

The Story of Move.

Within the quaint old room two men faced each other, well-matched opponents in a game where life and death were the stakes. Without the sunlit garden was blaying with flowers, and in through the open window came the mingled scent of the blossoms.

The English officer stood where the sunlight fell on his brilliant uniform, and threw into stern relief the proud, unbending lines of his face. A remarkable face it was, and one to rivet attention—a face that revealed the man's developed character, and side by side contained the record of beautiful possibilities unrealised. Under different circumstances Captain Powell had been a man of lofty ideals, and generous, kindly heart—as it was, no scruple of pity or generosity was suffered to thwart his success as a soldier.

Facing him in a silent duel of eyes stood Sir Nial O'Sullivan, the young lord of the castle. Young in years, and bearing still undimmed youth's fresh enthusiasm, but old in the strength of his disciplined manhood, and well-proven courage.

Each man seemed mentally probing the other, each keenly alert to discover a flaw in his enemy's armour, and to measure the strength of his own.

Captain Powell at length broke the silence.

"Sir Nial, I have every reason to believe

believe that my information is correct. Do you deny that you bear papers addressed to the rebel commander Sarsfield?"

"I decline to give Captain Powell any information on that subject," O'Sullivan replied coldly.

"Your answer gives me sufficient information," Captain Powell rejoined a tinge of passion betraying itself in his voice "and your contumacy obliges me to adopt a course which I regret. I must hold you a prisoner, and my men will search the castle — yes, by God destroy it completely, if those papers be not found!"

While the duel continued inside outside the sun still shone and the songbirds sang to the blossoms. And now a sweeter melody was added to the joyous summer chorus as a clear child voice trilled forth in gladness.

Little Merv O'Sullivan, her arms filled with wealth of roses, passed through the garden singing as she went. The open window drew her eyes, and as she came nearer Sir Nial appeared to her view. With a cry of delight the child rushed in and flung her flowers on the floor while she buried herself in her brother's arms.

"O Nial — Nial — Nial!" she cried almost wild with joy — "when did you come, and why did you not tell Merv? — O why did you not tell Merv?"

The calm of Sir Nial's mind was broken

broken. Captain Powell saw the treacherous pallor and the slight lip-quiver as Sir Nial clasped his little sister his heart's most cherished idol, closely to his breast. Here was the armour defective indeed — verily had Sir Nial betrayed a spot whose weakness courted attack.

With a grim smile Captain Powell passed out into the garden, where at some little distance he paced up and down past the window.

Relieved from his presence, Sir Nial quickly explained to Merve the state of affairs. Her face grew white, and her blue eyes opened wide with terror — terror for Nial's safety — but the brave young heart soon conquered all signs of fear.

"Give me the papers, Nial!" she whispered eagerly, "I can keep them safely for you — no one would hurt me — and then you can say you have not got them."

Sir Nial smiled reassuringly into the blue eyes that were raised to his in agonised pleading.

"You shall have them, my darling," he said, but does my little Merve realise how important is the trust? Where can you hide them with safety?"

"You must not know, Nial," Merve answered, her eyes agleam with triumph, "You must know nothing of their whereabouts until I restore them to you when the danger is past. Give them to

to me now, — Captain Powell cannot see.”
Sir Nial hastily handed her a sealed packet which had been concealed in his breast, and swift as a sunbeam stole sped away, to put her treasure in hiding.

Later that evening Sir Nial O'Sullivan and Captain Powell had another momentous interview and ere it ended Nial's face was 'drawn' with anguish.

“You quite realise, Captain Powell at length concluded, that 'no weak scruples can stand in the way of my duty to my King. If the treasonable papers which I am convinced you possess are not surrendered to me your sister's life shall pay the 'forfeit. Give them up, and I promise you pardon and protection. You must decide.”

“More is dearer to me than life” Sir Nial replied, “but my honour is also dear. I cannot decide to-night — to-morrow you shall have my answer.”

Neither observed a little white-robed figure that crouching on the balcony above leant to the open window, eagerly drinking in each word.

More hastened back and entered her room by the window as the speaker's departed. Then words broke from her lips, in a low wail of sorrow.

“O Nial, my Nial, would they make you a traitor? — make you a traitor for me! Better a thousand deaths than that my beloved. But More will save you my darling, — save you by life or by death!”

Outside

Outside her door she could hear the sentries pacing. The house was well guarded, she knew, but that knowledge did not cause her purpose to falter. Merve had made up her mind to carry those papers herself to General Sarsfield ere morning dawned.

Her window opened on the balcony, and at the eastern side a flight of steps, well hidden by clustering roses, led down to the ground. Across the balcony and down these steps Merve softly made her way in the solemn hush of the night. There was no moon to betray her, but afar in the deep blue heaven a few pale stars gleamed like angels of hope. Swiftly and cautiously Merve made her way through the gardens and reached unobserved the stable where her own white pony, the fleetest in Ireland, was resting. Her heart beat fast as she led it forth saddled, but no sleepy sentry woke up to molest her.

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Merve had once before visited General Sarsfield with Nial, so she knew in what direction to ride. She resolutely put aside all thought of the danger, and only suffered her mind to rest on Nial — on Nial her dearly-beloved, whom she was riding to save.

In the ghostly glimmer of early dawn the Irish pickets saw a snowy horse and a white-clad rider flash past them on to the camp. Some shots pursued

pursued the vision without effect, and weird old legends of fairies and spirits recurred to the minds of the drowsy men.

Next morning, when Merve failed to appear, Sir Nial entered her room and there he found the message his little sister had left behind.

"Nial darling" — it ran — "I am going to General Sarsfield to-night. If I live I shall reach him, and if I die it is also well, for then your love for me will never tempt you again. Goodbye, my own beloved. — Merve."

Without a word Nial went down and placed the letter in Captain Powell's hands. While the officer learned of his strange defeat, Nial stood by the window gazing over the pleasant landscape — seeing only a childish figure flying through the shadow and fear of the night, conscious of nothing save a torturing anxiety to learn the fate of his darling.

Captain Powell's voice broke in upon his thoughts. The soldier's eyes had a gleam of unwonted softness, and his voice sounded strangely kind.

"Sir Nial, I must confess myself fairly defeated. My duty as a soldier perhaps demands that I should hold you a prisoner and inform my superiors of this occurrence, but the instincts of honour and humanity alike forbid such a course. Therefore I have much pleasure in bidding you

you farewell, — and ere I go I must con-
gratulate you on possessing such a noble
and devoted little sister."

With a courteous salute Captain Powell
passed from the room. Nial, left free
to follow his own devices, was soon on
his way to the Irish camp. There he
found Eevee safe and uninjured, the
heroine of the hour. The brother and
sister were left alone for some time to
enjoy their reunion ere the General
summoned Sir Nial to meet him.

This is how Eevee concluded her
story to Nial — "and General Sarsfield
knows nothing of how they tried to make
you false — I could not bear to tell him
that. O Nial dearest, it would have
killed me had you been faithless for my
sake — had your stainless honour been
shadowed by me. Promise me Nial, that
you will never let the thought of me
come between you and honour again."

"I promise you, Eevee Mavourneen"
Nial said, very tenderly, and the sunlight
shone again in Eevee's blue eyes.
