HEROTALES OF IRELAND

As Good as the Arabian Nights.

Collected in the Original Irish from the Lips of Irish Story Tellers.

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THE TWENTY-SEVENTH TALE.

Skeeahawn Dyarrig and the Daughter of the King of the Western World.

Noinin, daughter of the King of the Western World, went out walking one day. While walking she saw the bird Skeeahawn Dyarrig and thought him more beautiful than anything else she had seen in her life.

"Oh, it's happy I'd be with that bird!" cried she.

Skeeahawn Dyarrig flitted around the King's daughter a while, came near her, sprang away, and then disappeared in a thicket.

The King's daughter went out the next day; the bird came; she thought him more beautiful still. He flew nearer; she tried to catch him, but could not. The third day he flew very near her.

"Oh, it is glad I should be to have that beautiful bird!" cried the maiden.

Skeeahawn Dyarrig came nearer and nearer. She caught him at last, pressed him up to her cheek, kissed him, fondled him, put him in her bosom, and carried him home to her chamber.

The King's daughter had a very large, roomy cage brought for Skeeahawn Dyarrig. She kept the bird in her chamber, and fed him with every dainty that he would eat.

During that night the maid came to her mistress, and what did she see in the cage but a man in place of the bird. When the maid went away Noinin turned to Skeeahawn Dyarrig and talked to him.

"I am under the enchantment of the Queen of Glen Dyarrig," said he. "Every day I am a bird, but in the night I am in my own form. I become a man again. I am cramped here and suffering; free me from the cage, even for a short time; free me till daybreak."

Noinin opened the cage, and the two were talking and keeping each other company till daybreak, when the man became a bird again, but he would not go back in the cage, and the young woman could not catch him. He was in the chamber till the door was opened; he darted out then and was flitting around near the castle.

Noinin went walking the fourth day to know could she come by the bird again. She was anxious and not so glad as the first days. She followed Skeeahawn Dyarrig, made after him quickly, striving to catch him. She was walking and he flying, sometimes near her, sometimes far away, till late in the day he came to a hill. Near the top of the hill she strove hard to seize him, but the hill opened and he disappeared in the opening. When she made an offer to follow and go down, the place closed before her, and there she was, left on the hillside. She had lost the road home; knew not where to go. She spent that night on the hill, hoping that Skeeahawn Dyarrig would come in the night or the following morning.

Morning came, but there was neither sight nor trace of Skeeahawn Dyarrig. Noinin was in great grief and trouble; at home her father, mother, and all were anxious to know where she was or what had become of her. She walked away from the hill, walked all the day till near evening, when she saw a fine castle far out ahead of her, and when she came near she found a great gate with rich ornaments, the gate high and splendid. She knocked and a woman came out there before her.

"What do you want here, my daughter?" asked the woman, "and where are you going?"

"I have come to ask lodgings in this castle for the night."

"You will have lodgings," said the woman, "and supper as well, for you are hungry after the long journey. You are a stranger in this place, and very few people walk the way here. Will you tell me now what your name is?"

"I came from the Western World, and my name is Noinin," said the maiden.

"And what brought you this way?"

Noinin told her whole story; told all, told everything in the way it had happened; how she had seen Skeeahawn Dyarrig, and followed and caught him, then lost him, and followed a second time; how she had wandered till, hunger and thirst and weary, she had made her way to that castle.

"Will you take service with me?" asked the woman.

"I will," said Noinin.

It is not known what wages she asked or did the woman give wages at all, but she said: "I will keep you in service a day and a year. You do not know, I suppose, whose house this is?"

"I do not, indeed," said Noinin.

"This is Tyach Geehy (Wind's house), and I am Wind's queen."

When three-quarters of the year were past Noinin had a son; she spent her time till her service was over. The woman found no fault with Noinin, said no evil word to her. But at the end of the time her decision was this: "I will keep you no longer. I do not wish to have a boy growing up in my house. You are free to go elsewhere and serve in some other place."

"Well, now as you are going," said Wind's Queen, "here is a ring. When you look through it you will feel neither hunger nor thirst, and, besides, you will see all things around, whether distant or near, exposed or concealed."

Noinin went away with her son then, travelled till near dark, looked through the ring, saw a fine castle, and made her way to it. In front was a gate and a beautiful green. She knocked at the gate, a kindly looking woman came to her.

"What do you want?" asked the woman.

"I need lodgings for a night. I have travelled far and am weary. I could see no house except this one."

"You must have lodgings," said the woman, "for it's very seldom we see any one passing the way. Come into the castle."

Noinin followed her.

"Tell me who you are," said the woman.

"Noinin, from the Western World. I am looking for service."

"How long will you serve?"

"As long as you like, but I hope you'll allow my child to stay with me?"

"Yes," answered the woman, "and why not?"

"The child is no trouble," said Noinin, "only give him to eat, he is not cross or uneasy."

"I will keep you a day and a year," said the woman.

Noinin was serving in her new place with good will. What the boy did not grow in the day he grew in the night, and what he did not grow in the night he grew in the day, and no one could know that he was growing half as well as he was.

"Well," said the woman, "do you know what house this is?"

"I do not."

"It is not well for any one to be in service without knowing where the service is. This is Tyach Grainne (Moon's house), and I am Moon's queen."

They were spending the time in good agreement, and Noinin was an excellent servant; knew every work and did what she knew. When her term was ended the Queen said:

"Your son is growing very fast; growing up to be large. We cannot let the like of him live in this house any longer."

"I must go then," said Noinin, "for I cannot stay here without him."

"I will give you a gift if you go," said the Queen.

She went to a room in the castle and brought out a can, worked in figures, and a rod, and said: "You might go to a place and not know where you were or how to go out of it. All you need is to put on this cap and say, I wish to be in such or such a place, or on such or such a road, and you'll be there. With this rod you can open a passage through any place or give proper form to a person enchanted."

Noinin took the cap and the rod, left a blessing with the Queen, and went away. All that day she saw nothing but waste land and wild places. Toward evening she remembered the ring which she had brought with her from Wind's house, took it out, looked through it, saw a grand castle with a court in the rear and a lawn out in front of it. She came to the castle and knocked at the gate. A beautiful woman came out and asked:

"What do want or expect here?"

"Lodgings for the night, if you are willing to give them," said Noinin.

"I will give you lodgings," said the woman, "for it is very seldom we see a strange person coming the way. How old is this child?"

"A year and a quarter with two days," said Noinin.

"If that is his age he'll be the best hero in the world when of full growth. Will you take service with me?" asked the woman.

"I will," said Noinin.

"Now, tell about yourself; tell me all and tell truly."

She told her whole story.

"Do you know what castle this is?" asked the woman.

"I do not."

"This is Tyach Grainne (Sun's house) and I am Sun's queen."

Noinin served well till the day and the year were both ended. I could not be told nor related how the lad was growing, growing always; no one could say what his height was.

"We cannot have such a man in the house," said Sun's queen. "You must make ready to go to-day and by a day with me. You have I suppose though much hardship and will pass through more yet than you think of, but towards the end you may find better fortune."

Noinin remained during that day, and next morning she saw three ravens opposite the castle on a hill, and they fighting.

"Well," said the son, "it is a pity to see two killing one."

"Never mind the ravens," said his mother, "it is not easily known; would it be good luck to lad luck for you to interfere with them."

Noinin intended to go on the following morning.

"No," said the Queen, "I will not let you go; I have good will for you. I wish to talk longer."

Next morning they saw the three ravens a second time.

"It's a pity to see two killing one," said the boy.

"I told you before," said the mother, "not to mind them."

"I will mind! I must help the third raven."

"You will not," said she, and she kept him that day from going to the ravens. "I am troubling you more than I ought and delaying too long," said Noinin.

"No," said Sun's Queen. "I'll keep you this day, but will ask you no longer. I have some words more to tell you."

Again the three ravens were fighting, two against one.

"Well," said the boy, "it's a pity to see two killing one. I must help the third raven."

"It is hard to keep you from fighting," said the mother, and she let him go that time.

"I had a sister," said Sun's Queen to Noinin, "and she was taken from me many years ago. You will travel now through lonely and strange places; have an eye around you to know would you see her; you may miss this way again or you may not, but if you see her tell me in case you come back here. I will give you a tablecloth, which in need will give you food and drink in plenty. Here it is."

The boy went to the birds on the hill. "It's a shame for two to be killing one," said he.

"It would be fitter for you to mind yourself than to come here interfering with us," answered one of the ravens.

"Whatever I do I'll stop this," said the boy.

"There will be only one against one from this out, let the third be on me."

Noinin's son made at one of the ravens; the bird flew around and above and was rushing to strike when the boy pointed his sword out before him and stabbed; the bird's blood gushed out on his hand, and when he shook it off it struck one of the other two ravens. That moment the bird was the finest man at all. When the boy saw the change he said to the second raven:

"I have nothing against you more than I have against this one."

He sprinkled that bird and it became a man like the other. Noinin took farewell of the Queen, and went away with the two men and her own son. The two men walked ahead and toward evening reached a narrow opening in a high cliff. When the two entered, the cliff closed behind them. Noinin took the rod which Sun's Queen had given her and struck a blow, then a second and a third. The passage opened, she went down the world below to the finest land that could be. The two men were there before her. They travelled and were travelling. There was plenty of light there; a beautiful country, every part finer and better than the part just before it.

Noinin now remembered the cap and put it on, saying: "I wish the way opened to Glen Dyarrig."

The road was opened, and they travelled and were travelling, how long is not known, till they came near to Glen Dyarrig; but they could not see anything in it, all was so covered with dust, fog, and blinding enchantment. They were weary and fainting from hunger, and food to be had there in no place. Noinin remembered the tablecloth brought from Sun's house, which she was not to use till she needed it greatly. She spread the cloth; it was covered with good food and drink. All were eating and drinking with pleasure when a swan came down, took the best bit of food on the cloth, and flew away with it. It was not long till she snapped off another piece.

"If you take a third one I'll try a rod on you," said the boy.

The swan came the third time and was sweeping down, when he took the rod which his mother had and struck the swan with it. That minute she dropped to the ground, a beautiful woman, the sister of Sun's Queen.

Said the woman to Noinin: "I have waited long for this son of Skeeahawn Dyarrig to come and break the enchantment that was on me. I know well what brought you this way. Now stay here. These two heroes will guard you till we return. This young man and I will be walking together." The two walked away then. "You will see the King soon," said Sun's sister-in-law to the young man, Noinin's son, "for he knows that we are coming, but he does not know who we are. When the King asks who you are and where you are going, you will say that you are the son of a father and mother in North Erin; that they died, and you and your sister (I am to be the sister) are travelling. You are seeking service for your sister. The King will take me as maid for his daughter. Do not leave this place. I will come out to walk every evening. It will go hard with me if I, as maid of the young Princess, do not learn the ins and outs of the castle."

The King of Glen Dyarrig hired Sun's sister-in-law to be in attendance on his daughter. The next day the Princess and the maid went out walking.

"This is a dark, lonely place," said the maid. "How can you live at all here, since nothing can be seen in it from the fog and great haze?"

"Oh, never mind that," replied the King's daughter. "Come with me, let us walk a start."

They walked on till they came to a circle that had been a fine one in old times. There was a great ring on one side of the door.

"Take a pull out of that ring," said the Princess.

The maid pulled.

"Now look around."

"She did so." One-third of the glen was bright and clear. She gave another pull; two-thirds of it were bright. At the third pull the whole glen was as clear as ever it had been, or as any place could be.

"My mother puts enchantment on this glen every morning and I'm the world except herself, and it is that way till evening. In the evening it is dark for her as well as for others, but if a man knows about pulling the ring he can clear the glen as we have done this time."

Next day in the evening the maid went out and saw Noinin's son. They walked on together; walked, walked a good start; walked till they came to the half-ruined castle.

"This was a fine castle on a time," said the maid.

"Oh, it is fine enough now itself," said Noinin's son.

"Pull this ring," said the maid, "but not with too much strength."

He pulled the ring. One-third of the glen was seen.

"Knock another pull out of it," said she.

He did so. Two-thirds of the glen was in sight. A third time, the whole glen was shining before them. When pulling the third time he looked around, saw the place growing clear, and said: "I might as well pull it all out." He did so. The enchantment was gone from Glen Dyarrig altogether.

"Now pull the ring on that side of the door," said the maid. He pulled it.

"I am Faranaaye," said a voice, "what do you want of me?"

"I want the Queen and her daughter to have no more power of enchantment in this glen and Skeeahawn Dyarrig to come here this minute."

"As long as you like, but I hope you'll allow my child to stay with me?"

"Yes," answered the woman, "and why not?"

"The child is no trouble," said Noinin, "only give him to eat, he is not cross or uneasy."

"I will keep you a day and a year," said the woman.

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Noinin intended to go on the following morning.

"No," said the Queen, "I will not let you go longer."

DAVID BALFOUR.

(A Sequel to "Kidnapped")

A STORY OF ADVENTURE.

By ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON,

Author of "Treasure Island," "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," &c.

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CHAPTER XII.—ON THE MARCH AGAIN WITH ALAN.

It was likely between one and two, the moon (as I have said) was down; a strongish wind, carrying a heavy wrack of cloud, had set in suddenly from the west, and we began our movement in as black a night as ever a fugitive or a murderer wished. The whiteness of the path guided us into the sleeping town of Broughton, thence through Picardy, and beside my old acquaintance the gibbet of the two thieves. A little beyond we made a useful beacon, which was a light in an upper window of Lochend. Sleeping by this, but a good deal at random, and with some trampling of the harvest, and stumbling and falling down upon the banks, we made our way across country and won forth at last upon the linky, boggy mainland that they call the Figgate Whins. Here, under a bush of whin, we lay down the remainder of that night and slumbered.

"AY, BUT YE WOULD NAE, ALAN," SAID I.

The day called us about five. A beautiful morning it was, the high westerly wind still blowing strong, but the clouds all blown away to Europe. Alan was already sitting up and smiling to himself. It was my first sight of my friend since we were parted, and I looked upon him with enjoyment. He had still the same big greatcoat on his back; but (what was new) he had now a pair of knitted hose hung down above the knee. Doubtless these were intended for disguise; but, as the day promised to be warm, he made a most unseasonable figure.

"Well, Davie," said he, "is this no a bonny morning? Here is a day that looks the way that a day ought to. This is a great change of it from the belly of my haystack; and while you were there sottering and sleeping I have done a thing that maybe I do over seldom."

"And what was that?" said I.

"Oh, just said my prayers," said he.

"And where are my gentry, as ye call them?" I asked.

"Gone kens," says he, "and the short and long of it is that we must take our chance of them. Up with your foot soles, Davie! Forth, Fortune, once again of it! And a bonny walk we are like to have."

"So we went east by the beach of the sea, toward where the salt pans were smoking in by the Isk mouth. No doubt there was a by-ordinary bonny blink of morning sun on Arthur's Seat and the green Pentlands, and the pleasantness of the day appeared to set Alan among nettles.

"I feel like a gomeral," says he, "to be leaving England on a day like this. It sticks in my head. I would maybe like it better to stay here and hing."

"Ay, but ye would nae, Alan," said I.

"No, but what France is a good place, too," he explained; "but it's some way not the same. It's a foreign place, I believe, but it's no Scotland. I like it fine when I'm there, man; yet I kind of weary for Scots divots and the Scots peat-reek."

"If that's all you have to complain of, Alan, it's no such great affair," said I.

"And it is not; I'm not complaining, whatever," said he, "and mo tuit new out of yon de'il's haystack."

"And so you were unco' weary of your haystack?" I asked.

"Weary's nae word for it," said he. "I'm not just precisely a man that's easily cast down; but I tell you, Davie, I'm glad the lift above my head. I'm like the auld Black Douglas (wasna it?) that likit better to hear the laverock sing than the mouse cheep. And yon place, ye see, Davie—whilk was a very suitable place to hide in, as I'm free to own—stank of me like a fox. Ye ken, Davie, I'm no Spartan. I like it fine when I'm there, man; yet I kind of weary for Scots divots and the Scots peat-reek."

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"Then that cannot tell the truth," he observed to me as we went on again, "should be an minnie to leave an honest, handy lee behind them. If folk dinna ken what ye're doing, Davie, they're terrible taken up with it; but if they think they ken, they can nae mair for it than wind t'ae for peace cartridge."

As we had first made inland, so our road came in the end to lie very near the north; the old kirk of Aldally for a landmark on the left, on the right the top of the Berwick Law, and it was thus we struck the shore again not far from Dirleton. From North Berwick we skirted Gullane Ness, there runs a string of four small isles, Craigleith, The Lamb, Fidra, and Eyrebrough, notable by their diversity in size and shape. Fidra is the most particular, being a strange gray islet of two humps, made the more conspicuous by a piece of ruin, and I mind that as we drew closer to it we came clear of windows of these ruins the sea peeped through like a man's eye. Under the lee of Fidra there is a good anchorage in westerly winds, and there, from a far way off, we could see the Thistle riding.

The shore in face of these islets is altogether wild. There is no dwelling of men and scarce any passage, or, at most, of some vagabond Children running at their play. Gullane is a small place on the inside of the Ness, the folk of Dirleton go to their business in the inland fields, and those of North Berwick straight to the sea fishing from their haven, so that few parts of the coast are lonelier. But I mind, as we crawled upon our bellies into the multiplicity of heights and hollows, keeping a bright eye upon all sides, and our hearts hammering at our ribs, there was such a shining of the sun and sea, such a stir of the wind in the bent grass, and such a bustle of down-popping rabbits and up-flying gulls, that the desert seemed to me like a place alive. No doubt it was in all ways well chosen for a secret embarkation, if the secret had been kept; an I even now that it was out, and the place watched, I was well able to creep unperceived to the front of the sand hills, where they look down immediately on the beach and sea.

But here Alan came to a full stop.

"Davie," said he, "this is a little passage! As long as we lie here we're safe; but I'm nane sae muckle nearer to my ship or the coast of France. And as soon as we stand up and signal the brig, it's ane her matter. For where will your gentry be, think ye?"

"Maybe they're no coming yet," said I. "And even if they are, there's one clear matter in our favor. They'll be all arranged to take us, that's true. But they'll have arranged for our coming from the east, and here we are upon their west."

"Ay," said Alan. "I wish we were in some force, and this was a battle, we would lonnily have outman-navved them. But it is nae, Davie, and the way it is, is a wee thing less inspiring to Alan Breck. I swither, Davie."

"Time flies, Alan," said I.

"I ken that," said Alan. "I ken naething else, as the French folk say. But this is a dreidfu' place of beds or tails. Oh! if I could but ken where your gentry were!"

"Alan," said I, "this is no like you. It's got to be now or never."

"This is no me, quo' he."

sang Alan, with a queer face, betwixt shame and drollery.

"Neither you nor me, quo' he, neither you nor me.

Wow, na, Johnnie man! neither you nor me!"

And then of a sudden he stood straight up where he was, and, with a handkerchief flying in his right hand, marched down upon the beach. I stood up myself, but I looked behind him, scanning the sand hills to the east. His appearance was at first unremarked, seagull not expecting him so early, and my gentry

"DAVIE, ARE YE NO COMING? I AM SWIER TO LEAVE YE!"

watching on the other side. Then they awoke on board the Thistle, and it seemed they had all in readiness, for there was scarce a second's bustle on the deck before we saw a skiff put round her stern and begin to pull lively for the coast. Almost at the same moment of time, and perhaps half a mile away toward Gullane Ness, the figure of a man appeared for a blink upon a sand hill, waving with his arms; and, though he was gone again in the same flash, the gulls in that part continued a little longer to fly wild.

Alan had not seen this, looking straight to seaward at the ship and skiff.

"It mean us as it will," said he, when I had told him. "Weel, may yon boatie row, or my craig 'll have to thole a rasceing."

That part of the beach was long and flat, and excellent walking when the tide was down; a little crossy burn flowed over it in one place to the sea; and the sand hills ran along the head of it, like the rampart of a town. No eye of ours could spy what was passing behind there in the bents, no hurry of ours could mend the speed of the boat's coming; time stood still with us through that uncanny period of waiting.

"There is one thing I would like to ken," says Alan. "I would like fine to ken these gentry's orders. We're worth four hunner pound the pair of us. How if they took the guns to us, Davie? They would get a bonny shot from the top of that large sandy bank?"

"Morally impossible," said I. "The point is that their can have no guns. This thing has been gone about too secret; pistols they may have, but never guns."

"I believe ye'll be in the right," says Alan. "For all which I am weary as a good deal for yon boat."

And he snapped his fingers and whistled to it like a dog.

It was now perhaps a third of the way in, and we ourselves already had on the margin of the sea, so that the soft sand rose over my shoes. There was no more to do, whatever, to wait. We took our last look as we were able at the creeping motion of the boat, and as little as we could manage at the long, impenetrable front of the sand hills, over which the gulls twinkled, and behind which our enemies were doubtless marshalling.

"This is a fine, fresh, edifying place to spy in," says Alan suddenly, and, man, I wish that I had yet courage."

"Alan," I cried, "what kind of talk is this of it? You're just made of courage. It's the character of the man and I could prove myself if there was nae to be."

"And so ye could, on the more pleasant," said he. "What makes the difference with me is just my great penetration and knowledge of affairs. But for auld, cauld, clear, deadly courage, I am not it to hold a candle to ye. Look at us two here upon the sands. Here am I, fair hobbling for my life, and ye will not so much as know it, for ye keep your shoulder to me, and ye stop and stop, and ye think that I could do that, or would? No me. Firstly, mean ye I have nae gotten courage and I could nae dance and cavorsalize, because I am a man of an amazing penetration and a great knowledge of affairs?"

"Is that what you're coming, is it?" I cried. "Ah, man, then you are wise your old wayes, but you are even wise yet. But this much I'll own. If I could get on board with you and your gentlemen, I would set the shore in Fife, it would be the better for me. But I'm no coming back to Stirling with nobody to meddle me."

"And that's just precisely what my captain'll read," retorted Alan. "Kens he a guess dark, but I'll tell ye what he'll say he'll carry ye to France, an' that's near hand to Geneva, and he by your own account o' it your business has."

Remembrance of my temptation in the wood made me strong as iron.

"I have a trust to keep Alan," said I. "I am trusted with your cousin Charlie; I have passed my word."

"Braw trysts that you'll can keep," said Alan. "Ye'll just miseries I ance and for a' with the gentry in the tents. And what to?" he went on with an extreme threatening gravity. "Just tell me that! my manage! Are ye to be speerled away like Jenny Grange? Are they to chine a chine in your inside and bury ye in the heaps? Or is it to be the other way, and are they chiving ye in with dagger? Are they to tie ye in tassels? Would ye stick your head in the mouth of Sam Fraser and the Black Widgie?" he added, with extraordinary bitterness.

"Alan," cried I, "they're all rogues and liars, an I'm with ye there. Too more reason there should be no decent man in such a land of thieves. My word is passed, and I'll stick to it. I said long sae to your kinswoman that I would stand to my word. Do ye mind of that? the night I had Cluny fell at wars. No more I will, then. Here I stop. Prestongrange promised me my life; if he's to be rancworn, here I'll have to die."

"Aweel, aweel," said Alan.

All this time we had seen or heard no more of our pursuers. In truth we had caught them unawares; their whole party as I was to learn afterward had not yet reached the scene. What there was of them was spread among the tents toward Gullane. It was quite an affair to call them in and bring them over, as I the last was making speed. They were besides but one party of the Hielanders, a branch of Hig their cattle thieves, of several clans, no gentlemen there to the Captain, and the more they looked at Alan and me upon the beach, the less I must suppose they liked the looks of us.

Whoever had betrayed Alan, it was not the Captain; he was in the—off humor I, steering and stirring up his seamen like a man with his heart in ' s empty. Already he was near in and the boat searing alongside Alan's face had flamed crimson with the excitement of his deliverance, when our friends in the tents, seeing he was off, saw well enough that he was in two minds of it whether to stop. Do you think that I could do that, or would? No me. Firstly, mean ye I have nae gotten courage and I could nae dance and cavorsalize, because I am a man of an amazing penetration and a great knowledge of affairs?"

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