

THE COLUMBIA DEMOCRAT.

I have sworn upon the Altar of God, eternal hostility to every form of Tyranny over the Mind of Man.—Thomas Jefferson

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MISCELLANEOUS.

LEGEND OF THE BELL ROCK.

BY CAPTAIN MARRAT, R. N.

There was a grand procession through the streets of the towns of Perth and of Dundee. The holy abbots, in monks' habits, the censets were swung, flags and banners were carried by seamen, lighted tapers by penitents St. St. Antonia, the patron of those who trust to the stormy ocean, was carried in all pomp through the streets, and as the procession passed, coins of various value were thrown down by those who watched it from the windows, which as fast as thrown, were collected by little boys dressed as angels, who held silver vessels to receive the largesses. During the whole day did the pageant continue, and large was the treasure collected in the two towns. Every one gave freely, for there were few, indeed none, who, if not in their own circle, at least among their acquaintances, but had to deplore the loss of some one dear to them, or to those whom they visited, from the dangerous rock, which lay in the very track of all the vessels entering the Frith of Tay.

These processions had been arranged, in order that a sufficient sum of money might be collected to enable the authorities to put in execution a plan proposed by an adventurous and bold young seaman; in a council held for the purpose, of fixing a bell on the rock; which should be so arranged that the slightest breath of wind would cause the hammer of it to vibrate, and thus, by its rolling, warn the mariner of his danger. The money received was more than sufficient for the purpose. A meeting was then held, and it was unanimously agreed that Andrew M'Clise should be charged with the commission to go over to Amsterdam, and purchase the bell of a merchant residing there, who, as Andrew stated, had one in his possession, which, from its fine tone and size, was exactly calculated for the service to which it was to be appropriated.

Andrew M'Clise embarked with the money, and made a prosperous voyage. He had often been at Amsterdam, and had lived with the merchant, whose name was Vandermaelin, and the attention to his affairs, the dexterity, and the rapidity of the movements of Andrew M'Clise, had often elicited the warmest encomiums from Mynheer Vandermaelin; and many evenings had Andrew M'Clise passed with him, drinking in moderation their favorite meerschaum. Vandermaelin has often wished that he possessed a son like Andrew M'Clise, to whom he could leave his property, with the full assurance that it would not be scattered, but greatly increased.

Vandermaelin was a widower, he had but one daughter, who was now just arrived at an age to return from the pension to her father's house, and take upon herself the domestic duties. M'Clise had never yet seen the beautiful Katerina.

"And so, Mynheer M'Clise," said Vandermaelin, who was sitting in the warehouse on the ground floor of his tenement, you came to purchase the famous bell of Utrecht, with the intention of fixing it

upon the rock, the danger of which we have so often talked over after the work of the day has been done? I, too, have suffered from that same rock, as you well know; but still I have been fortunate. The price will be heavy; and so it ought to be, for the bell itself is of no small weight.

"We are prepared to pay it, Mynheer Vandermaelin."

"Nevertheless, in so good a cause, and for so good a purpose, you shall not be overcharged. I will say nothing of the beauty of the workmanship. You shall pay but for its value as metal the same price which the Jew Isaacs offered me for it but four months ago. I will not ask what a Jew would ask, but what a Jew would give, which makes no small difference. Have you ten thousand guilders?"

"I have, and more."

"That is my price, Mynheer M'Clise, and I wish for no more, for I, too, will contribute my share to the good work. Are you content, and is it a bargain?"

"It is; and the holy abbots will thank you on vellum, Mynheer Vandermaelin, for your generosity."

"I prefer the thanks of the bold seamen to those of the idle churchmen, but never mind, it is a bargain. Now, well go in, it is time to close the doors. We will take our pipes, and you shall make the acquaintance of my fair daughter, Katerina."

At the time of which we are speaking, M'Clise was about six and twenty years of age; he was above the middle size, elegant in person, and with a frankness and almost a nobility in his countenance, which won all who saw him.

His manners were like those of most seamen, bold, but not offensively so. His eye was piercing as an eagle's and it seemed as if his very soul spoke from it. At the very first meeting between him & the daughter of Vandermaelin, appeared to both as if their destinies were to unite them.

They loved not as others love, but with an intensity it would be impossible to portray; but they hardly exchanged a word. Again and again they met; their eyes spoke, but nothing more: The bell was put on board the vessel, the money had been paid down, and M'Clise could no longer delay. He felt as if his heart strings were severed, as he tore himself away from the land where all remained that he coveted upon earth. And Katerina, she too felt as if her existence was a blank.

As the vessel sailed from the port, she breathed short; and, when not even her white and lofty top-gallant sail could be discerned as a speck, she threw herself upon her couch and wept. M'Clise, as he sailed away, remained for hours leaning his cheek on his hand, thinking of, again and again, every lineament and feature of the peerless Katerina.

Two months passed away, during which M'Clise was busied every ebb of the tide in superintending the work on the rock. At last all was ready, and once more was to be held a gay procession; but this time it was on the water. It was on a calm and lovely summer's morn, that the abbots and the monks, attended by a large company of the authorities, started from the shore of Aberbrothwick in a long line of boats, decorated with sacred banners, and with other various flags and devices. The music floated along the water, and the solemn chants of the monks were, for once heard, where never yet they had been listened to before, or ever will again. M'Clise was at the rock, in a small vessel purposely constructed to carry the bell, and with sheers to hang it on the anvil, imbedded in the solid rock. The bell was in its place, and the abbot blessed the bell; while holy water was sprinkled on the metal, which was, for the future, to be lashed by the waves of the salt sea. The music and the chants were renewed, as they continued, the wind gradually rose, and, with the rising of the wind, the bell tolled loud and deep. The tolling of the bell was the signal for return, for it was a warning that

that the weather was about to change, and the procession pulled back to Aberbrothwick and landed in good time; for, in one hour more, and the rocky coast was again lashed by the waves, and the bell tolled loud and quick, although there was nothing near it but the sea gull that screamed with fright as he wheeled in the air, at this unusual noise upon the rock, which at the ebb, he had so often made his resting place.

M'Clise had done his work; the bell was fixed, and once more he hastened with his vessel to Amsterdam. Once more he was an inmate of Vandermaelin's house, once more in the presence of the idol of his soul. This time they spoke; this time their vows were exchanged for life and death. But Vandermaelin saw not the state of their hearts. He looked upon the young seaman as one too low, too poor, to be a match for his daughter; so he never imagined that he would have dared to love her. But he was soon undeceived; for M'Clise frankly stated his attachment, and demanded the hand of Katerina, and, at the demand, Vandermaelin's face was flushed with anger.

"Mynheer M'Clise," said he, after a pause, as if to control his feelings: when a man marries, he is bound to show that he has where withal to support his wife, to support her in that rank, and to afford her those luxuries, to which she has been accustomed in her father's house. Show me that you can, do so, and I will not refuse you the hand of Katerina.

"As yet, I have it not," replied M'Clise; "but I am young, and can work; I have money and I will gain more. Tell me what sum do you think that I should possess to warrant my demanding the hand of your daughter?"

"Produce twelve thousand guilders and she is yours," replied the merchant.

"I have but three thousand," replied M'Clise.

"Then, think no more of Katerina. It is a foolish passion, and you must forget it. And, Mynheer M'Clise, I must not have my daughter's affection tampered with. She must forget you; and that can only be effected by your not meeting her again. I wish you well, Mynheer M'Clise, but I must request your absence."

M'Clise departed from the presence of the merchant, bowed down with grief and disappointment. He contrived that a letter containing the result of his application, should be put in the hands of Katerina. But Vandermaelin was in formed of this and Katerina was sent to convent, there to remain until the departure of her lover, and Vandermaelin wrote to this correspondent at Dundee, requesting that the goods forwarded to him might not, in future, be sent by the vessel commanded by M'Clise.

Of this our young captain received information. All hope was nearly gone, still he lingered, and delayed his departure. He was no longer the active, energetic seaman, he neglected all, even his attire.

M'Clise knew in which convent his fair Katerina was immured; and often would he walk round its precincts, with the hope of seeing her, if it were but for a moment, but in vain. His vessel was now laden, and he could no longer delay. He was to sail the next morning; and once more did the unhappy young man take his usual walk to look at those walls which contained all that was dear to him. His reverie was broken by a stone falling at his feet, he took it up; there was a small piece of paper attached to it with a silken thread. He opened it; in the handwriting of Katerina he found but these two ominous words—"The Bell."

The bell! M'Clise started, for he immediately comprehended what was meant. The whole plan came like electricity through his brains. The bell was worth ten thousand guilders; that was the sum offered, and would now be given by Isaacs the Jew. He would be happy with his Katerina, and he blessed her ingenuity for devising the means. For a minute or

two he was transported, but the reaction soon took place. What was he about to attempt? Sacrilege—a treason against humanity. The bell had been blessed by the holy church, it had been purchased by holy and devout alms. It had been placed on the rock to save the lives of his brother seamen; and were he to remove it, would he not be responsible for all the lives lost? Would not the wail of the widow, and the moan of the orphan, be crying out to Heaven against him! No, no never! The crime was too horrible, and M'Clise stamped upon the paper, thinking that he was tempted by Satan in the shape of a woman, but when woman tempts man is lost. He recalled the charms of Katerina, all his repugnance was overcome, he resolved that the deed should be accomplished, and that Katerina should be gained, even if he lost his own soul.

Andrew M'Clise sailed from Amsterdam and Katerina recovered her liberty. Vandermaelin was anxious that she should marry; and many were the unsuccessful suitors for her hand. She reminded her father, that he had pledged himself, if M'Clise counted down twelve thousand guilders, that she should be his wife; and to that pledge she insisted he was bound fast. And Vandermaelin, after reasoning with and pointing out to her that twelve thousand guilders was a sum so large, that M'Clise might not procure it until his old age, even if he were fortunate, acknowledged that such was his promise, and that he would, like an honest man, abide by it, provided that M'Clise should fulfil his part of the agreement in the space of two years, after which he should delay her settlement no longer. Katerina raised her eyes to Heaven, and whispered, as she clasped her hands, "The Bell." Alas! that we should invoke Heaven when we would wish to do wrong; but mortals are blind, and none so blind as those who are impelled by passion.

It was in the summer of that year that M'Clise made his arrangements; having procured the assistance of some lawless hands, he had taken the advantage of a smooth and glassy sea and a high tide, to remove the bell to his own vessel; a work of little difficulty to him, as he had placed it there, and knew well the manner of the fastenings. He sailed away for Amsterdam and was permitted by Heaven to arrive safely with his sacrilegious freight. He did not, as before, enter the canal opposite to the house of Vandermaelin, but one that ran behind the habitation of the Jew Isaacs. At night, he went into the house, and reported to the Jew what he had for sale; and the keen gray eyes of the bent double little Israelite sparkled with delight, for he knew that his profit would be great. At midnight the bell was made fast to the crane, and safely deposited in the warehouse of the Jew, who counted out the ten thousand guilders to the enraptured M'Clise, whose thoughts were wholly upon the possession of his Katerina, and not upon the crime he had committed.

But, alas! to conceal one crime, we too often come to be guilty of many of a deeper hue; and thus it was with Andrew M'Clise. The people who had assisted him, upon the promise of a thousand guilders being divided among them, now murmured at their share, and insisted upon an equal division of the spoils, or threatened an immediate confession of the black deed.

M'Clise raved, and cursed; and tore his hair, and promised to give them the money as soon as he had wedded Katerina; but they would not consent. Again the devil came to his assistance, and whispered how he was to act. He yielded to their demands. The next night the division was to be made. They met in his cabin; he gave them wine, and they drank plentifully; but the wine was poisoned, and they all died before the morning. M'Clise tied weights to their bodies, and sank them in the deep canal, and broke open his hatches, to make it appear that his vessel

had been plundered. He then went to the authorities, denouncing his crew as having robbed him and escaped. Immediate search was made, but they were not to be found; and it was supposed that they had made off in a boat.

Once more M'Clise, whose conscience was seared, went to the house of Vandermaelin, counted down ten thousand guilders; and claimed his bride; and Vandermaelin, who felt that his daughter's happiness was at stake, now gave his consent.—As M'Clise stated that he was anxious to return to England, and arrange with the merchants whose goods had been plundered, in a few days their marriage took place; and Katerina clasped the murderer in her arms. All was apparent joy and revelry; but there was anguish in the heart of M'Clise, who, now that he had gained his object, felt that it had cost him too much, for his peace of mind was gone for ever. But Katerina cared not; every spark of feeling was absorbed in her passion, and the very guilt of M'Clise but rendered him more dear for her that he had done all this? M'Clise received her portion, and hastened to sail away; for the bodies were still in the canal, and he trembled every hour lest his crime should be discovered.—When Vandermaelin bade farewell to his daughter, he knew not why, but there was a feeling he could not suppress, that they never should meet again.

"Down—down below, Katerina; this is no place for you," cried M'Clise, as he stood at the helm of the vessel. "Down, dearest, down, or you will be washed overboard.—Every sea threatens to pour into our decks; already have we lost two men. Down, Katerina! down I tell you."

"I fear not; let me remain with you."

"I tell you down," cried M'Clise in wrath; Katerina cast upon him a reproachful look, and obeyed.

The storm was at its height; the sun had set; black and monstrous billows chased each other and the dismayed vessel was hurled on toward the land. The wind howled, and whistled sharply through each chink in the bulwarks of the vessel. For three days had they fought with the gale, but in vain. Now, if it continued, all chance was over, for the shore was on their lee, distant not many miles.

Nothing could save them, but gaining the mouth of the Frith of Tay, which would enable them to bear up for Dundee. There was a boiling surge, a dark night, warring sea, and their masts were floating far away. M'Clise stood at the helm, keeping the vessel broadside to the sea; his heart was full of bitterness, for his guilty conscience bore him down, and he looked for death, yet he dreaded it; for was he not a sacrilegious murderer, and is there not an avenging God above?

Once more Katerina appeared on deck, clinging for support to Andrew.

"I cannot stay below. Tell me, will it soon be over?"

"Yes," replied M'Clise, gloomily; "it will soon be over with all of us."

"How mean you? You told me there was no danger."

"I told you falsely. There is death soon, and damnation afterwards for you I hate lost my soul!"

"Oh say not so!"

"I say it. Leave me woman, leave me or I curse thee."

"Curse me, Andrew! Oh no! Kiss me Andrew; and if we are to perish, let us expire in each other's arms."

"'Tis as well; you have dragged me to perdition. Leave me, I say, for you have my bitter curse."

Thus was his guilty love turned to hate, now that death was staring him in the face.

Katerina made no reply. She threw herself on the deck, and abandoned herself to her feeling of bitter anguish. And as she lay there, and M'Clise stood at the helm, the rain abated, the vessel was no longer borne down as before, although the