

RASHLY IMPORTUNATE, GONE TO HIS DEATH.

'Twas a life insurance agent—one of the modern style, With brassy cheek and fluent tongue and aggravating smile— That persecuted Abner Brown, and eke inflamed his bile.

This agent followed Abner like a slenth hound on the scent, And managed to encounter him wherever Abner went; Till Abner fell into a state of chronic discontent He used to corner Abner, and hang right on and bore, Until, in desperation, the disgusted Abner swore Then the calmly smiling agent would Abner bore some more.

In vain he strove that agent's visitations to avoid, And he realized that, if he would no longer be annoyed, The pestilential agent must be speedily destroyed.

One day he followed Abner to his place of business, Remarking, "Now, you'd better take a policy, I guess," Then Abner said a profane word the opposite of "bless,

And held a loaded pistol midst that agent's bristling hair, And grimly told that agent, if he ever anywhere Said "policy" to him again, he'd slay him then and there!

"If that is so," the agent said, "perhaps I'd better go. But if you will permit me, I would just like to show Our new endowment policy, with rates extremely 'low.'"

His ill-timed iteration sealed the zealous agent's fate, For Abner pulled the trigger and forever stopped his prate. So that he annoyed nobody, subsequently to that date.

The jurors by such agents had frequently been tried; Hence their verdict was that Abner was completely justified, By "temporary sanity," in this one's homicide. —Buffalo Courier.

THE BATTLE OF THE TWINS.

A TALE OF THE MONK'S CASCADE.

Twenty-five years ago, the service companies of my regiment being then in the West Indies, I was doing duty with a four-company depot in the pleasant island of Jersey, when a sudden and unpleasant order caused us to be transported at once to Kinsale. I need scarcely state here the exact nature of the emergency that gave rise to this order; I will simply say that Ireland was not quiet—at least part of it,—and those were the days when our men went to church with sixty rounds of ball-cartridge in their pouches and percussion caps to match. We were transported in an old and well-known war-steamer, which has long since departed to the land where the spirits of all good war-steamer men go; but ere we sighted the "Old Head" of Kinsale, or got the first glimpse of Fort Charles (a haunted spot, whereby hangs a tale of itself), the emergency had vanished. We had scarcely been there three weeks, however, when, in consequence of another order, we found ourselves en route to a most romantic part of Munster. On the march, my own particular line of duty required me to be a day in advance of the main body—in fact I was alone; and during that eventful period of my solitary "march" (on horseback) I witnessed some scenes, the parallel of which may be found in any land; others which can only be witnessed in Catholic countries; and others again which can only be met with in Ireland.

One fine July afternoon, as I was leisurely proceeding toward a small village which contains the ruins of an abbey church, I was much impressed with the romantic nature of the country. Before arriving at a thickly-wooded bend in the splendid macadamised road, I had dismounted from my horse, and, with the reins over my arm, was proceeding observantly along. It was then three o'clock, and as I reached the bend a scene burst upon my view which struck me with delight. The road I was pursuing wound up to the summit of a hill; a deep gorge, wild, rock-strewn, and studded here and there with sloe-bushes, thorns and brambles, being on the left of the road, and dense woods, with trees of a noble growth, clothing the right. On the summit stood the moss and ivy-clad ruins of the old abbey. It was a noble picture, indeed! Neath the ancient walls

on the left fell a magnificent cascade from the height of a hundred feet into the gorge; where, after seething and hissing aloft in a white mist of foam over the broken fragments of rock below, it abandoned its angry tone, and vanished quietly into the green-clad valley beyond, where a herd of cattle were quietly grazing near its margin. Some of them, indeed, stood in it, whisking their tails and chewing their cuds with drowsy industry. Still leading my horse, I toiled up the steep ascent, which I left as I reached the crest of the hill, and entered the precincts of the abbey, where well-worn footpaths existed. But what a scene met my gaze here! The ground around the only remaining window of the ruins in this wild spot was strewn with human bones, not laid regularly, skull upon skull, arm upon arm, thigh-bone upon thigh-bone, as in catacombs, but scattered in loose hundreds and thousands everywhere, except upon the path which led beneath the crumbling, weed-obstructed and ivy-mantled window, beneath and on each side of which I noticed that iron-hinged vaults existed. Verily, it was a "valley of dry bones," albeit on the summit of a hill! Tying my horse by the bridle to a tree within a grassy and secluded spot, I wandered past the broken window to the edge of the cascade, and sat down upon a projecting ledge or cornice. There was not a breath of air; everything around me was as warm and calm and motionless as the minutes which precede an earthquake:

"Every leaf was at rest, and I heard not a sound—"

save the dull thunder of the water below me. I love such spots; and in the exuberance of my spirits began to sing the words of a song of a sacred character; but although I knew that my lips moved and that I was not deaf five minutes before, not a sound could I catch. My voice had become a portion of the element roar beneath and around me; in fact, as with Niagara or the Zambesi, or La Grande Chartreuse, there was no longer a confused noise heard a great way off, but a continued roar that drowned all other sounds, and "did not permit the bird to hear his own song, nor the traveller to be delighted with it. In this mood I could, in the words of Drummond, have almost looked round and wept for Babylon and Memphis, long destroyed while this work remained, when a new object attracted my attention. Crossing the path by which I had myself entered the place, advanced a man about forty years of age, with handsome though sunburnt features. He was dressed in a light blue coat, with brass or gilt buttons, a strong Spanish felt hat, a yellow waistcoat, dark brown corduroy trousers and heavy boots, with a flowing silk tie and down-turned collar, exhibiting a well-browned, well-shaped throat. Altogether, being six feet in height, and stout in proportion, he was what might be termed, in the language of the district, "a fine lump of a boy." But he seemed either wearied with travelling or mentally annoyed; for, as he passed, his blue eyes had a saddened look, his brow was wrinkled, and his lips were set. Making his way direct to the abbey, he rested one hand on a stick he held in front of one of the vaults, while with the other he raised his hat reverentially, made the sign of the cross, and remained in that attitude for some minutes. After this he seated himself on a stone close by, and gazed for a moment at the wild Golgotha around him, and then covering his face with both hands, rocked himself to and fro in such a manner that I imagined he must be in an agony of tears. Thus he remained for ten minutes or more, when rising he drew his hat down over his brows, and walked toward the public road by a route different from that by which he had entered. I again turned my thoughts to their former channel, and the incident had quite quitted my mind, when I was startled by the appearance of another person upon the scene. I say I was startled, because, although this new-comer wore an ordinary shaped beaver hat, cloth trousers, lighter boots, and a different style of vest and neck adornment, yet there seemed to be the very same blue coat with yellow buttons, the very same build, features, eyes, and age, as the one who had recently left the spot. He also went to the vault near the window, raised his hat and stood a minute or two, after which he departed in the same direction. I could not account for it at the time, but in spite of the bright July sun a cold shiver ran through me, even as though I had gazed upon a wraith! How I should have felt had I witnessed the same on a cold starry midnight, I cannot tell. To say the least, this combination of incidents was

singular. Thus pondering, and attracted by the impatient pawing of the ground by my horse, by which I imagined he must have been murmuring, in the words of the "Ancient mariner,"

"Water, water everywhere,
And not a drop to drink!"

I abandoned my seat by the cascade, and made the best of my way to the roadside inn, which I had seen on my arrival at the summit of the hill.

On reaching the spot, I first made over my horse to the charge of a shaggy-headed but utterly beardless wild Irish boy of fifty or thereabouts, who designated me as "yer honor," in a very strong brogue, and then made my way with some difficulty into a sort of parlor, where there were two deal tables, several common benches or forms, and the remains of what had once been an arm chair, of which I took possession, by an open window. Previous to so doing, I had seized the ring which dangled from the end of a greasy rope, and now I waited for the result. During an interval of at least five minutes I had surveyed everything around, from the smoky chimney to the sanded floor, but there was no answer. The very yard to which I had seen my horse led a short time before was as silent as the statues of Palmyra; so I gave a second and more vigorous pull, and presently there entered, not a fat and smiling Boniface, with bald pate and white apron, or a sleek landlady wreathed in smiles, but my original shock-headed friend from the stable-yard.

"Does yer honor want anything?" he asked as he entered, and stooped to pull up his woolen stockings, which had fallen from his unbuttoned knee-breeches down over his ankles.

"Is there nobody to attend?" I asked; "and can I not have a room?"

"Faix, an' here's meeself to attend, if that's what yer after!" said the odd-looking being before me, suddenly transferring his fingers from the buttoning of his breeches to the scratching of his head.

"Shure the masther's gone down to the meadow yanther, to sell a cock iv hay to a gentleman from town, an' divil a room is there impty; save yer honor would like to come into the kitchen, where yer'e wilkim, at any rate. There's only wan bidroom impty, an' that's the wan where the beautiful corpse is laid out, d'ye see, for the wakin!"

"What beautiful corpse?" I inquired at this very cheerful announcement, which was made gratis.

"Why, the misthress, of coorse! Shure she died five days ago, yer worship, an' we'll wake her to-morrow night, afther that ye can have the room. But won't yer honor like somethin'! Shure we've beautiful porter, an' wine an' shtout, an' whishky an' pitaties, an' bacon an' iggs, an' butther an' milk, an' some cowl chicken, an' cabbage, an'—an' iverythin', to be sure, that a Chrishtian could want."

"And who's to prepare them?" I asked, half disheartened, and half amused. "Is there a servant—a cook?"

"Is it a cook yer wantin'?" Faix, a better hand than meeself at bilin' bacon an' cabbage isn't to be found in all Munster; an' as for a sarvint of all work, in the shtable or the kitchen or the dhrawin'-room or the parlor, I'm shure ye'll not get a better anyhow!" This extraordinary self-advulatory speech was delivered with a jerk of the right leg, a complete spin round upon it, the left knee being raised nearly to the chin, and the whole accompanied by a double snap of the fingers of both hands, that would have been extremely ludicrous at any time.

"Under these circumstances, then," I replied, suppressing a smile, "you may bring me a small bottle of stout. Or stay! I think I'll have a little whiskey and cold water now, and some stout for dinner." And away went the strange being, muttering something about "gaugers," and "quare people intirely—intirely," all of which I could not catch; but he certainly brought me in as excellent a glass of whiskey as ever I tasted, with a jug of excellent water, from the cascade, in all probability.

In the same manner he served me with a tolerable dish of cold bacon and fowl, some very nice bread (as I very humbly declined the "cowl cabbage and potatoes") and not by any means a bad bottle of stout, to which I was about to do ample justice, when the door suddenly opened, and who should enter but my first apparition of the abbey and cascade—the one with the Spanish hat and black thorn stick! Making the usual salutation, he at once seated himself at the vacant table in the shade of the room. Not seeing the

bell rope at first, he rapped sharply on the table with the head of his stick, and was soon served with what he asked for—some whiskey.

"Not a dangerous apparition, after all," thought I, and went on with my meal.

I had noticed that, notwithstanding a rather Hibernian countenance, which is somewhat peculiar to that part of Ireland, he spoke without brogue, from which, and his swarthy hands and face, I inferred that he had either travelled or read a great deal; perhaps both. While waiting for whatever he had ordered, he took from his pocket what appeared to me to be a Roman Catholic missal, which he was perusing, when two respectable men of apparently the farmer class entered and sat down on one of the benches away from either of the tables, having first saluted both of us, and entered into a low conversation with each other. I had finished my meal, re-occupied the old arm-chair, filled my meerschaum, and was just studying drowsily the first clouds of my own creation, when who should enter but the wraith—the counterpart of the man with the blue coat—and seated himself on another bench near the table where he sat! I am positive there was a slight start; a sudden opening of the fulsome round, handsome eyes; a momentary rising of the brows in wonder; in fact, the very faintest indication of surprise by both of them; but, beyond this, not the slightest token of recognition. They were evidently utter strangers to each other. The coats they wore seemed to have been made by the same tailor on the same order. There was no other similarity in dress, but the stature, the build, the features, and the tone of the voice were counterparts—only in the latter there was considerable brogue. If I had been awed and puzzled at the ruins near the cascade, I was doubly so now, that these mysterious duplicates sat *vis-à-vis* and in such close proximity! I should here remark that the two coats were evidently quite new, and what an unaccountable itching I felt to know the tailor of one or both of them! Satisfying himself with a strong tumbler of whiskey-punch, the last comer remained in silent contemplation for some time of what was passing around him. By this time I had recovered from my low spirits somewhat, and, being wrapt in my own memories of an eventful past, paid less attention to what was passing around me; the more so when the shaggy-headed individual who was stable-boy, waiter, cook, and housemaid all rolled into one, brought in a country paper a week old, gave a fresh tug at the woolen stockings, scratched his head and disappeared; and so did the two farmers shortly afterward. I might have been an hour thus engaged, during which I heard questions asked and answers given in tones of voice which would have struck any one but themselves. From this they got to "yarn-spinning," two or three more tumblers of strong whiskey-punch each increasing the volume of their discourse, to which I could not but listen. From the scattered words I gathered in the intervals of my reading, I learned that one—my first vision—had but just returned from Sierra Leone, and that the other had also just landed at Cork from Sydney. One had been manager in some sort of a heterogeneous trading concern; the other a keeper and subsequently an owner of cattle. At length an occasional laugh broke in to enliven the occasion, and one of them seemed to enjoy his pipe hugely. Finally they asked me if I objected to a song, which, of course, I did not.

The Sierra Leone man sang first, "Kathleen Mavourneen" being his theme; and he did it with such exquisite taste and pathos that I was delighted. The other clapped his hands with vociferous approbation, and sang in turn, "Oh! Come to the West, Love," with such surpassing tone and feeling that I could not forbear clapping as hard as I could. It was sheer, pure melody, such as I have never heard on any stage. The first then commenced "A Baby was Weeping," and this proved the climax of the concert. At the very first line of the song the Sydney man started, gazed in the face of the other, cast his eyes on the floor, and, placing both hands over his face, I could see the tears as big as rain-drops passing through his fingers on the floor. Convulsive sobs shook his stalwart frame, which he endeavored to control as best he could. When the song was concluded, there was no applause; but, happening to look in the large mirror over the fireplace, I observed his face to grow deadly pale. His lips were firmly closed, his breath came thick and hard, and his nostrils were dilated like one of Job's war-horses, as he arose erect