and promise never to return here again?”

Notwithstanding Charley's orders Tom Doyle was releasing the right hand of the prisoner, who at once replied:

"I cannot make such a promise, as I want to remain in England for some time."

"You must make such a promise," cried young Blake, as he placed the pistol within an inch of the prisoner's head.

The cunning old rogue then interfered, saying:

"Take it easy, Charley, and don't be in such a hurry. Let us do one thing at a time."

Old Oscar Blake then placed the document on a bench before the prisoner, and handed him the pen, as he said:

"Sign that, and we will then have another talk about it."

The prisoner did sign the document without the slightest hesitation, his hand trembling the while as if agitated by terror.

Old Blake seized the paper, examined the signature a moment, and then burst out into a hoarse laugh, as he cried:

"That settles one point. Now get all you can out of him, Charley."

At that instant the prisoner struck the lantern in Tom Doyle's hand, and it fell on the floor, the light going out at the same time.

Then all was confusion for a few moments, while old Blake cried:

"Hold the prisoner. And strike another light, you clumsy thief."

"I am striking a light, sir," cried Tom Doyle, "and there is no danger of him escaping at all, as he is tied as fast as ever he can be to the post. Oh, murder alive! what is the meaning of that at all?"

Without any aid from Tom Doyle, a bright light appeared in the vault at the moment, and then startled cries burst from each of the three masked men.

Standing on the very spot where the prisoner had been lately secured, was the form of a beautiful woman whose face was as pale as death.

When the light first flared up, she cast her glaring eyes at the three men, and she then fixed them on Charley Blake, as she exclaimed, in thrilling tones:

“Miserable wretch, have you become an assassin? Is this the way in which you prove that my father’s accusations against you were untrue?”

The three men staggered back as if they had been assailed by ghosts, while Charley Blake gasped forth:

“Merciful Heaven! it is my wife!”

The pale-faced woman glared back at the man in turn as she exclaimed:

“I was your wife, miserable wretch, but you will never claim me again, as I am lost to you and the world forever.”

As the young woman spoke, her form seemed to glide away, the bright light gradually dying out at the same time, until the startled conspirators were left in total darkness.

After a little time Tom Doyle managed to light the lantern again, and then great was the astonishment of the three rascals to find the prisoner sitting before them in the same position as he was when he signed the document.

Tom Doyle appeared to be the first to recover his power of speech, and he glared at O’Connor as he gasped forth:

“What is the meaning of all this?”

“The meaning of what?” asked the prisoner, as if totally unconscious of what had transpired.

Old Blake was almost fainting with agitation as he gasped forth:

“We are bewitched. The paper is gone, and the ghost must have taken it.”

“What ghost are you talking about?” asked the prisoner, in the most innocent tones.

Charley Blake had recovered his presence of mind, and he advanced and pointed his weapon at the prisoner's head as he cried:

“What infernal humbug is this? Explain at once.”

The light in the lantern went out on the instant, and then a bright glare illumined the whole vault, while a ghostly voice exclaimed:

“I will explain!”

The three men uttered fearful cries as another form appeared in the place of the prisoner, while old Blake gasped forth:

“Merciful Heaven! it is the ghost of young Redmond O'Connor, who died on Spike Island!”

CHAPTER XII.

THE DRAMA GOES ON.

The appearance of his fair wife in a ghostly form startled Colonel Blake and his father to a fearful extent, but it did not astound them half as much as the apparition of the young man whom they believed to be dead for some time.

Both father and son shrank back aghast, their limbs tottering under them, and their tongues refusing to utter even an exclamation of surprise after the first shock was over.

Tom Doyle appeared to be as astounded as the others, as he had known Redmond O'Connor full well, and he had reason to fear the ghost of the young man whose father was consigned to the English prison.

The old policeman was not so dumfounded as not to be able to use his tongue, however, as he soon exclaimed, in horrified tones:

"Oh, holy mother of Moses! if it isn't the ghost of young Redmond O'Connor himself who was killed in the revolt on Spike Island. Will you look at him how he glares at you, Colonel Blake, and isn't it awful entirely!"

The ghostly figure was staring at Colonel Blake, and it raised its right hand at the moment and pointed at him, while it exclaimed:

"Yes, I am the spirit of the man whom you betrayed to his death. It was you who had the arms placed on board my yacht, and there stands the instrument who carried out your work."

The ghost then turned, and pointed his hand at Tom Doyle, who groaned aloud:

"Merciful goodness! the dead know everything. Have

mercy on me, good sir, and I'll make all the amends in my power."

A disdainful smile passed over the pallid face of the ghost, and he fixed his eyes on old Blake as he continued to exclaim:

"As for you, wretched old sinner, your whole life has been one scene of crime and treachery. You betrayed the Spanish smuggler whose agent you were, and you hoped to steal the treasure which Sancho took from the English ship, but you never found it. You will see that treasure ere you die, and when you are a pauper, but you will never touch one piece of the Spaniard's gold save the coin you found on the margin of the lake."

The wretched old miser groaned in agony, and he gasped forth:

"Oh, murder! murder! and sure the dead do know everything. No living soul saw us the night we looked for the treasure in the lake. It is awful entirely."

And the miserable old man fell on the floor in an unconscious state.

Charley Blake was made of sterner metal, and as he recovered a little from his consternation, he commenced to argue that they were being made the victims of some unaccountable trick.

Acting on the impulse of the moment he made a dash forward as if to seize the ghost, when the light went out, and he received a blow in the face that felled him to the floor in an insensible state.

When the father and son recovered their senses again, Tom Doyle was standing over them holding the lantern, as he exclaimed:

"Isn't this awful entirely!"

Old Blake stared up at his bailiff as he gasped forth:

"What has happened at all, and where are we? Are we alive or dead at all?"

Tom Doyle pointed to a mark on his own forehead as he replied, with a shudder:

“The cold hand of the ghost must have struck us all, sir, as I only just came to my senses a minute ago, and I struck the light to find you both lying there for dead. Oh, isn’t it awful entirely!”

Charley Blake was recovering his full senses, and glared around the vault, as he inquired:

“Where is the prisoner?”

Tom Doyle stared around also, as he replied:

“He is gone, sir, and the ghost must have whipped him off while we were lying here.”

The stout soldier sprang to his feet and seized Doyle by the throat, as he cried:

“There is some infernal trick in this, you scoundrel, and you must be in it. Confess at once or I will choke you to death.”

The bailiff dropped the lantern again, and they were in utter darkness, as he groaned forth:

“Murder me if you like, as I am not fit to live after what I saw to-night.”

Dragging the fellow to the door of the vault, Colonel Blake cried to his father:

“Let us get out of this infernal hole, sir, and we will investigate the whole matter. Help, and a light up there at once!”

The soldier’s loud voice rang out through the house, but there was no response to the summons.

He managed to reach the stairs leading up from the cellar, still dragging Doyle with him, and followed by his father, as he yelled again:

“Help, up there! What is the matter with you infernal rascals?”

The “infernal rascals” above did not respond, and the cause of their silence was soon discovered.

When the three startled men reached the main room of the old building, where a lamp was burning on the table, they found Doyle's three companions stretched on the floor, and bound and gagged.

On being released, one of the men, who acted as the driver on the previous night, addressed Tom Doyle, saying:

"Blow my eyes, if this isn't a nice go!"

"What has happened to you?" asked Doyle.

"I'm blowed if I can tell, only that we was laid out in short order."

The fellow then went on to explain that they were seated in the room taking a glass of brandy each, when they were suddenly keeled over on the floor and laid senseless for the time.

"And what happened then?" asked Doyle.

The driver rubbed his head as if striving to recover his full senses ere he replied:

"Blow me if I know. When we come to we found ourselves lying here with the gags and ropes on us so that we couldn't stir or speak."

Colonel Blake bent a keen glance on the speaker as he inquired:

"Did you see any one at all?"

"Not a soul, sir. From first to last we didn't see a cove until you come in. What is the game, anyhow?"

And the man looked at his fellows and then at Doyle as if they all felt that they had been the victims of some practical joke, for which they meant to hold their old companion responsible.

It will be remembered that the three men were rough customers from the slums of London, that they had been selected by Doyle to carry out the plot against the young South American, and that they were well acquainted with the old policeman in former days.

While Doyle was endeavoring to pacify his friends old

Blake caught sight of a sealed letter lying on the table, and he soon saw that the letter was addressed to himself.

While his hands were still trembling from the recent excitement, the old miser seized the letter and proceeded to read it as fast as he could.

And, oh, how his eyes glared as he devoured the contents of the document, which read as follows:

“OSCAR BLAKE : This is to inform you that a certain old Spaniard is baffling all your wicked plans, and he will continue to do so to the end.

“Your wicked son has informed you that the old Spanish smuggler died in prison on the Irish coast, but that is not true, as you will be assured of ere long.

“The old Spaniard also desires to inform you that the sole object of his life is to punish you for your treachery to him and to others. The treasure that you would sell your soul to gain is still concealed in the lake, but you will never find it.

“Rest assured that you will be foiled in all the future plots you may devise against Darcy O'Connor ; that you will be persecuted by secret enemies, until your life will become a burden to you, and that your son will share in all your earthly punishments.

“If you and your son should have the courage to go and seek the treasure in the lake again, I swear to you that you will there meet

“SANCHO.”

It is almost impossible to describe the rage and agitation of the old miser on reading the insulting defiance.

Drawing his son aside he handed the letter to him, saying, in whispered tones:

“Read that, and see if you will agree with me in what I think about it.”

Colonel Blake did read the note, and he became more furious than his father, as he bit his lip until the blood appeared as he turned to the old man and whispered:

“We are beset by traitors, sir. I think Tom Doyle is in with our enemies.”

The old fellow cast a sly and malicious smile on his bailiff, as he rejoined:

“That is my notion also, my boy, but don’t let on you mistrust him, and we’ll pay him off to the full bent.”

Charley Blake nodded an approval, as he said:

“Yes, we will pretend that we are his dupes, and we will soon find out whose game he is playing.”

Having thus settled as to the treatment of Doyle, the worthy pair played the parts agreed upon in the most cunning manner possible.

Pretending to be thoroughly exhausted by the excitement of the night, they requested the four rascals to accompany them back to the city, and Doyle was invited to remain in their house that night.

The cunning old policeman was also playing his part to perfection, and though his old employers plied him with soft words and plenty of liquor that night they could not get him to betray the fact that he was acting a treacherous part to them.

Both father and son were very much affected by the incidents of the night, but their passions were aroused, and they resolved to fight their secret enemies to the last.

On consulting over the ghostly appearances in the vault, they both concluded that they had been the victims of a delusion produced by some stage machinery, and that Tom Doyle and his associates had assisted in the effect.

On the following day, when old Doyle arrived at his banking-house in the city, he received very evil tidings.

In the first place, the Irish court decided that young Darcy O’Connor’s claim on the estate of his forefathers was a just one, and that the young South American would soon be put in possession of the property.

The next piece of evil information was to this effect:

Old Oscar Blake had recently purchased some railroad bonds for a large amount of money, and these bonds were now declared to be forged.

The old miser was a little disconcerted by the disastrous

news, but his son soon rallied him, and it was determined that they would contest young O'Connor's right in a higher court, and adopt other means as well.

On the afternoon of that day they both hastened over to Ireland, taking Tom Doyle with them.

As the country was in a disturbed state at the time, the desperate pair had resolved to raise a band of reckless rascals, arm them to the teeth, and hold the mansion and the estate against the claimant.

They also resolved to probe Tom Doyle to his very depths, and if fully assured of his treachery, to put him out of the way as soon as possible.

The bailiff appeared to be perfectly willing to act with them in all their movements, and he even volunteered to raise a party of reckless characters in Ireland who would hold the fort for the Blakes against all comers.

The cunning pair pretended to accept the proposition, but the soldier said to his father soon after:

"The scoundrel is in the pay of our enemies, and he must be put out of the way at once."

As the Blakes had still plenty of means at their command, they were enabled to carry out their plans on an extensive scale.

Before leaving London Colonel Blake had a private interview with a detective whom he knew to be a bold, cunning, and unscrupulous fellow.

The detective's name was Jim Barlow, and he was principally engaged in cases that required the aid of a rough gang of hard fighters.

When the Blakes arrived at Cloverfield House the young South American had not yet appeared to take possession, and they at once declared their intention of taking the case before a higher court, and holding the property against all comers.

On the following day after their arrival, Jim Barlow ap-

peared at the mansion with about twenty strong and plucky fellows, who were all armed to the teeth.

The strangers also brought over an expert diver, and a complete apparatus for searching the lake.

On the night of that day regular patrols from the mansion guarded the lake, and the diver commenced his operations under the supervision of old Blake and his son.

On the same night, when Tom Doyle was returning from the village to the mansion, he was fired upon from behind a hedge, and received a rifle-ball in his breast.

It was then declared that the bailiff had been shot at by some of the old tenants on the estate, who had a grudge against him.

The surgeons declared that, while the wound would prove fatal, the unfortunate man might linger for some days.

When old Blake offered to have his wounded bailiff removed to his own house and cared for there, Doyle declared that he must be taken to his own cottage to die in peace.

In the morning after the shooting of the bailiff a small steam yacht appeared in the bay before daybreak, and the wounded man disappeared from his cottage about the same time.

CHAPTER XIII.

AFTER THE TREASURE AGAIN.

Soon after the arrival of the steam yacht in the bay, it was discovered that its owner was a wealthy Spanish gentleman, known as Victor Gonzales, and that he was a personal friend of Darcy O'Connor.

It was also rumored that Darcy O'Connor was on board the yacht with his friend, and that the young South American was waiting a favorable opportunity to seize the home of his forefathers.

When that rumor was brought to the ears of the Blakes, the colonel gave a grim smile at his father, and said:

“Let him come and take it if he is able, but we will have a word or two to say about it.”

The yacht remained in the harbor for several days, but young Darcy O'Connor was not known to appear on shore.

The dark-faced Spanish gentleman did often appear in the village, however, where he spent his money very freely.

Victor Gonzales was invited to the residences of several Irish gentlemen in the neighborhood, where he made himself so popular and agreeable as to make the Blakes turn green with envy and jealousy.

The Spanish gentleman took care to spread about an account of his experience with the Blakes, as he stated in plain terms that they were infamous scoundrels, and that he was in the neighborhood to assist Darcy O'Connor in gaining full justice on them.

During his visit on shore Victor Gonzales was often accompanied by an old gentleman whom he introduced as his father, and who was also loud in his denunciation of the Blakes.

As the old miser and his son scarcely ever stirred out from the mansion except at night, and as none of the country gently visited them, they did not chance to meet the Spaniards, but they were informed of the intentions of the foreigners, and they raved accordingly.

Colonel Blake then consulted with Jim Barlow regarding a secret attack on the Spaniards, but that worthy replied:

“None of that kind of work for me, colonel. We came here to defend your house, and guard the treasure you are looking for, but I don’t propose to put my neck in a halter by making a sly attack on gentlemen who keep within the bounds of the law.”

Colonel Blake fumed a little at the reply, and he then had a secret consultation with his worthy father.

In the meantime, the disappearance of the wounded bailiff remained a mystery to all.

Some said that he had been made away with and flung into the sea, so that he could not testify against the parties who shot at him.

Others insisted that Doyle had got some of his friends to bear him away to some secret hiding-place, fearing that his enemies would pursue him to the death.

And it was also rumored that the Blakes could tell more about his disappearance than others, and that he was confined in some private room in the old mansion.

About the same time the villagers spread a report that parties were seen prowling around the lake at the dark hours of night, and one bold fellow swore that he had received a rough pounding at the hands of two men, whom he could not recognize, while he was approaching the lake to watch the operations of the prowlers.

No rumor regarding the treasure of the lake had as yet leaked out in the neighborhood, and it was supposed that the prowlers around it there were poachers or fishermen.

On a certain night old Blake and his son, accompanied

by Jim Barlow and the diver, made their way to the lake and took up a position on the old spot where the lovers had met in the days gone by.

The old miser was in an intense state of excitement, holding a gold coin in his hand, as he said:

“Where that was found last night there must be plenty more.”

The diver looked down into the lake, and shook his head, as he replied:

“There is no more in the same spot, I’ll swear, sir, unless it is stowed away under the rocks, and we will have to blast them to get at it.”

Colonel Blake shook his head, as he said:

“That is sheer nonsense. The men who hid the treasure could never stow it away under the rocks, as there was no diving-instruments worth a pin in those days.”

Old Oscar Blake stamped his foot in rage, as he yelled out:

“On my soul, but I’ll call on the ghost of the old Spaniard to show me where the treasure is.”

The words were scarcely uttered when an unearthly groan was heard as if coming from the water beneath them.

The four men started back in evident affright, while old Blake gasped forth:

“It is the ghost of Sancho, and he is guarding the treasure.”

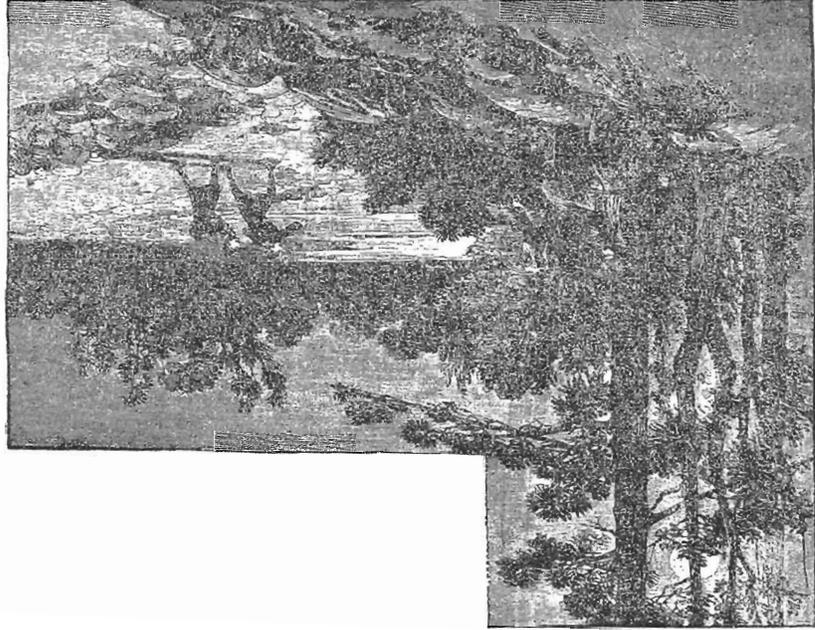
“Then why don’t you call on him, father,” said the colonel, in jeering tones.

As if spurred on to desperation by his love for gold and the jeers of his son, the old man raised his voice again, crying:

“Be ye a spirit from heaven or the lower world, I call on you to appear and show me where the treasure is hidden.

There was a dead silence for a few moments, and then the ghost’s voice was heard from below again, crying:

TWO FIGURES MADE THEIR WAY TO THE MARGIN OF THE LAKE.—(P. 60.)



“Will you follow me, Oscar Blake, if I lead you to find the treasure?”

The old miser was so startled with the response that he could only gasp forth again:

“It is the voice of Sancho. I mind the Spanish accent now well.”

Colonel Blake burst out into a mocking laugh as he cried:

“Some one is playing a precious trick on us. If you believe it is the voice of your old Spanish friend, father, muster up courage, and call on him to appear to you. I believe it is some rascal in hiding around here.”

The old man drew a flask from his pocket and took a good drink of brandy, as if to muster up courage with it, and then clearing his throat, he called out:

“If you are the ghost of Sancho, the smuggler, guarding the treasure, I call on you to appear to me and show me where it is.”

The old fellow took another swig of the brandy when he finished the speech, while his son jeeringly cried:

“He takes good care not to appear, as he knows that we will put a bullet through his head.”

The taunting words were scarcely pronounced when a pale face suddenly appeared above the water beneath them, and then the voice they heard before fell on their startled ears, crying:

“Follow me, Oscar Blake, and I will lead you to the hidden treasure.”

Old Blake was the first to see the pale face in the water, and notwithstanding the false courage he had imbibed, he sank back on the grass, as he groaned forth:

“Merciful goodness, it is the face of Sancho! I am a lost man now.”

Colonel Blake was almost as much startled as his father, and he could not utter a word.

Jim Barlow was a matter-of-fact customer, who did not

believe much in ghosts, and he drew his revolver and pointed it at the pale face, as he cried:

“Come out there, you skulking scamp, and let us know what your game is, anyhow. Blow my eyes, he is down again, but I will give him a shot.”

The face went down under the water, Jim Barlow firing a moment after.

Old Blake sprang up from the ground, and shook his fist in the face of the detective, as he cried:

“You murdering fool, what are you at? Do you want to kill a ghost, and he the very one to lead us where we can find the treasure?”

The old fellow then cast an imploring look down into the water, as he cried:

“Come back again, Sancho, my boy, and I’ll go with you. I will be ready for you in a jiffy.”

And the old fellow pulled off his coat, when his son seized him and drew him back from the lake, as he cried:

“You are mad drunk, father. Hold back here, and let the diver go down to investigate. We will explode this infernal game this very night.”

The diver was an old seafaring man, and he was not free from superstition.

After staring down into the dark water for a moment, he also drew back, crying:

“Hang me, if I care to go there again at night in such company as that.”

Colonel Blake at once strode toward the diver, as he cried:

“You infernal coward! if you don’t go down, I will.”

CHAPTER XIV.

SOME SURPRISES FOR THE BLAKES.

When Colonel Blake declared that he would go down into the lake himself if the professional diver would fix the suit on him, the man drew back, saying:

“Colonel Blake, I wish you to understand that I came here to work myself, and not to teach others my business.”

The pompous colonel stared at the man in disgust, as he demanded:

“Then you refuse to go down yourself, or permit me to go down?”

The man replied in firm but respectful tones:

“I do not refuse to go down at a proper time, but, under the circumstances, I decline to work any more to-night, and for good reason.”

The bold soldier laughed in a scornful manner, and then cried, in jeering tones:

“What a man you are, to be frightened by some mischievous rascals who are playing tricks on us. Did I not warn you that I would have to encounter an enemy here, and did I not pay you for any extra risk you might incur?”

The diver drew back still farther from the lake, drawing his suit with him, as he sullenly replied:

“The pay was fair enough, but I did not agree to face the spirits of the other world.”

“Pshaw! You are a fool, and a coward as well, as I tell you again that we are beset by some evil rascals who do not dare show their faces to us.”

Old Oscar Blake groaned at the moment, and he then cried to his son:

“No, no, Charley. The man is right, and the ghosts are after us. Let us get away.”

Colonel Blake turned instantly on his father, as he cried, in disgusted tones:

“Keep quiet, will you? and take another drink of whisky if you want courage.”

“All the whisky in Ireland would not put courage into me now,” groaned the old man, “as I know in my heart of hearts ’tis the Spaniard’s ghost is after me. Come away, in the name of goodness.”

The stubborn soldier clenched his hands and stamped on on the ground with rage, as he cried:

“The mischief take you all. What do you think of this affair, Barlow?”

The private detective shook his head in an ominous manner, as he replied:

“Hang me if I know what to make of it, colonel. It is very strange that we saw the head in the lake, and though I fired straight at it the ball did not have any effect at all. I don’t know what to make of it.”

Colonel Blake turned to the lake again, and gazed into the dark water, as he cried:

“It was not a human head that you saw at all, but some infernal contrivance worked by the fiends who were plaguing us to-night. Would that I could go down, and I would soon discover the trick.”

“It is no trick at all, my son,” cried old Blake. “Sure I mind the voice of the Spaniard, Sancho, as if I only heard it yesterday. Come away, come away, I say, or the ghost will be the death of us.”

And the terrified old man seized his son by the arm, and staggered along as if ready to sink on the ground.

Colonel Blake turned on his father and shook him roughly, as he cried:

“Rouse yourself, father, and be a man.”

The soldier then bent his mouth to the old man's ear, and he whispered:

"I firmly believe we are on the eve of finding the treasure, if we only have courage."

The old man's cupidity was aroused on the instant, and he eagerly replied:

"Do you think so, Charley?"

"I am certain of it. The infernal rascals who have been playing on us are taking this means of frightening us away, knowing that we are on the right track to find the treasure.

The old man's eyes glared up on the moment, but he shivered again, as he inquired:

"But if the rogues knew where it was, why didn't they take it away long ago?"

"Because they did not have the chance. It is not an easy matter to remove big boxes of gold coin."

The old man shook his head ominously as he retorted in sullen tones:

"I don't like it, Charley, and I would like to give it up, as I fear that I may be struck dead at any moment. Oh, murder alive! who is that coming here now?"

And the trembling old man pointed to a tall dark figure who was advancing toward them along the edge of the lake.

Colonel Blake drew his revolver on the instant, and he turned to the detective, saying:

"You stand by me against this intruder."

"Of course, colonel. But I would not advise you to be too quick with your weapon."

The tall stranger had advanced to within about ten paces of the group when Colonel Blake raised his pistol and pointed it at him, crying:

"Who comes there?"

The stranger started as if from a reverie, and then looked

at the persons before him as if he had perceived them for the first time, as he replied:

“I am a friend, I hope.”

The man spoke with a decidedly foreign accent, and Colonel Blake recognized him by his tones, as he turned to his father, and whispered:

“It is that infernal Spaniard, Gonzales. I have a good mind to shoot him as he is trespassing on our property now.”

The old man grasped the pistol arm of his son, and turned the weapon up in the air, as he whispered back:

“Don’t do it, Charley. There are witnesses here, and you would be hung for murder.”

Victor Gonzales continued to advance in a careless manner until he stood within a few yards of Colonel Blake, and then he addressed the latter in scornful tones, saying:

“You here, Colonel Blake! Ah, I forgot that you were a pretender to the land we now stand on.”

Colonel Blake uttered a fierce imprecation to himself, and he then addressed the young Spaniard aloud, crying:

“You insolent hound, I will have you to know that you are trespassing on our land, and I could have you shot like a dog. How dare you address me after the lies you have spread about concerning me.”

The Spaniard advanced a few steps nearer, as he retorted, in dignified tones:

“I have spread no lies about you, coward. My good friend, Darcy O’Connor, denounced you in London. He accused you of being a perjured coward and a robber, and he was ready to prove his words. He challenged you to mortal combat, but you refused to give him satisfaction. I denounce you now, in the presence of your friends, and I challenge you to mortal combat.”

As the Spaniard spoke he drew a revolver from his pocket,

and held the point toward the ground, after the manner of duelists awaiting the signal to fire.

Colonel Blake gave vent to another fierce cry, and he turned to Jim Barlow, crying:

“You are witness that this foreign rascal drew a weapon on me on my own grounds.”

The detective stepped to the front on the instant, as he replied:

“I must bear witness also, Colonel Blake, that you were the first to draw a weapon on the gentleman. If you must fight, why not show fair play, and have it out like gentlemen? I will not be a witness to a murder.”

Colonel Blake stormed again, and scowled at the detective, as he cried:

“What do you mean, Barlow? Do you not see that he has his weapon ready to shoot me?”

“That I don’t, sir. I see that the gentleman, whoever he is, has his weapon pointed to the ground. Come, come, sir, and no ugly work.”

The detective then appeared to recognize the Spaniard, as he cried:

“Why, Mr. Gonzales, is it you? I heard that you were in this part of the world, but I have not had the pleasure of meeting you before.”

The young Spaniard greeted Barlow in a pleasant manner, and he then turned toward Colonel Blake, saying:

“I am ready to fight that person in any way he pleases, and with any weapons.”

Colonel Blake did not reply to the Spaniard, but turned on the detective, with an ugly scowl, saying:

“What do you mean by this? You did not tell me that you knew this person,”

Jim Barlow chuckled to himself, as he replied:

“You did not engage me, Colonel Blake, to give you a list of every gentleman I know. I knew the foreign gentle-

man in London, and I knew him to be a gentleman, and that is why he must have fair play."

Colonel Blake now realized that the detective would not back him in any vile scheme against the Spaniard, and he ground his teeth with rage as he felt his helplessness, while he said to himself:

"That infernal Barlow has been selling me right through in the interest of this foreigner. I can see it all clear now."

The Spaniard advanced another step nearer, crying:

"You do not answer me, Colonel Blake. I have made the offer to fight you with any weapon you please."

Old Blake stood behind his son, as if to seek protection from the weapon of the Spaniard, and he then groaned forth:

"Come away, Charley, and don't have anything to do with the foreign rascal, as he came here purposely to kill you, I am certain."

Colonel Blake turned a scornful look on his father, and then addressed the Spaniard, saying:

"I have no quarrel with you, sir. If your friend, Darcy O'Connor, were present it would be different, as I have been seeking him."

The Spaniard grasped at the proposition at once, as he cried:

"Will you fight my friend O'Connor?"

"Certainly, I will. I have been only waiting a chance to meet where we could fight in private."

"And this place will suit you?" demanded the Spaniard, in eager tones.

"This place will suit me as well as any other," replied the soldier, assuming an air of bravado.

"Then I will send him to you very soon."

The tall Spaniard then darted into the grove and disappeared, while old Blake seized his son by the arm, crying:

“For goodness sake, Charley, come away or they will kill the pair of us.”

The detective grinned, and winked at the diver, as he said to the old man:

“No danger of that, Mr. Blake, while I am here. I suppose you are a good shot, colonel?”

Colonel Blake saw that the fellow was sneering at him, and he cried:

“You are an insolent puppy, and I believe that you are playing the traitor to us right through.”

The detective grinned again, as he replied:

“Come, come, colonel; you don't know what you are talking about now. I am not what you call a gentleman, perhaps, but I can take my own part with pistol or fists. Ah, here comes your gentleman, now.”

Another form emerged from the grove, and old Blake gave vent to a fearful groan, as he recognized the young South American, Darcy O'Connor.

Advancing until he stood within a few paces of the colonel, the young stranger addressed him in stern and haughty tones, as he said:

“I understand from my friend Gonzales that you proposed to give me a meeting at last, Colonel Blake, and I am ready for you on the instant.”

As the young South American spoke, he also drew a revolver from his pocket and held the point toward the ground, as if ready for immediate action.

Another dark figure appeared at the edge of the grove at the same moment, and the Blakes felt certain that it was the Spaniard backing his friend.

Old Oscar Blake felt that the whole affair was a plot to kill his son, and he clutched his arm again, as he cried, in tremulous tones:

“For heaven's sake, come away, Charley, as you can see that the rascals mean to kill you.”

“He killed my cousin and my uncle,” cried Darcy O’Connor, “and I will have vengeance.”

“It is an infernal lie,” cried old Blake, “as he had nothing to do with the infernal rebels at all.”

“Then you had, you old wretch.”

“That is another lie,” roared old Blake.

The young South American turned instantly toward the grove, as he cried aloud:

“Do you mean to say that you did not hire two men to perjure themselves and swear that my uncle was engaged in the attack on the barracks, when you knew that he was spending the evening with Mr. Latimer?”

Old Blake put on a bold face, as he yelled forth:

“It is an infamous lie, bad luck to you. I never hired any one to do such dirty work for me.”

The young South American raised his voice still higher, as he cried:

“Did you not bribe Tom Doyle and another policeman to swear against my uncle?”

“Not at all, not at all. If Tom Doyle was alive now, he could tell you that it was a great lie.”

Raising his voice still louder, Darcy O’Connor cried:

“Tom Doyle is here to testify.”

Even as the young man spoke, a drooping figure walked out of the grove and advanced toward the trembling old man, who started back as if assailed by a ghost, as he gasped forth, in terrified tones:

“Merciful goodness, it is Tom Doyle!”

Tom Doyle followed the old man as he retreated before him, while he cried, in thrilling tones:

“Yes, I am Tom Doyle, and I charge you with having bribed me to swear away the liberty of old Mr. O’Connor six years ago. I have another and a heavier charge to lay against you also.”

Old Blake fell on his knees as if imploring mercy, while young O'Connor called out:

“What is the other charge, Doyle?”

Shaking his clenched fist at the kneeling figure before him, Tom Doyle cried:

“I charge you, Oscar Blake, with having tried to murder me by firing at me from behind the hedge, and then laying the blame on innocent men.”

Old Blake gave vent to a heart-rending groan, threw up his arm as if in despair, and sank insensible on the ground.

CHAPTER XV.

M O R E W I T N E S S E S .

Colonel Blake was staring at the bailiff in a bewildered manner, when the old man sank senseless before him.

Then arousing himself, he bent over his father, as he cried, in angry tones:

“This is an infernal plot to crush us, but it will not succeed, you rascals!”

The young South American advanced until he stood over the senseless old man also, and he then cried:

“Colonel Blake, it is a plot against you, and I warn you that you have not seen half of it yet. You have been plotting and plotting for years with your miserable father, and it is now your enemy’s turn to retaliate. Are you ready to fight me?”

Colonel Blake was in a desperate mood, and uttering a fierce exclamation, he aimed his weapon at young O’Connor and fired on the instant.

Fortunately the detective was on the watch, and he struck up the weapon while the would-be assassin was in the act of drawing the trigger.

Before the infuriated soldier could fire again, Darcy O’Connor sprang at him, tore the pistol from his grasp, and hurled him violently to the ground beside his father, as he cried:

“If you will not fight me like a man, I will treat you as a dog, you scoundrel!”

And the young South American commenced to kick the fallen man, until the detective dragged him away, crying:

“Do not lower yourself, Mr. O’Connor. Colonel Blake

has promised to fight you like a man, and I am sure he will be man enough to keep his promise."

Colonel Blake was foaming with rage as he sprang to the ground and shook his fist at Darcy O'Connor, crying:

"Yes, I will fight you, you infernal hound! Let us have weapons on the instant, and get at it. Who will act as second for me?"

The detective touched his hat in a respectful manner, as he advanced to the soldier, saying:

"I don't care if I do, colonel."

Colonel Blake scowled at the detective, and then turned to the diver, saying:

"I would prefer you, as I believe Barlow has been acting the traitor to me."

The diver looked at the detective, who nodded at him, and he at once answered the colonel, saying:

"I will act for you, Colonel Blake, but remember that we must have fair play."

"Who wants anything else? I believe you are all in with that infernal foreigner."

The diver did not pay any attention to the insult, but turned to the young South American, saying:

"Who will act for you, sir?"

Darcy pointed to the figure at the edge of the grove, as he replied:

"My friend is here."

The man advanced to the group with slow and steady strides, and as he drew near Colonel Blake, started again, and muttered to himself:

"The mischief! As I live, it is old Latimer himself. I fear I am doomed now."

It was the old Frenchman who thus advanced, and he bent his stern and flashing eyes on Colonel Blake for a moment, as he cried:

"Yes, wretch, I am here to see justice done at last. We will proceed now."

The old Frenchman then turned to the diver and drew him aside to make arrangements for the duel.

In the meantime old Blake had recovered his senses again, and when he understood what was going on he raised himself to his feet and caught his son by the arm, crying:

"Oh, Charley, Charley, don't you see that it is all a game to kill you! Come away with me, or you will be murdered out and out."

The detective grinned, as he cried:

"The colonel can't back out now."

"Ha, ha, you villain!" cried old Blake, shaking his fist at Jim Barlow, "you are in the plot, and I'll have you indicted for murder."

The detective grinned again, as he replied:

"You won't have me indicted for shooting Tom Doyle from behind a hedge."

The old man groaned, as he replied:

"I didn't do it, you villain!"

Speaking in very stern tones, the detective advanced and glared at the old villain, as he replied:

"You did do it, for I saw you, and so did the diver here as well. Is not that so, Bob?"

The diver was in the act of loading two revolvers with the old Frenchman, and he merely turned his head for a moment as he replied:

"We will settle all that hereafter. The pistols are ready now, and you will take your places, gentlemen."

The manner of the diver appeared to be entirely changed, as he now acted like one who had not only taken part in the same capacity before, but he also bore himself as one accustomed to the best society.

The trembling old man noticed the change in the diver,

and it alarmed him the more as he grasped his son's arm again, crying:

"Come away, I say, Charley. Don't you see it is all a vile conspiracy against you?"

Colonel Blake was losing courage when he saw the preparations completed for engaging in a deadly duel, and he turned to the diver, crying:

"I see you are all against me here, and I will not get fair play. I will not fight at present, as I know this is a plot to kill me."

The driver straightened himself up at once, and cast a scornful glance at the cowardly soldier, as he cried:

"Colonel Blake, if you intimate that I am a party to any foul play, you are an infernal liar. The pistols are loaded alike, and you can have your choice. If you do not fight the gentleman as you proposed, I would advise him to give you a good drubbing and a ducking in the lake as well."

The young South American advanced a step or two from where he had been placed by the old Frenchman, and he cried:

"The scoundrel must fight me, or I will flog him within an inch of his life."

Colonel Blake retreated some steps with his father, as he whispered to him:

"It is a plot to put the pair of us out of the way, I am sure. Call aloud for the fellows, and we will turn the tables on them."

Old Blake retreated along the lake, as he yelled aloud, in frightened tones:

"Help, help, boys. Where in the mischief are you all, and we going to be murdered here?"

There was no response to the cries, while the detective chuckled to himself, as he muttered:

"You will have to call louder than that, old fellow, before the boys will come to your help."

Colonel Blake was backing away after his father, when the young South American sprang after him, crying aloud:

“You refuse to fight with me, then?”

“I do, at present.”

“Then I brand you as a cowardly villain, and I will treat you as such.”

The young man was then about to spring at his intended victim, when another voice was heard at the end of the grove, and out sprang a woman, crying:

“Hold, hold, Mr. O’Connor.”

Darcy O’Connor held back, and so did Colonel Blake, as he gasped forth:

“Good heavens! it is my wife.”

The young woman advanced until she stood near the cowardly wretch, and she then addressed him in thrilling tones, as she cried:

“Yes, you infamous wretch, I have the misery to be your wife, but I did not think that you were such a miserable coward as you prove yourself to be.”

Colonel Blake winced under the insult, and he then glared at his wife, as he cried:

“I see that you are in league with my enemies, but I will prove to them and to you that I am not a coward.”

The woman cast a scornful glance at her husband, as she exclaimed:

“Base wretch, you are a coward, or you would fight the cousin of the man you injured so deeply.”

“I will fight him.”

The diver advanced and offered two pistols to the soldier, as he said:

“That settles it. Take your choice of weapons. We have agreed on ten paces, and I have to give the word.”

CHAPTER XVI.

MORE REVELATIONS.

Goaded on by the words of his wife, Colonel Blake became desperate, and he resolved to sell his life as dearly as possible.

Old Blake, on the other hand, had no spark of courage in his miserable nature, and he was again attempting to drag his son away, when the seconds interfered, crying:

“Out of the way, you old wretch, or we will have you flung into the lake!”

It was the diver who spoke, and he had assumed all the air of one who would put his threat into execution.

Old Blake gazed around at the group, but he could not see a friendly face among them.

The bailiff was scowling at his master, and muttering loud threats as to the punishment in store for him.

Mr. Latimer also cast ominous glances at father and son, and they both knew that the old Frenchman had good reason to hate them.

Even Jim Barlow, their private detective, seemed to regard the wretched pair with undisguised scorn, as he jeered at the old man when he threatened to have them all arrested for murdering his son.

Celia Latimer drew back a little toward the grove, but she was near enough for her discarded husband to notice the indignant and scornful glances in her glorious dark eyes.

But the most striking figure presented in that strange scene was the young South American.

Standing before his opponent, pistol in hand, while the

diver was preparing to give the word, Darcy O'Connor raised his voice, crying:

“Colonel Blake, the hour has come for your just punishment. Did I so desire, I could have you branded as a felon, and sent to prison for life, but I am determined to punish you with my own hand.”

The desperate man sneered, and stamped his foot impatiently, as he cried:

“Cease this nonsense, and let us on with the work. I am not dead yet, and I will live to crush all such treacherous wretches as you are.”

The old man made another effort to drag his son away, as he cried:

“Oh, Charley, Charley, this is a game to put you out of the way. Don't you see there is not a friendly face around you, barring my own? You murdering villains, if you don't stop this work, I'll have you all hung for murder to-morrow.”

The wounded bailiff raised his voice as loud as he could at the moment, crying:

“It is you who will be hung for murder, you treacherous old villain!”

“You are a liar, Tom Doyle, as I never fired a shot at you at all.”

The young South American raised his voice again, crying:

“Silence! Will some one gag that old wretch, who has been a thief and robber from his earliest boyhood? If my opponent is ready, I am.”

The diver then raised his voice, and gave his instructions to the duelists, while Jim Barlow dragged the wretched old man aside, saying:

“You may thank yourself for all this, as you will know before you die.”

All was ready, and the word was given by the diver.

The pistols flashed out at the same moment, and an instant later Colonel Blake fell to the ground, crying:

“I am hit in the leg.”

Fearful cries of lamentation then burst from old Blake, as he rushed to his wounded son, yelling:

“This is willful murder, and I’ll have you all hung.”

The two seconds then went to the aid of the wounded man, who had received a ball in the leg.

The young stranger from South America was not injured.

He also advanced until he stood over his opponent, and he then addressed him in thrilling tones, crying:

“Charles Blake, I could have shot you in the heart, but I wished you to live so that you may learn the truths I will now unfold to you.”

The wounded man groaned in agony, while his father exclaimed:

“The poor boy will be a cripple for life. Oh, what good is all the money now?”

The young South American turned on old Blake, as he replied:

“You have no money now, as I can inform you that you are a beggar, and I effected your ruin.”

The old man burst out into a scornful laugh, and there was a strong touch of lunacy in his voice, as he cried:

“Is it me have no money? Why, you beggarly hound, I could buy and sell you twenty times over.”

The young stranger replied, in calm tones:

“I repeat that you are a beggar, and I can soon prove it. Your banking house in London has failed, all the property you held has been seized by your creditors, and you will be lodged in prison for fraud before morning.”

The detective then stepped forward, saying:

“The gentleman has spoken the truth, as I have informa-

tion from London to that effect, and I knew it was coming for some time past."

The man then drew forth a warrant, clapping his hand on the shoulder of the trembling old man at the same time, as he added:

"Here is a warrant for your arrest for attempting to shoot your bailiff."

The miserable old wretch fell on his knees and implored for mercy, while his wretched son groaned in agony.

The young South American then spoke again in his thrilling tones, saying:

"Colonel Blake, about six years ago you had a friend whom you pretended to like, and that friend you betrayed to an untimely death by the foulest treachery."

"To whom do you allude?" demanded Colonel Blake, as he commenced to recognize something familiar in the tones of his accuser.

"I allude to Redmond O'Connor, who was engaged to this lady here. I will ask her how you won her as your bride?"

The handsome young French woman cast a look of hatred at her husband, as she exclaimed:

"He won me by the foulest lies and the basest treachery!"

Old Latimer then raised his voice, crying:

"Father and son sent me to a dungeon in Paris, so that I would not be present here to shield my daughter."

The wounded man was glaring at his opponent, and he then cried:

"You are not Darcy O'Connor, but Redmond O'Connor himself, the convicted felon. Officer, I call on you to arrest that man, who was sentenced to prison for life."

The real Redmond O'Connor tore off his disguise at the moment and presented his glowing features to the group,

drawing a packet from his pocket at the same time, as he cried:

“Yes, I am Redmond O’Connor, and I was a convicted felon through the instrumentality of those wretches; but there is my free pardon from the government, and I stand here on the soil of my fathers a free man. The old homestead is mine, these lands are mine, and you are both beggars. Such is the retribution which I have been bringing on your heads since I escaped from Spike Island on the night of the revolt.”

A murmur of admiration and approval arose from those present, while the young woman seized the hand of her former lover and pressed it to her lips, as she cried:

“It was on this very spot that I last beheld you, and I rejoice to meet you here again.”

Deep groans burst from the wretched father and son, and the old man exclaimed in frantic tones:

“Don’t give up yet, Charley, as we will find the treasure very soon.”

At that moment the old Spaniard appeared from the grove, and addressed Oscar Blake in fierce tones, *crying*:

“The treasure of the lake has been secured by me, you treacherous pirate. By me it has been given to and shared with this brave young man whom you tried to have put to death, Oscar Blake. I am Sancho, the smuggler.”

Old Blake *stared* at the old foreigner, and he then cried in frantic tones:

“Then you are a robber if not a ghost. Where is the treasure?”

As the half-crazy old man spoke he sprang at the old Spaniard, and clutched him by the throat.

A furious struggle then ensued on the edge of the lake, and before any one could interfere the former associates went down into the water together, while old Sancho cried:

“Yes, I will show you where the treasure was kept.”

They then sank under the water and disappeared, as Redmond O'Connor cried:

"Fear not they will be drowned, as they will appear again."

Colonel Blake was in too much agony of mind and body to care much what became of his wretched father, and he only groaned for medical aid.

Woman-like, his wife then approached him and knelt to dress his wound, saying:

"You are a wicked wretch, but I cannot desert you in your agony."

There was no mercy in the eyes of Redmond O'Connor, as he remembered his father's untimely death and his own intense sufferings in the gloomy prison, so he turned away, saying:

"You will be borne to the doctor's house in the village, but you will never enter the home of my father again."

The others were watching the water when Redmond O'Connor joined them, saying:

"Fear not that they will perish, as my old friend knows the secret of the lake."

He was about to say something more when the young woman approached him, saying:

"The wounded man desires a few words with you, as he fears he is dying."

Redmond was soon at the side of his old enemy, who stared eagerly in his face as he asked:

"Are you really Redmond O'Connor?"

"I am."

"Is it true that we are ruined, as you say, and that you were the cause of it all?"

"It is true as that you are lying wounded there, and I have been the cause of it all. On the night when I escaped from prison and learned of your treachery I swore that I

would hound you to death, and I have been plotting against you ever since."

The wounded man pointed to the detective and the diver as he asked:

"Are these men in your employ?"

"They are. There is not a man on your place, from Tom Doyle down to the stable-boy, who is not in my secret employ. I have laid my plans so that your every movement is watched. I beguiled you on here to seek the treasure, and you are both beggars now."

The wounded man groaned in agony, as he responded:

"I fear that you are telling the truth, and I have been justly punished for my crimes. Spare my wretched old father, as he has sinned for me."

"Your wretched old father must bear his share of the punishment, for he robbed my father and sent him to prison. You have lived to learn that there is always justice on this earth as well as in the world to come."

The wounded man groaned again, as he replied, with a sigh:

"I feel that you are right. If I live, I will try to change my ways of life."

A wild cry was heard from the grove at the moment, and then old Blake rushed out on the scene.

The old wretch's clothes were dripping with water, and there was a wilder gleam in his eyes as he flung himself by his son, crying:

"Oh, Charley, Charley, I saw the spot where the treasure was kept, and it was wonderful entirely!"

"You are doting, father," replied the wounded man. "How did you come out?"

"Murder alive! I couldn't tell, or how I went in either; but there are the chests that held the gold, in a cave under the very spot where we are standing now. The chests are empty, but they are the very ones I saw them bury long

years ago, and it was Sancho, the Spaniard, showed them to me."

At that moment the old Spaniard stepped out from the grove, and his clothes were dripping wet also, while he cried:

"I will explain the secret of the lake, and how the treasure was hidden there."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE SECRET OF THE LAKE.

The old Spaniard turned his scowling face on Oscar Blake, and there was no pity in his glance either, as he demanded:

“Did you not spy on us here one night very many years ago?”

It was very evident that the old wretch was growing quite idiotic, as he laughed in a merry way ere he replied, in churlish tones:

“To be sure I did, and it was fine fun I had frightening you all that night.”

The old Spaniard scowled again, as he continued:

“Then you betrayed us on the following morning to the revenue cutter, although you were in my pay at the time.”

“Of course I did. Didn't I get a hundred golden guineas for it, and didn't I hope to get all the treasure you buried besides?”

“And you didn't get it.”

The old wretch's eyes gleamed in a ferocious manner, as he cried:

“I'll have the gold yet in spite of you, see if I don't. Charley, my boy, this land and lake are ours and we can claim all the treasure found on it. If you lose your leg I will buy you a wooden one, and what does it matter?”

The old Spaniard turned away in disgust from Oscar Blake, and addressed his wounded son, saying:

“I will tell you first about the treasure of the lake.”

Charles Blake cast a pitying glance at his father, as he replied:

“Yes, yes, tell it and be done with it, as I fear I am bleeding to death.”

The old Spaniard then continued:

“On a certain night, many years ago, my men and me brought four chests from our vessel in the bay to hide them here in that grove.

“As we were digging the holes to bury them in that old traitor stole on us to spy, and we hunted him away. We then hesitated about burying them here, when one of the men with his spade dug out a large hole like a cave that was already made.

“On examining this hole we found that it led out to a cave that was half filled with water, and the water running into it from the lake.

“We then concluded to place our boxes in the water in the cave, cover up the whole well again, and leave our secret in the deep water.

“We expected to return in a month or so and secure our treasure, but we were chased on the following morning by an English vessel, and our ship sunk in the bay outside.

“All my men perished in the waves except myself and three others. They died soon after in prison, but I live yet. I escaped from prison some months ago, and then hastened here to get some of my treasure.”

The old Spaniard then turned and laid his hand on Redmond O'Connor's shoulder, as he continued:

“That night I met my son and friend here, and he had just returned from an English prison also. He was ruined and robbed by the man who betrayed me to the English cruiser long years before.

“When I learned his history we became sworn friends, and I shared with him my treasure.”

Redmond O'Connor here interposed, and grasped the old Spaniard's hand, saying:

“Yes, and we swore to be avenged on those who had

falsely betrayed us also, and I think we have kept our oaths."

The diver addressed the old Spaniard, saying:

"But how did you get into the cave from the water?"

The old Spaniard grinned as he replied:

"That is my secret, and the secret of my young friend here, but I will tell it to you all, as the gold is gone from it now.

"On the night that I met my friend here I had no shovel to dig, and I thought I could find my way into the cave from the lake.

Being a good diver, I plunged in and groped around at the side. Then I did find what you would call a sluice formed by the rocks, behind which is the cave.

"Great was my joy when I found my gold all safe, and that I would not have to dig a hole to find it, and thereby expose the secret."

The diver again spoke, saying:

"Then that was not the way you came out of the cave now, Mr. Gonzales?"

"Oh, no. When the gold was all removed my young friend and I dug a hole behind here, to play some tricks on the brigands who were after my treasure."

The old Spaniard then turned again to Oscar Blake with a fearful grin, saying:

"We did use that gold to speculate and to beggar you. We have been watching you and plotting against you, and we now know that you are two miserable beggars."

Colonel Blake revived a little, and he cast a look of hate at the old Spaniard, as he replied:

"You are an escaped convict and a robber, and I call on those around to arrest you."

A scornful laugh burst from the old Spaniard, and his eyes glared defiance, as he cried:

“Bah! You are one hateful fool. The people around are my friends, and they will not touch me in enmity.”

The old Spaniard then pointed to the steam yacht down the bay, as he cried:

“If danger should come I have fleet wings to bear me away to Spain, and my son here will come with me.”

“With the greatest of pleasure,” replied Redmond O’Connor. “I will share your life with you, old friend, wherever you go.”

Old Oscar Blake appeared to be listening to the conversation for some moments, and he then sprang suddenly up from his son’s side, saying:

“Have courage, Charley, I will find the treasure yet.”

“You old villain,” cried the Spaniard, “it has been all removed.”

“It is you that is lying, as I will soon prove.”

As the wretched old lunatic spoke he made a dash for the lake and plunged in head foremost, crying:

“Here goes for the gold.”

Some effort was made to save the wretched old man, as the diver and Redmond O’Connor plunged in after him.

When they did bring him *to the surface* again he was dead, with his hands clutching some pieces of rock which he had found at the bottom of the lake, and which he had fancied a portion of the gold he had dreamt so much about for long years.

Colonel Blake was removed to the house of the village surgeon that night, but he died before the morning dawned.

When the sun appeared again over the little bay, the steam yacht of the Spaniard had disappeared, and with it all the others who had taken part in the strange scene enacted that night.

It was soon after announced that Redmond O’Connor

had disposed of his Irish property, and that he had retired to live in Spain.

It was also rumored that he was the secret leader of a powerful organization having for its object the overthrow of the English rule in Ireland.

A certain wealthy young Spaniard often appears in London and France with a beautiful wife, and that young woman is the one who was betrayed into an unhappy marriage by Colonel Blake.

It is asserted that the wealthy young Spaniard is of Irish descent, that he is immensely wealthy, and that he devotes large sums of money in buying the most approved arms.

The people around the old Irish village receive a visit from Redmond O'Connor about every six months, when the steam yacht flies in and out of the harbor like an enchanted bark.

The humble people of the neighborhood look on young O'Connor as a perfect godsend to them, as he spends his money among them in the most lavish manner.

Elsewhere he is known as the Irish Monte-Cristo, and many stories are told of his daring deeds, his acts of generosity, and his hatred of all tyrants.

[THE END.]

STREET & SMITH'S SELECT SERIES
OF
POPULAR AMERICAN COPYRIGHT STORIES,
BY POPULAR AUTHORS.

In Handsome Paper Covers, 25 Cents.

No. 1.
A STORY OF POWER AND PATHOS.

THE SENATOR'S BRIDE.

By Mrs. ALEX. McVEIGH MILLER,

Author of "Brunette and Blonde," "Lady Gay's Pride," etc.

This is a domestic story of deep interest, charmingly written, with vigor and earnestness, and has not a dull scene in it. The author's purpose is to portray nature; she therefore avoids all extravagance, and relies entirely upon her ability to entertain her readers with the presentation of scenes and incidents that never surpass probability, yet are extremely captivating.

The story of "THE SENATOR'S BRIDE" is something more than a work of fiction. It contains a moral that is certain to be impressed upon all who follow the career of the wife who wrecked her happiness because she respected herself too much to deceive her husband.

PRICE, TWENTY-FIVE CENTS.

Issued in clean, large type, with handsome lithographed cover, and for sale by all Booksellers and Newsdealers; or sent, *postage free*, to any address, on receipt of price, by the publishers,

STREET & SMITH,
P. O. Box 2734. 31 Rose St., New York.

STREET & SMITH'S SELECT SERIES
OF
POPULAR AMERICAN COPYRIGHT STORIES,
BY POPULAR AUTHORS.

In Handsome Paper Covers, 25 Cents.

No. 2.
A VIGOROUS DRAMATIC STORY.

A WEDDED WIDOW ;
OR,
THE LOVE THAT LIVED.

By **T. W. HANSHEW,**

AUTHOR OF

"Young Mrs. Charnleigh," "Beautiful, but Dangerous," etc.

An admirably told love story, brisk in action, with well drawn characters, and a novel and ingenious plot.

PRICE, TWENTY-FIVE CENTS.

Issued in clean, large type, with handsome lithographed cover, and for sale by all Booksellers and Newsdealers ; or sent, *postage free*, to any address, on receipt of price, by the publishers,

STREET & SMITH,
P. O. Box 2734. 31 Rose St., New York.

STREET & SMITH'S SELECT SERIES
OF
POPULAR AMERICAN COPYRIGHT STORIES,
BY POPULAR AUTHORS.

In Handsome Paper Covers, 25 Cents.

No. 3.
An Entrancing Love Story.

VELLA VERNELL;
OR,
AN AMAZING MARRIAGE.

By Mrs. SUMNER HAYDEN,
Author of "Little Goldie," etc.

In originality of conception, and artistic skill in the construction and development of plot, the story of "VELLA VERNELL" will compare favorably with the most meritorious works of fiction. The language is graceful and forcible; the style is earnest and captivating; the incidents are novel and dramatic—a series of animated pictures, so very life-like that the reader becomes impressed with their reality; the characters are capitably drawn, and speak and act like sentient beings; while the plot is fresh and ingenious, and evolved with the tact of a master-hand.

PRICE, TWENTY-FIVE CENTS.

Issued in clean, large type, with handsome lithographed cover, and for sale by all Booksellers and Newsdealers; or sent, *postage free*, to any address, on receipt of price, by the publishers,

STREET & SMITH,
P. O. Box 2734. 31 Rose St., New York.

STREET & SMITH'S SELECT SERIES
OF
POPULAR AMERICAN COPYRIGHT STORIES,
BY POPULAR AUTHORS.

In Handsome Paper Covers, 25 Cents.

No. 4—(DOUBLE NUMBER).

TWO INTENSELY INTERESTING STORIES.

BONNY JEAN ;
OR,
THE CHEST OF GOLD.

By Mrs. E. BURKE COLLINS,

Author of "Sir Philip's Wife," "Married for Gold," etc.

A love story of absorbing interest, artistic in construction, and founded on an entrancing plot.

A SEVERE THREAT.

By Mrs. E. BURKE COLLINS,

Author of "Bonny Jean," "Sir Philip's Wife," etc.

A story exciting in action, brisk in movement, with several highly wrought dramatic scenes.

PRICE, TWENTY-FIVE CENTS.

For sale by all Booksellers and News Agents, or will be sent, *postage free*, to any address in the United States or Canada, on receipt of price, by the publishers,

STREET & SMITH,
P. O. Box 2734. 31 Rose St., New York.

STREET & SMITH'S SELECT SERIES
OF
POPULAR AMERICAN COPYRIGHT STORIES,
BY POPULAR AUTHORS.

In Handsome Paper Covers, 25 Cents.

No. 7.
A PATHETIC AND IMPRESSIVE STORY.

GRATIA'S TRIALS;
OR,
MAKING HER OWN WAY.

By LUCY RANDALL COMFORT,
Author of "Diamond; or, The California Heiress," "Vendetta,"
"Cecile's Marriage," "Twice an Heiress," etc.

A healthy and inspiring tone, which gradually impresses the reader, is evident in every chapter of this ingeniously conceived and well managed story. It is successful in carrying out the author's intention—to not only entertain those who scan its pages, but to also endow them with that fortitude which will enable them to uncomplainingly endure misfortunes, while heroically battling to overcome them.

PRICE, TWENTY-FIVE CENTS EACH.

Issued in clean, large type, with handsome lithographed cover, and for sale by all Booksellers and News Agents; or sent, *postage free*, to any address in the United States or Canada, on receipt of price, by the publishers,

STREET & SMITH,
P. O. Box 2734. 31 Rose St., New York.

THE SEA AND SHORE SERIES.

NOW READY.

Stories of Strange Adventure Afloat and Ashore.

No. 1.

AN IRISH MONTE CRISTO;
OR,
THE TREASURE OF THE LAKE.
By JOHN SHERMAN.

No. 2.

THE SILVER SHIP.
By LEWIS LEON.

STREET & SMITH, PUBLISHERS,
25-31 Rose Street,
NEW YORK.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00023046210