Stories by English Authors: Ireland

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THE GRIDIRON

BY SAMUEL LOVER

A certain old gentleman in the west of Ireland, whose love of the ridiculous quite equalled his taste for claret and fox−hunting, was wont, upon festive occasions, when opportunity offered, to amuse his friends by DRAWING OUT one of his servants, exceedingly fond of what he termed, his “thravels,” and in whom a good deal of whim, some queer stories, and, perhaps more than all, long and faithful services had established a right of loquacity. He was one of those few trusty and privileged domestics who, if his master unheedingly uttered a rash thing in a fit of passion, would venture to set him right. If the squire said, “I'll turn that rascal off,” my friend Pat would say, “Throth you won't, sir;” and Pat was always right, for if any altercation arose upon the “subject−matter in hand,” he was sure to throw in some good reason, either from former services—general good conduct—or the delinquent's “wife and children,” that always turned the scale.

But I am digressing. On such merry meetings as I have alluded to, the master, after making certain “approaches,” as a military man would say, as the preparatory steps in laying siege to some extravaganza of his servant, might, perchance, assail Pat thus: “By the by, Sir John” (addressing a distinguished guest), “Pat has a very curious story, which something you told me to−day reminds me of. You remember, Pat” (turning to the man, evidently pleased at the notice thus paid to himself)—“you remember that queer adventure you had in France?”

“Throth I do, sir,” grins forth Pat.

“What!” exclaims Sir John, in feigned surprise, “was Pat ever in France?”

“Indeed he was,” cries mine host; and Pat adds, “Ay, and farther, plase your honour.”

“I assure you, Sir John,” continues mine host, “Pat told me a story once that surprised me very much, respecting the ignorance of the French.”

“Indeed!” rejoined the baronet; “really, I always supposed the French to be a most accomplished people.”

“Throth, then, they're not, sir,” interrupts Pat.

“Oh, by no means,” adds mine host, shaking his head emphatically.

“I believe, Pat, 'twas when you were crossing the Atlantic?” says the master, turning to Pat with a seductive air, and leading into the “full and true account” (for Pat had thought fit to visit North Amerikay, for “a raison he had,” in the autumn of the year ninety−eight).

“Yes, sir,” says Pat, “the broad Atlantic”—a favourite phrase of his, which he gave with a brogue as broad, almost, as the Atlantic itself.

“It was the time I was lost in crassin' the broad Atlantic, a−comin' home,” began Pat, decoyed into the recital; “whin the winds began to blow, and the saw to rowl, that you'd think the Colleen Dhas (that was her name) would not have a mast left but what would rowl out of her.

“Well, sure enough, the masts went by the hoard, at last, and the pumps were choked (divil choke them for that same), and av coorse the wather gained an us; and, throth, to be filled with wather is neither good for man or baste; and she was sinkin' fast, settlin' down, as the sailors call it; and, faith, I never was good at settlin' down in my life, and I liked it then less nor ever. Accordingly we prepared for the worst, and put out the boot, and got a sack o' bishkits and a cask o' pork and a kag o' wather and a thrifle o' rum aboord, and any other little matthers we could think iv in the mortial hurry we wor in—and, faith, there was no time to be lost, for, my darlint, the Colleen Dhas went down like a lump o' lead afore we wor many sthrokes o' the oar away from her.

“Well, we dhrifted away all that night, and next mornin' we put up a blanket an the end av a pole as well as we could, and then we sailed illegant; for we darn't show a stitch o' canvas the night before, bekase it was blowin' like bloody murther, savin' your presence, and sure it's the wondher of the worid we worn't swally'd alive by the ragin' sae.

“Well, away we wint, for more nor a week, and nothin' before our two good−lookin' eyes but the canophy iv heaven and the wide ocean—the broad Atlantic; not a thing was to be seen but the sae and the sky; and though the sae and the sky is mighty purty things in themselves, throth, they're no great things when you've nothin' else to

look at for a week together; and the barest rock in the world, so it was land, would be more welkim. And then, soon enough, throth, our provisions began to run low, the bishkits and the wather and the rum—throth, THAT was gone first of all—God help uz!—and oh! it was thin that starvation began to stare us in the face. 'O murther, murther, Captain darlint,' says I, 'I wish we could land anywhere,' says I.

"'More power to your elbow, Paddy, my boy,' says he, 'for sitch a good wish, and, throth, it's myself wishes the same.'

"'Och,' says I, 'that it may plase you, sweet queen iv heaven, supposing it was only a DISSOLUTE island,' says I, 'inhabited wid Turks, sure they wouldn't be such bad Chrishthans as to refuse us a bit and a sup.'

"'Whisht, whisht, Paddy,' says the captain, 'don't be talking bad of any one,' says he; 'you don't know how soon you may want a good word put in for yourself, if you should be called to quarthers in th' other world all of a suddint," says he.

"'Thrue for you, Captain darlint,' says I—I called him darlint, and made free with him, you see, bekase disthress makes us all equal—'thrue for you, Captain jewel—God betune uz and harm, I own no man any spite'—and, throth, that was only thruth. Well, the last bishkit was sarved out, and, by gor, the WATHER ITSELF was all gone at last, and we passed the night mighty cowld. Well, at the brake o' day the sun riz most beautifully out o' the waves, that was as bright as silver and as clear as chrystal. But it was only the more cruel upon us, for we wor beginnin' to feel TERRIBLE hungry; when all at wanst I thought I spied the land. By gor, I thought I felt my heart up in my throat in a minit, and 'Thunder an' turf, Captain,' says I, 'look to leeward,' says I.

"'What for?' says he.

"'I think I see the land,' says I.

"So hes ups with his bring−'em−near (that's what the sailors call a spy−glass, sir), and looks out, and, sure enough, it was.

"'Hurrah!' says he, 'we're all right now; pull away, my boys,' says he.

"'Take care you're not mistaken,' says I; 'maybe it's only a fog−bank, Captain darlint,' says I.

"'Oh no,' says he; 'it's the land in airnest.'

"'Oh, then, whereaboats in the wide world are we, Captain?' says I; 'maybe it id be in ROOSIA, or PROOSIA, the Garmant Oceant,' says I.

"'Tut, you fool,' says he, for he had that consaited way wid him, thinkin' himself cleverer nor any one else—'tut, you fool,' says he, 'that's FRANCE,' says he.

"'Tare an ouns,' says I, 'do you tell me so? and how do you know it's France it is, Captain dear?' says I.

"'Bekase this is the Bay o' Bishky we're in now,' says he.

"'Throth, I was thinkin' so myself,' says I, 'by the rowl it has; for I often heerd av it in regard of that same; and, throth, the likes av it I never seen before nor since, and, with the help of God, never will.'

"Well, with that, my heart began to grow light; and when I seen my life was safe, I began to grow twice hungrier nor ever; so says I, 'Captain jewel, I wish we had a gridiron.'

"'Why, then,' says he, 'thunder an' turf,' says he, 'what puts a gridiron into your head?'

"'Bekase I'm starvin' with the hunger,' says I.

"'And, sure, bad luck to you,' says he, 'you couldn't eat a gridiron,' says he, 'barrin' you were a PELICAN O' THE WILDHERNESS,' says he.

"'Ate a gridiron!' says I. 'Och, in throth, I'm not such a gommoch all out as that, anyhow. But, sure, if we had a gridiron we could dress a beefstake,' says I.

"'Arrah! but where's the beefstake?' says he.

"'Sure, couldn't we cut a slice aff the pork?' says I.

"'By gor, I never thought o' that,' says the captain. 'You're a clever fellow, Paddy,' says he, laughin'.

"'Oh, there's many a true word said in joke,' says I.

"'Thrue for you, Paddy,' says he.

"'Well, then,' says I, 'if you put me ashore there beyant (for we were nearin' the land all the time), 'and, sure, I can ax them for to lind me the loan of a gridiron,' says I.

"'Oh, by gor, the butther's comin' out o' the stirabout in airnest now,' says he; 'you gommoch,' says he, 'sure I told you before that's France—and, sure, they're all furriners there,' says the captain.

"'Well, says I, 'and how do you know but I'm as good a furriner myself as any o' thim?'

"'What do you mane?' says he.

"'I mane,' says I, 'what I towld you, that I'm as good a furriner myself as any o thim.'

"'Make me sinsible,' says he.

"'By dad, maybe that's more nor me, or greater nor me, could do,' says I; and we all began to laugh at him, for I thought I would pay him off for his bit o' consait about the Garmant Oceant.

"'Lave off your humbuggin',' says he, 'I bid you, and tell me what it is you mane at all at all.'

"'Parly voo frongsay?' says I.

"'Oh, your humble sarvant,' says he; 'why, by gor, you're a scholar, Paddy.'

"'Thruth, you may say that,' says I.

"'Why, you're a clever fellow, Paddy,' says the captain, jeerin' like.

"'You're not the first that said that,' says I, 'whether you joke or no.'

"'Oh, but I'm in airnest,' says the captain; 'and do you tell me, Paddy,' says he, 'that you spake Frinch?'

"'Parly voo frongsay?' says I.

"'By gor, that bangs Banagher, and all the world knows Banagher bangs the divil. I never met the likes o' you, Paddy,' says he. 'Pull away, boys, and put Paddy ashore, and maybe we won't get a good bellyful before long.'

"So, with that, it wos no sooner said nor done. They pulled away, and got close into shore in less than no time, and run the boat up in a little creek; and a beautiful creek it was, with a lovely white sthrand—an illegant place for ladies to bathe in the summer; and out I got; and it's stiff enough in the limbs I was, afther bein' cramped up in the boat, and perished with the cowld and hunger; but I conthrived to scramble on, one way or t' other, tow'rd a little bit iv a wood that was close to the shore, and the smoke curlin' out iv it, quite timptin' like.

"'By the powdhers o' war, I'm all right,' says I; 'there's a house there.' And, sure enough, there was, and a parcel of men, women, and childher, ating their dinner round a table, quite convanient. And so I wint up to the door, and I thought I'd be very civil to them, as I heerd the Frinch was always mighty p'lite intirely, and I thought I'd show them I knew what good manners was.

"So I took aff my hat, and, making a low bow, says I, 'God save all here,' says I.

"Well, to be sure, they all stapt ating at wanst, and began to stare at me, and, faith, they almost looked me out of countenance; and I thought to myself, it was not good manners at all, more betoken from furriners which they call so mighty p'lite. But I never minded that, in regard o' wantin' the gridiron; and so says I, 'I beg your pardon,' says I, 'for the liberty I take, but it's only bein' in disthress in regard of ating,' says I, 'that I made bowld to throuble yez, and if you could lind me the loan of a gridiron,' says I, 'I'd be intirely obleeged to ye.'

"By gor, they all stared at me twice worse nor before, and with that, says I (knowing what was in their minds), 'Indeed, it's thrue for you,' says I. 'I'm tatthered to pieces, and God knows I look quare enough; but it's by raison of the storm,' says I, 'which dhruv us ashore here below, and we're all starvin',' says I.

"So then they began to look at each other again; and myself seeing at once dirty thoughts was in their heads, and that they tuk me for a poor beggar coming to crave charity, with that says I, 'Oh, not at all,' says I, 'by no manes—we have plenty of mate ourselves there below, and we'll dhress it,' says I, 'if you would be plased to lind us the loan of a gridiron,' says I, makin' a low bow.

"Well, sir, with that, throth, they stared at me twice worse nor ever, and, faith, I began to think that maybe the captain was wrong, and that it was not France at all at all; and so says I, 'I beg pardon, sir,' says I to a fine ould man, with a head of hair as white as silver; 'maybe I'm under a mistake,' says I, 'but I thought I was in France, sir; aren't you furriners?' says I. 'Parly voo frongsay?'

"'We, munseer,' says he.

"'Then would you lind me the loan of a gridiron,' says I, 'if you plase?'

"Oh, it was thin that they stared at me as if I had seven heads; and, faith, myself began to feel flushed like and onaisy; and so says I, makin' a bow and scrape ag'in, 'I know it's a liberty I take, sir,' says I, 'but it's only in the regard of bein' cast away; and if you plase, sir,' says I, 'parly voo frongsay?'

"'We, munseer,' says he, mighty sharp.

"'Then would you lind me the loan of a gridiron?' says I, 'and you'll obleege me.'

"Well, sir, the ould chap began to munseer me; but the divil a bit of a gridiron he'd gi' me; and so I began to think they wor all neygars, for all their fine manners; and, throth, my blood begun to rise, and says I, 'By my sowl, if it was you was in disthress,' says I, 'and if it was to ould Ireland you kem, it's not only the gridiron they'd give

you, if you axed it, but something to put an it, too, and the drop o' dhrink into the bargain, and cead mile failte.'

"Well, the word cead mile failte seemed to sthreck his heart, and the ould chap cocked his ear, and so I thought I'd give him another offer, and make him sinsible at last; and so says I, wanst more, quite slow, that he might understand, 'Parly—voo—frongsay, munseer?'

"'We, munseer,' says he.

"'Then lind me the loan of a gridiron,' says I, 'and bad scram to you.'

"Well, bad win to the bit of it he'd gi' me, and the ould chap begins bowin' and scrapin', and said something or other about a long tongs.

[Footnote: Some mystification of Paddy's touching the French n'tends.]

"'Phoo!—the divil swape yourself and your tongs,' says I; 'I don't want a tongs at all at all; but can't you listen to raison?' says I. 'Parly voo frongsay?'

"'We, munseer.'

"'Then lind me the loan of a gridiron,' says I, 'and howld your prate.'

"Well, what would you think, but he shook his old noddle as much as to say he wouldn't; and so says I, 'Bad cess to the likes o' that I ever seen! Throth, if you wor in my counthry, it's not that away they'd use you. The curse o' the crows an you, you ould sinner,' says I; 'the divil a longer i'll darken your door.'

"So he seen I was vexed; and I thought, as I was turnin' away, I seen him begin to relint, and that his conscience throubled him; and says I, turnin' back, 'Well, I'll give you one chance more, you ould thief. Are you a Chrishthan at all? Are you a furriner,' says I,' that all the world calls so p'lite? Bad luck to you, do you understand your own language? Parly voo frongsay?' says I.

"'We, munseer,' says he.

"'Then, thunder an' turf,' says I, 'will you lind me the loan of a gridiron?'

"Well, sir, the divil resa've the bit of it he'd gi' me; and so, with that, 'The curse o' the hungry an you, you ould neygarly villain,' says I; 'the back o' my hand and the sowl o' my foot to you, that you may want a gridiron yourself yit,' says I. And with that I left them there, sir, and kem away; and, in throth, it's often sense that I thought that it was remarkable."

THE EMERGENCY MEN

BY GEORGE H. JESSOP

The fourth morning after his arrival in Dublin, Mr. Harold Hayes, of New York, entered the breakfast−room of the Shelbourne Hotel in a very bad humour. He was sick of the city, of the people, and of his own company. Before leaving London he had written to his friend, Jack Connolly, that he was coming to Ireland, and he had expected to find a reply at the Shelbourne. For three days he had waited in vain, and it was partly, at least, on Jack's account that Mr. Hayes was in Ireland at all. When Jack sailed from New York he had bound Harold by a solemn promise to spend a few weeks at Lisnahoe on his next visit to Europe. Miss Connelly, who had accompanied her brother on his American tour, had echoed and indorsed the invitation.

Harold had naturally expected to find at the hotel a letter urging him to take the first train for the south. He had seen a great deal of the Connellys during their stay in the United States, and Jack and he had become firm friends. He had crossed at this unusual season mainly on Jack's account—on Jack's account and his sister's; so it was little wonder if the young man considered himself ill used. He felt that he had been lured across the Irish Channel—across the Atlantic Ocean itself—on false pretences.

But in a moment the cloud lifted from his brow, a quick smile stirred under his yellow moustache, and his eyes brightened, for a waiter handed him a letter. It lay, address uppermost, on the salver, and bore the Ballydoon postmark, and the handwriting was the disjointed scrawl which he had often ridiculed, but now welcomed as Jack Connolly's.

This is what Hayes read as he sipped his coffee:

LISNAHOE, December 23d.

MY DEAR HAROLD: Home I come from Ballinasloe yesterday, and find your letter, the best part of a week old, kicking about among the bills and notices of meets that make the biggest end of my correspondence. You must be destroyed entirely, my poor fellow, if you've been three days in dear dirty Dublin, and you not knowing a soul in it. Come down at once, and you'll find a hearty welcome here if you won't find much else. I don't see why you couldn't have come anyhow, without waiting to write; but you were always so confoundedly ceremonious. We're rather at sixes and sevens, for the governor's got “in howlts” with his tenants and we're boycotted. It's not bad fun when you're used to it, but a trifle inconvenient in certain small ways. Let me know what train you take and I'll meet you at the station. You must be here for Christmas Day anyhow. Polly sends her regards, and says she knew the letter was from you, and she came near opening it. I'm sure I wish she had, and answered it, for I'm a poor fist at a letter.

Yours truly,

JACK CONNOLLY.

The first available train carried Harold southward. On the way he read the letter again. The notion of entering a boycotted household amused and pleased him. He had never been in Ireland before, and he was quite willing that his first visit should be well spiced with the national flavour. Of course he had his views on the Irish question. Every American newspaper reader is cheerfully satisfied with the conviction that the Celtic race on its native sod has no real faults. A constitutional antipathy to rent may exist, but that is a national foible which, owing doubtless to some peculiarity of the climate, is almost praiseworthy in Ireland, though elsewhere regarded as hardly respectable. At any rate, with the consciousness that he was about to come face to face with the much−talked−of boycott, Harold's spirits rose, and as he read Polly Connolly's message they rose still higher. He was a lively young fellow, and fond of excitement. And at one time, as he recalled with a smile and a sigh, he had been almost fond of Polly Connolly.

When he alighted at the station—a small place in Tipperary—the dusk of the early winter evening was closing in, and Harold recollected that his prompt departure from Dublin had prevented him from apprising Jack of his movements. Of course there would be no trap from Lisnahoe to meet this train, but that mattered little. Half a dozen hack−drivers were already extolling the merits of their various conveyances, and imploring his patronage.

Selecting the best−looking car, he swung himself into his seat, while the “jarvey” hoisted his portmanteau on the other side.

“Where to, yer honour?” inquired the latter, climbing to his place.

“To Lisnahoe House,” answered Hayes.

“Where?”

This question was asked with a vehemence that startled the young American.

“Lisnahoe. Don't you know the way?” he replied.

“In troth an' I do. Is it Connolly's?”

“Yes,” answered Harold. “Drive on, my good fellow; it's growing late.”

The man's only answer was to spring from his seat and seize Harold's portmanteau, which he deposited on the road with no gentle hand.

“What do you mean?” cried the young man, indignantly.

“I mane that ye'd betther come down out o' that afore I make ye.”

Harold was on the ground in a moment and approached the man with clinched fists and flashing eyes.

“How dare you, you scoundrel! Will you drive me to Lisnahoe or will you not?”

“The divil a fut,” answered the fellow, sullenly.

Hayes controlled his anger by an effort. There was nothing to be gained by a row with the man. He turned to another driver.

“Pick up that portmanteau. Drive me out to Mr. Connolly's. I'll pay double fare.”

But they all with one consent, like the guests in the parable, began to make excuse. One man's horse was lame, another's car was broken down; the services of a third had been “bespoke.” Few were as frank as the man first engaged, but all were prompt with the obvious lies, scarcely less aggravating than actual rudeness. The station−master appeared, and attempted to use his influence in the traveller's behalf, but he effected nothing.

“You'll have to walk, sir,” said the official, civilly. “I'll keep your portmanteau here till Mr. Connolly sends for it.” And he carried the luggage back into the station.

“How far is it to Mr. Connolly's?” Harold inquired of a ragged urchin who had strolled up with several companions.

“Fish an' find out,” answered the youngster, with a grin.

“We'll tache them to be sendin' Emergency men down here,” said another.

The New−Yorker was fast losing patience.

“This is Irish hospitality and native courtesy,” he remarked, bitterly. “Will any one tell me the road I am to follow?”

“Folly yer nose,” a voice shouted; and there was a general laugh, in the midst of which the station−master reappeared.

He pointed out the way, and Harold trudged off to accomplish, as best he might, five Irish miles over miry highways and byways through the darkness of the December evening.

This was the young American's first practical experience of boycotting.

It was nearly seven o'clock when, tired and mud−bespattered, he reached Lisnahoe; but the warmth of his reception there went far to banish all recollection of the discomforts of his solitary tramp. A hearty hand−clasp from Jack, a frank and smiling greeting from Polly (she looked handsomer than ever, Harold thought, with her lustrous black hair and soft, dark−gray eyes), put him at his ease at once. Then came introductions to the rest of the family. Mr. Connolly, stout and white−haired, bade him welcome in a voice which owned more than a touch of Tipperary brogue. Mrs. Connolly, florid and good−humoured, was very solicitous for his comfort. The children confused him at first. There were so many of them, of all sizes, that Hayes abandoned for the present any attempt to distinguish them by name. There was a tall lad of twenty or thereabouts,—a faithful copy of his elder brother Jack,—who was addressed as Dick, and a pretty, fair−haired girl of seventeen, whom, as Polly's sister, Harold was prepared to like at once. She was Agnes. After these came a long array,—no less than nine more,—ending with a sturdy little chap of three, whom Polly presently picked up and carried off to bed. Mr. Connolly, of Lisnahoe, could boast of a full quiver.

There was a general chorus of laughter as Harold related his experience at the railway−station. The Connollys had rested for several days under the ban of the most rigid boycott, and had become used to small discomforts.

They faced the situation bravely, and turned all such petty troubles into jest; but the American was sorely disquieted to learn that there was only one servant in the house—an old man who for many years had blacked boots and cleaned knives for the family, and who had refused to crouch to heel under the lash of the boycott.

Harold stammered an apology for his unseasonable visit, but Jack cut him short.

“Nonsense, man; the more the merrier. We're glad to have you, and if you can rough it a bit you won't find it half bad fun.”

“Oh, I don't mind, I'm sure,” said Harold; “only I'm afraid you'd rather have your house to yourselves at such a time as this.”

“Not we. Why, we expect some Emergency men down here in a few days. We'll treat you as the advance guard; we'll set you to work and give you your grub the same as an Emergency man.”

“What is an Emergency man?” inquired Harold. “Those Chesterfieldian drivers at the station seemed to think it was the worst name they could call me.”

A hearty laugh went round the circle.

“If they took ye for an Emergency man, it's small wonder they were none too swate on ye,” observed Mr. Connolly.

“But what does it mean?” asked the New−Yorker.

“Well,” began the old gentleman, “there's good and bad in this world of ours. When tenants kick and labourers clare out, an' a boycott's put on a man, they'd lave yer cattle to die an' yer crops to rot for all they care. It's what they want. Well, there happens to be a few dacent people left in Ireland yet, and they have got up an organization they call the Emergency men; they go to any part of the country and help out people that have been boycotted through no fault of their own—plough their fields or reap their oats or dig their potatoes, an' generally knock the legs out from under the boycott. It stands to reason that the blackguards in these parts hate an Emergency man as the divil hates holy water; but ye may take it as a compliment that ye were mistook for one, for all that.”

Here Dick thrust his head into the door of the large library, in which the party was assembled.

“Dinner is served, my lords and ladies,” he cried; and there was a general movement toward the dining−room.

“No ceremony here, my boy,” laughed Jack, as he led Harold across the hall. “I'll be your cavalier and show you the way. The girls are in the kitchen, I suppose.”

But Miss Connolly and Agnes were already in the dining−room, and the party gathered round the well−spread board and proceeded to do full justice to the good things thereon. The meal was more like a picnic than a set dinner. Old Peter Dwyer, the last remaining retainer, had never attended at table, so he confined himself to kitchen duties, while the young Connollys waited on themselves and on each other. A certain little maid, whom Harold by this time had identified as Bella, devoted herself to the stranger, and took care that neither his glass nor his plate should be empty. A glance of approval, which he intercepted on its way from Miss Connolly to her little sister, told Harold that Bella had been given a charge concerning him, and he appreciated the attention none the less on that account, while he ate his dinner with the agreeable confidence that it had been prepared by Miss Polly's own fair hands.

Everything at table was abundant and good of its kind, and conversation was alert and merry, as it is apt to be in a large family party. So far, the boycott seemed to have anything but a depressing effect, though Harold could not help smiling as he realised how it would have crushed to powder more than one estimable family of his acquaintance.

After dinner Jack rose, saying that he must go round to the stables and bed down the horses for the night. Harold accompanied him, and acquitted himself very well with a pitchfork, considering that he had little experience with such an implement. he had gone with a couple of the younger boys to chop turnips for certain cattle which were being fattened for the market.

“How did you come to be boycotted?” inquired Harold, with some curiosity, as soon as he found himself alone with Jack.

“Oh, it doesn't take much talent to accomplish that nowadays,” answered the young Irishman, with a laugh. “In the first place, the governor has a habit of asking for his rent, which is an unpopular proceeding at the best of times. In the second place, I bought half a dozen bullocks from a boycotted farmer out Limerick way.”

“And is that all?” asked Harold, in astonishment. Notwithstanding his regard for his friend, he had never doubted that there must have been some appalling piece of persecution to justify this determined ostracism.

“All!” echoed Jack, laughing. “You don't know much of Ireland, my boy, or you wouldn't ask that question. We bought cattle that had been raised by a farmer on land from which a defaulting tenant had been evicted. Men have been shot in these parts for less than that.”

“Pleasant state of affairs,” remarked the New−Yorker.

“I don't much care,” Jack went on, lightly. “We're promised a couple of Emergency men from Ulster in a few days, and that will take the weight of the work off our hands. It isn't as if it were a busy time. No crops to be saved in winter, you see, and no farm work except stall−feeding the cattle. That can't wait.”

“But your sisters—all the work of that big house—“ began Harold, who was thinking of Polly.

“We expect two Protestant girls down from Belfast to−morrow. That'll be all right. We get all our grub from Dublin,—they won't sell us anything in Ballydoon,—and we mean to keep on doing so, boycott or no boycott. We have been about the best customers to the shopkeepers round here, and it'll come near ruining the town—and serve them right,” the young man added, with the first touch of bitterness he had displayed in speaking of the persecution of his family.

By next day the situation had improved. A couple of servant−girls arrived from the north. They were expected, and accordingly Dick was on hand with the jaunting−car to meet them and drive them from the station. The Emergency men had not yet appeared, so Jack and such of his brothers as were old enough to be of use were kept pretty busy round the place. Harold had wished to return to England and postpone his visit till a more convenient time, but to this no one would listen. He made no trouble; he was not a bit in the way; in fact, he was a great help. So said they all, and the young New−Yorker was quite willing to believe them.

He did occasionally offer assistance in stable or farm−yard, but he much preferred to spend his time rambling over the old place, admiring the lawns, the woods, the gardens, all strangely silent and deserted now. Miss Connolly was often his companion. The importation from Belfast relieved her of some of the pressure of household cares, and since her brothers were fully occupied, it devolved upon her to play host as well as hostess, and point out to the stranger the various charms of Lisnahoe.

This suited Harold exactly. He usually carried a gun and sometimes shot a rabbit or a wood−pigeon, but generally he was content to listen to Polly's lively conversation, and gaze into the depths of her eyes, wondering why they looked darker and softer here under the shadow of her native woods than they had ever seemed in the glare and dazzle of a New York ball−room. Harold Hayes was falling in love—falling consciously, yet without a struggle. He was beginning to realise that life could have nothing better in store for him than this tall, graceful girl, in her becoming sealskin cap and jacket, whose little feet, so stoutly and serviceably shod, kept pace with his own over so many miles of pleasant rambles.

One day—it was the last of the old year—Miss Connolly and Harold were strolling along a path on which the wintry sunshine was tracing fantastic patterns as it streamed through the naked branches of the giant beech−trees. The young man had a gun on his shoulder, but he was paying little attention to the nimble rabbits that now and then frisked across the road. He was thinking, and thinking deeply.

He could not hope for many more such quiet walks with his fair companion. She would soon have more efficient chaperons than the children, who often made a pretence of accompanying them, but invariably dashed off, disdainful of the sober pace of their elders. Before long—next day probably—he would be handed over to the tender mercies of Jack, who had constantly lamented the occupations that prevented his paying proper attention to his guest. The heir of Lisnahoe had promised to show the young stranger some “real good sport” as soon as other duties would permit. That time was close at hand now. The Emergency men had been at work for several days; they were thoroughly at home in their duties; besides, the fat cattle would be finished very shortly and sent off to be sold in Dublin. Jack had announced his intention of stealing a holiday on the morrow, and taking Hayes to a certain famous “snipe bottom,” when the game was, to use Dick's expression, “as thick as plums in one of Polly's puddings.”

It was hard to guess then they might have such another rumble, and Harold had much to say to the girl at his side; and yet, for the life of him, he could not utter the words that were trembling on his lips.

“I don't believe you care much for shooting, Mr. Hayes.”

A rabbit loped slowly across die road not twenty yards from the gun, but Harold had not noticed it. He roused himself with a start, however, at the sound of his companion's voice.

“Oh yes, I do, sometimes,” he answered, glancing alertly to both sides of the road; but no game was in sight

for the moment.

"If this frost should break up, you may have some hunting," pursued Miss Connolly. "I'm afraid you're having an awfully stupid time."

Harold interposed an eager denial.

"Oh yes, you must be," insisted the young lady; "but Jack will find more time now, and if we have a thaw you will have a day with the hounds. Are you fond of hunting?"

"I am very fond of riding, but I have never hunted," answered the New−Yorker.

"Just like me. I am never so happy as when I am on horseback, but mamma won't let me ride to hounds. She says she does not approve of ladies on the field. It is traditional, I suppose, that every mistress of Lisnahoe should oppose hunting."

"Indeed, why so?" inquired Harold.

"Why, don't you know?" asked the girl. "Has nobody told you our family ghost−story?"

"No one as yet," answered Hayes.

"Then mine be the pleasing task; and there is a peculiar fitness in your hearing it just now, for to−morrow will be New−Year's Day."

Harold failed to see the applicability of the date, but he made no observation, and Miss Connolly went on.

"Ever so many years ago this place belonged to an ancestor of mine who was devoted to field−sports of all kinds. He lived for nothing else, people thought, but suddenly he surprised all the world by getting married."

Harold thought that if her remote grandmother had chanced to resemble the fair young girl at his side, there was a good excuse for the sportsman; but he held his tongue.

"The bride was exacting—or perhaps she was only timid. At any rate, she used her influence to wean her husband from his outdoor pursuits—especially hunting. He must have been very much in love with her, for she succeeded, and he promised to give it all up—after one day more. It seems that he could not get out of this last run. The meet was on the lawn; the hunt breakfast was to be at Lisnahoe House. In short, it was an affair that could neither be altered nor postponed.

"This meet," continued Polly, "was on New−Year's Day. There was a great gathering, and after breakfast the gentlemen came out and mounted at the door; the hounds were grouped on the lawn; it must have been a beautiful sight."

"It must, indeed," assented Harold.

"Well, this old Mr. Connolly—but you must understand that he was not old at all, only all this happened so long ago—he mounted his horse, and his wife came out on the step to bid him good−bye, and to remind him of his promise that this should be his last hunt. And so it was, poor fellow; for while she was standing talking to him, a gust of wind came and blew part of her dress right into the horse's face. Mr. Connolly was riding a very spirited animal. It reared up and fell back on him, killing him on the spot."

"How horrible!" exclaimed Harold.

"Wait! The shock to the young wife was so great that she died the next day."

"The poor girl!"

"Don't waste your sympathy. It was all very long ago, and perhaps it never happened at all. However, the curious part of the story is to come. Every one that had been present at that meet—men, dogs, horses—everything died within the year."

"To the ruin of the local insurance companies?" remarked Harold, with a smile.

"You needn't laugh. They did. And next New−Year's night, between twelve and one o'clock, the whole hunt passed through the place, and they have kept on doing it every New−Year's night since."

"A most interesting and elaborate ghost−story," said Harold. "Pray, Miss Connolly, may I ask if you yourself have seen the phantom hunt?"

"No one has ever done that," replied Polly, "but when there is moonlight they say the shadows can be seen passing over the grass, and any New−Year's night you may hear the huntsman's horn."

"I should like amazingly to hear it," replied the young man. "Have you ever heard this horn?"

"I have heard A horn," the girl answered, with some reluctance.

"On New−Year's night between twelve and one?" he pursued.

"Of course—but I can't swear it was blown by a ghost. My brothers or some one may have been playing

tricks. You can sit up to−night and listen for yourself if you want."

"Nothing I should like better," exclaimed Harold. "Will you sit up too?"

"Oh yes. We always wait to see the Old Year out and the New Year in. Come, Mr. Hayes, it's almost luncheon−time," she added, glancing at her watch; and they turned back toward the house, which was just visible through the leafless trees.

Harold walked at her side in silence. He had heard a ghost−story, but the words he had hoped to speak that day were still unuttered.

Loud were the pleadings, when the little ones' bedtime came, that they might be allowed to sit up to see the Old Year die; but Mrs. Connolly was inexorable. The very young ones were sent off to bed at their usual hour.

Cards and music passed the time pleasantly till the clock was almost on the stroke of twelve. Then wine was brought in, and healths were drunk, and warm, cheerful wishes were uttered, invoking all the blessings that the New Year might have in store. Hands were clasped and kisses were exchanged. Harold would willingly have been included in this last ceremony, but that might not be. However, he could and did press Polly's hand very warmly, and the earnestness of the wishes he breathed in her ear called a bright colour to her cheek. Then came good−night, and the young American's heart grew strangely soft when he found himself included in Mrs. Connolly's motherly blessing. He thought he had never seen a happier, a more united family.

The party was breaking up; some had retired; others were standing, bedroom candlesticks in their hands, exchanging a last word, when suddenly, out of the silence of the night, the melodious notes of a huntsman's horn echoed through the room. Harold recalled the legend, and paused at the door, mute and wondering.

Jack and his father exchanged glances.

"Now which of you's tryin' to humbug us this year?" asked the old man, laughing, while Jack looked round and proceeded, as he said, to "count noses."

This was a useless attempt, for half the party that had sat up to wait for the New Year had already disappeared.

Dick sprang to the window and threw it open, but the night was cloudy and dark.

Again came the notes of the horn, floating in through the open window, and almost at the same moment there was a sound of hoofs crunching the gravel of the drive as a dozen or more animals swept past at wild gallop.

"This is past a joke," cried Jack. "I never heard of the old hunt materializing in any such way as this."

They rushed to the front door—Jack, Mr. Connolly, all of them. Harold reached it first. Wrenching it open, he stood on the step, while the others crowded about him and peered out into the night. Only darkness, rendered mirker by the lights in the hall; and from the distance, fainter now, came the measured beat of the galloping hoofs.

No other sound? Yes, a long−drawn, quivering, piteous sigh; and as their eyes grew more accustomed to the night, out of the darkness something white shaped itself—something prone and helpless, lying on the gravel beneath the lowest step. They did not stop to speculate as to what it might be. With a single impulse, Jack and Harold sprang down, and between them they carried back into the hall the inanimate body of Polly Connolly.

Her eyes were closed and her face was as white as the muslin dress she wore. Clutched in her right hand was a hunting−horn belonging to Dick. It was evident that the girl had stolen out unobserved to reproduce—perhaps for the visitor's benefit—the legendary notes of the phantom huntsman. This was a favorite joke among the young Connollys, and scarcely a New−Year's night passed that it was not practised by one or other of the large family; but what had occurred to−night? Whence came those galloping hoofs, and what was the explanation of Polly's condition?

The swoon quickly yielded to the usual remedies, but even when she revived it was some time before the girl could speak intelligibly. Her voice was broken by hysterical sobs; she trembled in every limb. It was evident that her nerves had received a severe shock.

While the others were occupied with Polly, Dick had stepped out on the gravel sweep, where he was endeavouring, by close examination, to discover some clue to the puzzle. Suddenly he ran back into the house.

"Something's on fire!" he cried. "I believe it's the yard."

They all pressed to the open door—all except Mrs. Connolly, who still busied herself with her daughter, and Harold, whose sole interest was centred in the girl he loved.

Above a fringe of shrubbery which masked the farm−yard, a red glow lit up the sky. It was evident the buildings were on fire. And even while they looked a man, half dressed, panting, smoke−stained, dashed up the steps. It was Tom Neil, one of the Emergency men.

These men slept in the yard, in the quarters vacated by the deserting coachman. In a few breathless words the big, raw−boned Ulsterman told the story of the last half−hour.

He and his comrade Fergus had been awakened by suspicious sounds in the yard. Descending, they had found the cattle−shed in flames. Neil had forced his way in and had liberated and driven out the terrified bullocks. The poor animals, wild with terror, had burst from the yard and galloped off in the direction of the house. This accounted for the trampling hoofs that had swept across the lawn, but scarcely for Polly's terrified condition. A country−bred girl like Miss Connolly would not lose her wits over the spectacle of a dozen fat oxen broken loose from their stalls. Had the barn purposely burned, and had the girl fallen in with the retreating incendiaries?

It seemed likely. No one there doubted the origin of the fire, and Mr. Connolly expressed the general feeling as he shook his head and murmered:

“I mistrusted that they wouldn't let us get them cattle out o' the country without some trouble.”

“But where is Fergus?” demanded Jack, suddenly.

“Isn't he here?” asked the Ulsterman. “When we seen the fire he started up to the big house to give the alarm, while I turned to to save the bullocks.”

“No, he never came to the house,” answered Jack, and there was an added gravity in his manner as he turned to his brother.

“Get a lantern, Dick. This thing must be looked into at once.”

While the boy went in search of a light, Mr. Connolly attempted to obtain from his daughter a connected statement of what had happened and how much she had seen; but she was in no condition to answer questions. The poor girl could only sob and moan and cover her face with her hands, while convulsive tremblings shook her slight figure.

“Oh, don't ask me, papa; don't speak to me about it. It was dreadful—dreadful. I saw it all.”

This was all they could gain from her.

“Don't thrubble the poor young lady,” interposed old Peter, compassionately. “Sure, the heart's put acrass in her wid the fright. Lave her be till mornin'.”

There seemed nothing else to be done, so Polly was left in charge of her mother and sister, while the men, headed by Dick, who carried a lantern, set out to examine the grounds.

There was no trace of Fergus between the house and the farm−yard. The lawn was much cut up by the cattle, for the frost had turned to rain early in the evening, and a rapid thaw was in progress. The ground was quite soft on the surface, and it was carefully scrutinised for traces of footsteps, but nothing could be distinguished among the hoof−prints of the bullocks.

In the yard all was quiet. The fire had died down; the roof of the cattle−shed had fallen in and smothered the last embers. The barn was a ruin, but no other damage had been done, and there were no signs of the missing man.

They turned back, this time making a wider circle. Almost under the kitchen window grew a dense thicket of laurel and other evergreen shrubs. Dick stooped and let the light of the lantern penetrate beneath the overhanging branches.

There, within three steps of the house, lay Fergus, pale and blood−stained, with a sickening dent in his temple—a murdered man.

Old Peter Dwyer was the first to break the silence: “The Lord be good to him! They've done for him this time, an' no mistake.”

The lifeless body was lifted gently and borne toward the house. Harold hastened in advance to make sure that none of the ladies were astir to be shocked by the grisly sight. The hall was deserted. Doubtless Polly's condition demanded all their attention.

“The girl saw him murdered,” muttered Mr. Connolly. “I thought it must have been something out of the common to upset her so.”

“D' ye think did she, sir?” asked old Peter, eagerly.

“I havnen't a doubt of it,” replied the old gentlemen shortly. “Thank goodness, her evidence will hang the villain, whoever he may be.” “Ah, the poor thing, the poor thing!” murmured the servant, and then the sad procession entered the house.

The body was laid on a table. It would have been useless to send for a surgeon. There was not one to be found within several miles, and it was but too evident that life was extinct. The top of the man's head was beaten to a

pulp. He had been clubbed to death.

“If it costs me every shilling I have in the world, and my life to the boot of it,” said Mr. Connolly, “I'll see the ruffians that did the deed swing for their night's work.”

“Amin,” assented Peter, solemnly; and Jack's handsome face darkened as he mentally recorded an oath of vengeance.

“There'll be little sleep for this house to−night,” resumed the old gentleman after a pause. “I'm goin' to look round and see if the doors are locked, an' then take a look at Polly. An', Peter.”

“Sir!”

“The first light in the mornin'—it's only a few hours off,” he added, with a glance at his watch —“you run over to the police station, and give notice of what's happened.”

“I will, yer honour.”

“Come upstairs with me, boys. I want to talk with you. Good−night, Mr. Hayes. This has been a blackguard business, but there's no reason you should lose your rest for it.”

Mr. Connolly left the room, resting his arms on the shoulders of his two sons. Harold glanced at the motionless figure of the murdered man, and followed. He did not seek his bedroom, however; he knew it would be idle to think of sleep. He entered the smoking−room, lit a cigar, and threw himself into a chair to wait for morning.

All his ideas as to the Irish question had been changing insensibly during his visit to Lisnahoe. This night's work had revolutionised them. He saw the agrarian feud—not as he had been wont to read of it, glozed over by the New York papers. He saw it as it was—in all its naked, brutal horror.

He had observed that there had been no attempt on the Connollys to appeal to neighbours for sympathy in this time of trouble, and he had asked Jack the reason. Jack's answer had been brief and pregnant.

“Where's the good? We're boycotted.”

And that dead man lying on the table outside was only an example of boycotting carried to its logical conclusion.

The sound of a door closing softly aroused Harold from his reverie. A little postern leading from the servants' quarters opened close to the smoking−room window. Harold looked out, and, as the night had grown clearer, he distinctly saw old Pete Dwyer making his way with elaborate caution down the shrubery path.

“Going to the police station, I suppose,” mused Hayes. “Well, he has started betimes.”

Then he resumed his seat and thought of Polly.

What a shock for her, poor girl, to leave a happy home with her heart full of innocent mirth, only to encounter murder lurking red−handed at the very threshold!

“I wish I had spoken to her to−day,” he muttered. “Goodness alone knows when I shall find a chance now. I wonder how she is?”

He realised that he could see nothing of her till breakfast time at any rate—if, indeed, she would be strong enough to appear at that meal. He had been sitting in the dark; he now threw aside his cigar, and, drawing his chair closer to the window, set himself resolutely to watch for the dawn and solace his vigil with dreams of Polly.

A raw, chill air blew into the room. He noticed that a pane of glass was broken. One of the children had thrown a ball through it a few days before, and in the present situation of the Connolly household a glazier was an unattainable luxury.

Harold rose with the intention of moving his chair out of the draught, but as he did so the sound of whispered words, seemingly at his very ear, made him pause. The voices came from the shrubbery below the window, and in one of them he recognised the unmistakable brogue of old Peter Dwyer.

Had the man been to the police station and returned with the constables so quickly? This was Harold's first thought, but he dismissed it as soon as formed. Peter had been barely half an hour absent, and the station was several miles off. Where had he been, then, and with whom was he conversing? Harold bent his head close to the broken pane and listened.

“Are ye sure sartin that the young woman seen us?” inquired a rough voice—not Peter's—“because this is goin' to be an ugly job, an' there's no call for us to tackle it widout needcessity?”

“Sartin as stalks,” whispered the old servant. “She was all of a thrimble, as if she'd met a sperrit an' all the words she had was 'I seen it—I seen it all,' an' she yowlin' like a banshee.”

“It's quare we didn't take notice to her, for she must ha' been powerful close to see us such a night. I thought I heerd the horn, too, an' I lavin' the yard.”

She wint out to blow it,” whispered Peter. “Most like it was stuck in the shrubbery she was.”

“Come on thin,” growled the other; “it's got to be done, an' the byes is all here. Ye left the little dure beyant on the latch?”

“I did that,” responded old Peter; and then a low, soft whistle sounded in the darkness. It was a signal.

Rapidly but cautiously Harold Hayes left the window and stole across the room. He understood it all. Polly had seen the murder and had recognised the assassins. Old Dwyer was a traitor. He had slipped out and warned the ruffians of the peril in which they stood, and now they were here to seal their own safety by another crime —by the sacrifice of a life far dearer to Harold than his own.

Swiftly, silently, he sped down the gloomy passage. The lives of all beneath that roof were hanging on his speed. Breathless he reached the little door, and flung himself against it with all his weight while his trembling fingers groped in the darkness for bolt or bar.

A heavy hand was laid on the latch, and the door was tried from without.

“How's this, Peter?” inquired the rough voice. “I thought ye said it wasn't locked.”

“No more it is; it's only stiff it is, bad cess to it. Push hard, yer sowl ye.”

But at this moment Harold's hand encountered the bolt. With a sigh of relief he shot it into the socket, and then, searching farther, he supplemented the defences with a massive bar, which, he knew, ought always to be in place at night.

Then he sped back along the passage, while muttered curses reached his ears from without, and the door was shaken furiously.

“Jack, Jack,” he panted, as he flung open the door of the room in which the young men slept—“Jack, come down and—”

He stopped abruptly. Mr. Connolly was kneeling at the bedside, and his two sons knelt to the right and left of him.

There were no family prayers at Lisnahoe; only the ladies were regular church−goers; but that it was a religious household no one could have doubted who knew the events of the night and saw the old man on his knees between his boys.

They rose at the noise of Harold's entrance, and the American, who felt that there were no moments to be wasted on apologies, announced his errand.

“Old Peter Dwyer is a traitor! He has gone out and brought the murderers to finish the work they have commenced.”

And then, in eager, breathless words, he told them how he had heard the conversation in the shrubbery, and how the men, apprehensive that Miss Connolly could identify them, had returned to stifle her testimony.

“They were right there,” said the old man. “She saw the first blow, and it was struck by Red Mike Driscoll.”

“Then she is better?” asked Harold, eagerly.

The boys were at the other end of the room, slipping cartridges loaded with small shot into the fowling−pieces they had snatched from the walls.

“Oh yes,” replied Mr. Connolly; “she is all right now.”

A sound of heavy blows echoed through the house. The men below had convinced themselves that the door was firmly fastened, and, desperate from the conviction that they were identified, and relying on the loneliness of the place, they were attacking the barrier with a pickaxe.

“I'll soon put a stop to that,” cried Jack; and cocking his gun, he left the room.

Dick was about to follow, but his father stopped him.

There's no one in front of the house yet,” said the old gentleman. “Slip out quietly, my boy, and make a dash for it to the police station. You've taken the cup for the two−mile race at Trinity. Let's see how quick you can be when you are running for all our lives.”

“I'll go down and fasten the door after him,” volunteered Hayes, and the old man nodded. Outside, on the landing, they could hear the blows of the pickaxe more distinctly. Suddenly, above the clangour, rang out close and sharp the two reports of Jack's double−barrel. He had selected a window commanding the attack, and had fired point−blank down into the group of men.

Shrieks and groans and curses testified to the accuracy of the young man's aim, and the sound of blows ceased. Harold and Dick ran rapidly downstairs. The latter unbarred the front door.

“Don't you run a fearful risk if you are seen?” inquired the American.

“Of course I do,” returned the brave lad, without a tremor in his voice; “but somebody's got to take the chance; we can't defend the house forever; and I wouldn't miss this opportunity of nabbing the whole gang for a thousand pounds.”

He opened the door and sped out into the night. He was out of sight in a moment, and, as far as Harold could judge, he had not been observed. Again the blows of the pickaxe rang out from the rear of the house.

Hayes closed the door and replaced the heavy bar. Then he turned to remount the stairs, and met Polly, who was standing near the top with a candle in her hand.

She was quite composed now, but very pale. He tried to ask if she had recovered, but she cut him short impatiently.

“There is nothing the matter with me. What is the meaning of all this uproar and—and the firing?”

For at this moment the twin reports of Jack's breech−loader again echoed through the house, this time it was answered by a fusilade from below.

There was nothing to be gained by concealment, and Harold told her the whole story in a few words.

“How prompt and clever of you!” she said; “You have saved all our lives.”

Her praise was very sweet to him, but there was no time to enjoy it now.

“Where are you going?” she asked, as he turned again to spring up the stairs.

I am going to my room for my revolver,” he answered. “I may have use for it before this is over.”

“Do,” she replied. “I will wait for you here.” Haves hurried on.

Jack was in the guest's room. The young Irishman had selected that window, as it commanded the little door against which the brunt of the attack had hitherto been directed. Every pane was shattered, and walls and ceiling showed the effect of the volley that had been directed against him, but the young fellow stood his ground uninjured. “Don't mind me,” he said, in answer to Harold's inquiry. “I'm all right, and can hold this fort til morning if they don't get ladders. I fancy I've sickened them of trying that door below.”

Harold hastily grasped his revolver and went His idea was to stand in the passage near the smoking−room, and defend the place should the door give way; for he did not believe that timber had ever been grown to withstand such blows.

Mrs. Connolly put her head out of the nursery door as he passed. Her husband had told her of the position of affairs.

“Is that you, Mr. Hayes?” she whispered. “Is Jack hurt?”

“Jack is quite safe,” answered the young American. “Are the children very much frightened?”

“Not as long as I am with them,” the old lady answered. “And Dick—what of him?”

“Dick is all right too,” replied Harold. He could not tell the poor woman that her boy was out in the open country without a wall between him and the ruffians.

Mrs. Connolly drew back into the nursery to take the post assigned her—assuredly not the easiest on that terrible night—to listen to the doubtful sounds from without, and to support, by her own constancy, the courage of her children.

Harold found Miss Connolly in the hall where he had left her.

“What do you intend to do?” she asked.

“I was going to stand inside the door they have been hammering at,” he answered, “in case they should break it in.”

“Papa is there,” said the girl; “perhaps you had better wait here. They will try the front door next”

“Very good,” he assented; and then added, with a sudden apprehension, “but the windows. There are so many of them. How can we watch them all?”

“There are bars to all the lower windows,” she replied, “and I do not think they know where to find ladders. No; their next attempt will be at the hall door, and it will be harder to repel than anywhere else, for the portico will protect them from shots from the windows.”

“And now, Miss Connolly,” urged Harold, “you can do no good here. Had not you better go upstairs out of the way?”

“No, no; I would rather wait here,” she answered. “Don't be afraid. I sha'n't give way again as I did to−night. I don't know what came over me, but it was all so horrible—so unexpected—“ She broke off with a little shuddering sigh.

“You saw them attack him?” asked Harold.

She nodded. “I was under that big cedar outside the parlor window. I had hidden there to blow the horn. Suddenly I saw Fergus with a lantern in his hand coming full speed toward the house. Just as he got within a few paces of me, half a dozen men burst out from the laurels. Oh, how savagely they struck at him! He was down in a moment. It was all so close to me: I recognised Red Mike by the light of poor Fergus's lantern.”

“And then?” asked Hayes.

“I don't think I remember any more. I must have staggered on to the house, for they tell me I was found at the foot of the steps, but I don't know how I got there. I was terribly frightened, but I sha'n't do it again—not if they blow the roof off,” she said, trying to smile.

“I should think they would be afraid to persevere now that they are discovered,” observed Harold. “This firing must alarm the neighbourhood.”

“In a lonely place like this!” said the girl. “No, no, Mr. Hayes; there are not many to hear these shots, and none that would not sooner fight against us than on our side. We must depend on ourselves. But oh,” she wailed, her woman's heart betraying itself through the mechanical calm she had maintained so long, “oh, I am sorry that your friendship for us should have brought you into such peril—to think that your visit here may cost you your life,” and she broke off and covered her streaming eyes with her hands.

“Indeed, indeed,” said Harold, earnestly, “I think any danger I may run a small price to pay for the privilege of knowing you, and, and—of loving you.”

It was out at last; the words that had been so difficult to say came trippingly from his tongue now, and she did not repulse nor attempt to licence him.

There, in the dimly lighted, lofty hall, he poured out all that had been in his heart since he had known her, and won from her in return a whisper that emboldened him to draw the yielding form toward him and press his lips to hers.

With a pealing crash the pickaxe bit into the stout oaken door, and the young lovers sprang apart, terrified at this rude interruption of dreams. Blow followed blow, and the massive woodwork shivered and splintered and swayed under the savage impulse from without.

The assailants had abandoned their attempt on the postern; they had ignored the kitchen door, within which stout Tom Neil with Dick's double−barrel stood on guard; they had turned their attention to the main entrance, where a projecting portico partially sheltered them from the galling discharges of Jack's favourite “Rigby.”

They were only partially sheltered, however. The heir of Lisnahoe had quickly shifted his ground when the attack on the postern was abandoned, and he now stood in another room, ready, with the quickness of a practised snipe−shot, to fire on any arm or hand or foot which showed even for an instant outside the shadow of the portico.

Crash, crash, crash! Again and again the steel fangs of the pick ate their way through the solid timber. The lock yielded quickly, but, heavily barred at top and bottom, the good door resisted staunchly. Polly had glided away from Harold's side. He fancied that she had sought a place of safety, and rejoiced thereat; but in a moment she reappeared. She carried a shot−gun in her hands, and when she reached his side she rested the butt on the ground and leaned on the weapon.

“I have often fired at things,” she said, simply. “Why shouldn't I now?”

Mr. Connolly and Jack joined them in the hall, and Neil had come up from the kitchen door. The main entrance was evidently the weak point, and the whole garrison must be on hand to defend it. The assailants had waxed cautious of late, and for some time had allowed the sharp−shooter no chance. He thought that he would be of more service below; but, as it proved, when he abandoned his post he committed a fatal error.

Apparently the enemy had discovered that the galling fire from above had ceased. Perhaps some of their number had ventured out and returned scatheless. They speedily took advantage of this immunity. While the attacks with the pickaxe were not relaxed for a moment, a score of men had brought the trunk of a young larch from the saw−pit at the back of the house. Poised by forty strong arms, this improvised battering−ram was hurled against the front door, carrying it clear off its hinges. In the naked entry a crowd of rough men jostled one another, as they sprang forward with hoarse imprecations on their prey. The garrison was vanquished at last.

Not yet. Four shots rang out as one, instantly repeated as the defenders discharged their second barrels into the very teeth of the advancing mob. Then Mr. Connolly, Neil, and Jack clubbed the guns they had no time to reload, and prepared to sell their lives dearly in a hand−to−hand struggle. Polly, as soon as she had fired, dropped her weapon, and in an instant Harold had swept her behind him, and stood, revolver in hand, his breast her bulwark, confronting the mob.

But the mob, withered by the volley, hesitated a moment. The vestibule was streaming with blood, and shrieking, writhing victims strove in vain to rise. It was a sickening sight, but there was the electricity of anger in the air and no one faltered long. On they came again with undiminished fury.

But again the rush was checked. Sharp and vengeful rang out the close reports of the American revolver, and at each echo a man fell. Less noisy, less terrific, but far more deadly, the six−shooter took up the work where the breech−loaders had left it; and Harold, covering with his body the girl he loved, fired as steadily as if practising in a pistol gallery, and made every shot tell.

He had not used his weapon in the first rush; somewhere or other, young Hayes had heard of the advantages of platoon firing.

The lights had been extinguished and day was just breaking. Firing from the obscurity into the growing light, the garrison had the best of the position; but there were firearms among the assailants too, and the balls whistled through the long hall and buried themselves in the panelling.

But this could not last. Much as they had suffered in the assault, the assailants were too numerous to be longer held at bay. With a feeling of despair, Harold recognised the futile click that followed his pressure on the trigger and told him that he had fired his last cartridge.

With a wild yell the assailants rushed forward. Not a shot met them; nothing stood between them and their vengeance but four pale, determined men, weaponless but unflinching.

A quick trampling as of a body of horse was heard on the gravel without. A sharp, stern order reached the ears even of those in the house.

“Unsling carbines! Make ready! Present!”

Clubs and blunderbusses dropped from nerveless hands as the advancing mob paused, faltered, and then surged backward through the doorway. The lust of vengeance gave way to the instinct of self−preservation, and the rioters scattered in flight.

Dick's gallant race against time had not been fruitless. A squadron of constabulary had reached the ground at the critical moment, and Lisnahoe was saved.

Few of the assailants escaped—every avenue was guarded by mounted policemen; and the gang which had long terrorised the neighbourhood—whose teachings and example had done so much to convert the sullen discontent of the peasantry into overt violence—was effectually broken up. From that night the boycott on the Connolly household was raised.

Red Mike Driscoll expiated on the gallows the murder of the Emergency man Fergus, and nearly a score of others were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment for assault and housebreaking.

The attacking party had lost three men killed, besides many wounded, more or less severely, by the shot−guns. The judicial inquiry into the casualties brought out details of the defence which struck terror to the hearts of the country people. It was not likely that Lisnahoe would be molested again.

Harold Hayes and Polly Connolly were married shortly after Easter. They are living in New York now, in a pleasant flat overlooking Central Park. They entertain a good deal, and Irish affairs are sometimes discussed at Mr. Hayes's table; but so far he has failed to convince any of his American friends that there may be more than one side to the agrarian question in Ireland.

“Nonsense,” remarked one gentleman, who professed to be deeply read in the subject; “they are an oppressed and suffering people. Let them have their land.”

“And what is to become of the landlords?” inquired Polly, with a wistful remembrance of her girlhood's beautiful home.

But to this question there has been no reply, and none has been offered yet.

A LOST RECRUIT

BY JANE BARLOW

When Mick Doherty heard that there was to be route−marching next day in the neighbourhood of Kilmacrone, he determined upon going off for a long “stravade” coastward over the bog, where there were no roads worth mentioning, and no risks of an encounter with the military. In this he acted differently from all his neighbours, most of whom, upon learning the news, began to speculate and plan how they might see and hear as much as possible of their unwonted visitors. Opinions were chiefly divided as to whether the Murghadeen cross−roads would be the best station to take up, or the fork of the lane at Berrisbawn House. People who, for one reason or another, could not go so far afield, consoled themselves by reflecting that the band, at any rate, would be likely to come through the village, and would no doubt strike up a tune while passing, as it had done a couple of years ago, the last time the redcoats had appeared in Kilmacrone. And, och, but that was the grand playin' intirely! It done your heart good just to be hearin' the sound of it, bedad it did so. Old Mrs. Geoghegan said it was liker the sort of thunder−storms they might be apt to have in heaven above than aught else she could think of, might goodness forgive her for sayin' such a thing; and Molly Joyce said she'd as lief as not have sat down and cried when't was passed beyond her listenin', it went that delightful thumpety−thump, wid the tune flyin' up over it.

The military authorities at Fortbrack were not ignorant of this popular sentiment, and had considered it in the order of that day. For experience had shown that a progress of troops through the surrounding country districts generally conduced to the appearance before the recruiting officer of sundry long−limbed, loose−jointed Pats, Micks, and Joes; and a recent scarcity of this raw material made it seem expedient to bring such an influence to bear upon the new ground of remote Kilmacrone. Certain brigades and squadrons were accordingly directed to move thitherward, under the general idea that an invading force from the southeast had occupied Ballybeg Allan, while in pursuance of another general idea, really more to the purpose, though not officially announced, the accompanying band received instructions to be liberal and lively in its performances by the way.

All along their route through the wide brown land the soldiers might be sure of drawing as much sympathetic attention as that lonesome west country could concentrate on any given line. Probably there would be no one disposed, like Mick Doherty, to get out of the way, unless some very small child roared and ran, if of a size to have acquired the latter accomplishment, at the sound of the booming drums. To the great majority of these onlookers the spectacle would be a rare and gorgeous pageant, a memory resplendent across twilight−hued time−tracts as a vision of scarlet and golden gleams, and proudly pacing horses, and music that made you feel you had never known how much life there was in you all the while. Some toll, it is true, had to be paid for this enjoyment. When it had passed by things suddenly grew very flat and colourless, and there was a tendency to feel more or less vaguely aggrieved because you could not go a−soldiering yourself. In cases, however, where circumstances rendered that obviously impossible, as when people were too old or infirm, or were women or girls, this thrill of discontent, seldom very acute, soon subsided, by virtue of the self−preserving instinct which forbids us to persist in knocking our heads hard against our stone walls. But it was different where the beholder was so situated that he could imagine himself riding or striding after the rapturous march−music to fields of peril and valour and glory, without diminishing the vividness of the picture by simultaneously supposing himself some quite other person. The gleam in young Felix M'Guinness's eyes, as he watched the red files dwindle and twinkle out of sight, was to the brightening up beneath his grandfather's shaggy brows as the forked flash is to the shimmering sheet−lightnings, that are but a harmless reflection from far−off storms. And there, indeed, pleasure paid a ruinous duty. If those who were liable to it did not imitate Mick Doherty's prudence and hold aloof, the reason may have been that they had not fortitude enough to turn away from excitement offered on any terms, or that their position was less desperately tantalising than his; and the latter explanation is the more probable one, since few lads in and about Kilmacrone can have had their martial aspirations baulked by an impediment so flimsy and yet so effectual.

There was nothing in the world to hinder Mick from enlisting except just the unreasonableness of his mother,

and that was an unreasonableness so unreasonable as to verge upon hat her neighbours would hare called “quare ould conthrariness.” For, though a widow woman, and therefore entitled to occupy a pathetic position, its privileges were defined by the opinion that “she was not so badly off intirely as she might ha' been.” Mick's departure need not have left her desolate, since she had another son and daughter at home, besides Essie married in the village, and Brian settled down at Murghadeen, here he was doing well, and times and again asking her to come and live with him. Then Mick would have been able to help her out of his pay much more efficaciously than he could do by his earnings at Kilmacrone, where work was slack and its wage low, so that the result of a lad's daily labour sometimes seemed mainly the putting of a fine edge on a superfluous appetite. All these points were most clearly seen by Mick in the light of a fiercely burning desire; but that availed him nothing unless he could set them as plainly before some one else who was not thus illuminated. And not far from two years back he had resolved that he would attempt to do so no more.

The soldiers had been about in the district on the day before, scattered like poppy beds over the bog, and signalling and firing till the misty October air tingled with excitement. When you have lived your life among wide−bounded solitudes, where the silence is oftenest broken by the plover's pipe or the croak of some heavily flapping bird, you will know the meaning of a bugle−call. Mick and his contemporaries had acted as camp−followers from early till late with ever intensifying ardour; one outcome whereof was that he heard his especial crony, Paddy Joyce, definitely decide to go and enlist at Fortbrack next Monday, which gave a turn more to the pinching screw of his own banned wish. It was with a concerted scheme for ascertaining whether there were any chance of bringing his mother round to a rational view of the matter that he and his friend dropped into her cabin next morning on the way to carry up a load of turf. Mrs. Doherty was washing her couple of blue−checked aprons in an old brown butter−crock, and Mick thought he had introduced the subject rather happily when he told her “she had a right to be takin' her hands out of the suds, and dippin' the finest curtsey she could conthrive, and she wid the Commander−in−Gineral of the Army Forces steppin' in to pay her a visit.” Of course this statement required, as it was intended to require, elucidation, so Mick proceeded to announce: “It's himself's off to Fortbrack a−Monday, 'listin' he'll be in the Edenderry Light Infantry; so the next time we set eyes on him it's blazin' along the street we'll see him, like the boys we had here yisterday.”

“Ah! sure now, that'll be grand,” said Mrs. Doherty, unwarily complaisant; “we'll all be proud to behold him that way. 'T is a fine thing far any young man who's got a fancy to take up wid it.”

“Och, then, bedad it is so!” said Mick, with emphasis, promptly making for the opening given to him.

“Bedad it is,” said Paddy.

“There's nothin' like it,” said Mick.

“Ah, nothin' at all,” said Paddy.

Mrs. Doherty made no remark as she twisted a dripping apron into a sausage−shaped roll to wring the water out.

“How much was it you were sayin' you'd have in the week, Paddy, just to put in your pocket for your divarsion like?” inquired Mick, with a convenient lapse of memory.

“Och, seven or eight shillin's anyway,” said Paddy, in the tone of one to whom shillings had already become trivial coins; “and that, mind you, after you've ped for the best of aitin' and dhrinkin', and your kit free, and no call to be spendin' another penny unless you plase. Sure, Long Murphy was tellin' me he was up in the town awhile ago, on a day when they were just after gettin' their pay, and he said the Post−Office was that thick wid the soldier lads sendin' home the money to their friends, he couldn't get speech of a clerk to buy his stamp be no manner of manes, not if he'd wrecked the place. 'T was the Sidmouth Fusileers was in at that time; they're off to Limerick now.”

“But that's a grand regulation they have,” said Mick, “wid the short service nowadays. Where's the hardship in it when a man can quit at the ind of three year, if he's so plased? Three year's no time to speak of.”

“Sure, not at all; you'd scarce notice it passin' by. Like Barney Bralligan's song that finished before it begun—isn't that the way of it, ma'am?”

“It's a goodish len'th of a while,” said Mrs. Doherty.

“But thin there's the lave; don't be forgettin' the lave, Paddy man. Supposin' we—”

“Tub be sure, there's the lave. Why, it's skytin' home on lave they do be most continial. And the Edenderrys is movin' no farther than just to Athlone; that's as handy a place as you could get.”

“You'd not thravel from this to Athlone in the inside of a week, if it was iver so handy,” said Mrs. Doherty.

“Is it a week? Och! blathershins, Mrs. Doherty, ma'am, you're mistook intirely. Sure, onst you've stepped into the town yonder, the train'll take you there in a flash. And the trains do be oncommon convenient.”

“Free passes!” prompted Mick.

“Ay, bedad, and free passes they'll give to any souldier takin' his furlough; so sorra the expense 't would be supposin' Mick here had a notion to slip home of an odd day and see you.”

“MICK!” said Mrs. Doherty.

“Och well, I was just supposin'. But I'm tould” —the many remarkable facts which Paddy had been tould lost nothing in repetition—“that they'll sometimes have out a special train for a man in the army, if he wants to go anywhere partic'lar in a hurry; there's iligance for you. And as for promotion, it's that plinty you'll scarce git time to remimber your rank from one day to the next, whether it's a full private you are, or a lance−corporal, or maybe somethin' greater. Troth, there's nothin' a man mayn't rise to. And then, Mrs. Doherty, it's the proud woman you'd be—ANYBODY'D be—that they hadn't stood in the way of it. And pensions—he might be pensioned off wid as much as a couple of shillin's a day.”

“Not this long while yet, plase the pigs,” broke out Mick, squaring his shoulders, as if Time were a visible antagonist, and momentarily forgetting the matter immediately in hand. “But there's chances in it—splendid—och, it's somethin' you may call livin'.”

“And,” said his friend, “the rations, I'm tould, is surprisin' these times. The top of everythin' that's to be got, uncooked, widout bone.”

Paddy and Mick discoursed for a good while in this strain about the dignities and amenities of a military life, and Mrs. Doherty had not much to say on the subject. During the conversation, however, she continued to rinse one of her aprons, and wring it dry very carefully, and drop it back into the water, like a machine slightly out of gear, which goes on repeating some process ineffectually. The two friends read in her silence an omen of acquiescent conviction, and congratulated each other upon it with furtive nods and winks. Mick went off to the bog in high feather, believing that the interview had been a great success, and that his mother was, as Paddy put it, “comin' round to the notion gradual, like an ould goat grazin' round its tetherin' stump.” His hopes, indeed, were so completely in the ascendant that he summed up his most serious uneasiness when he said to himself: “She'll do right enough, no fear, or I'd niver think of it, if Thady was just somethin' steadier. But sure he might happen to git a thrifle more wit yet; he's no great age to spake of.”

But when he came home about sunsetting, his mother was feeding her few hens outside their cabin, the end one of a mossy−roofed row, with its door turned at right angles to the others, looking out across the purple brown of the bog−land to the far−off hills, faint, like a blue mist with a waved pattern in it, against the horizon. Mick, brought up short by the group, woke out of his walking dream, in which he had been performing acts of valour to the tune of the “Soldier's Chorus” in Gounod's Faust, the last thing the band had played yesterday; and he noticed a diminution in the select circle of fowls, who crooned and crawked and pecked round the broken dish of scraps.

“I see the specklety pullet's after strayin' on you agin,” he said; “herself's the conthrary little bein'; I must take a look about for her prisintly.”

“Ah, sure she's sold,” said his mother; “it's too many I had altogether. I was torminted thryin' to git feedin' for them. So I sold her this mornin' to Mrs. Dunne at Loughmore, that gave me a fine price for her. 'Deed she'd have took her off of me this while back, on'y I'd just a sort of notion agin' partin' from the crathur. But be comin' in to your supper, child alive; it's ready waitin' this good while. Molly's below at her sister's, and I dunno were Thady's off to, so there's on'y you and me in it to−night.”

In the room the more familiar odour of turf−smoke was overborne by a crisp smell of baking, and Mrs. Doherty picked up a steaming plate which had been keeping warm on the hearth. “Isn't that somethin' like, now?” she said, setting it on the table triumphantly. “Rale grand they turned out this time, niver a scorch on the whole of them. I was afeard me hand might maybe ha' got out o' mixin' them,'t is so long since I had e'er a one for you; but sure I bought a half−stone of seconds wid the price of the little hin, and that'll make a good few, so it will, jewel avic, and then we must see after some more. Take one of the thick bits, honey.”

Probably most of us have had experience of the unceremonious methods which Fate often chooses when communicating to us important arrangements. We have seen by what a little seeming triviality of an incident she may intimate that our cherished hope has been struck dead, or that the execution of some other decree has turned

the current of our life away. It is sometimes as if she contemptuously sent us a grotesque and dwarfish messenger, who makes grimaces at us while telling us the bad news, which is ungenerous and scarcely dignified. So we need not wonder if Mick Doherty had to read the death−warrant of his darling ambition in a pile of three−cornered griddle−cakes. At any rate, he did read it there swiftly as clearly. Most likely he knew it all before the plate was set on the table, and his heart had already gone down with a run when he replied to his mother's commendations that they looked first−rate. As he indorsed this praise with what appetite he could, being, indeed, mechanically hungry, the uppermost thought in his mind was how he should at once let his mother understand that she had got the price she hoped for her pet hen; and after considering for a while, he said: “Did you ever notice the quare sort of lane−over the turf−stack out there's takin' on it? I question hadn't we done righter to have took a leveller bit of ground for under it. But I was thinkin' this mornin'”—of what a different subject he had been thinking!—“that next year I'd thry buildin' it agin' the back o' th' ould shed, where there does be ne'er a slant at all.”

“Ay, sure that 'ud be grand,” said Mrs. Doherty, much more elated than if she had heard of a large fortune; “you couldn't find an iliganter place for it in the width of this world.” She felt quite satisfied that her craftily timed treat had dispelled the dreaded danger, which actually was the case in a way. But if Mick would stay at home with her, she was perfectly content to suppose that she came after a griddle−cake in his estimation. Her relief made her unusually talkative; but Mick was reflecting between his answers how he must now tell Paddy Joyce that they were never to be comrades after all.

He went out on this mission immediately after supper. The sun had gone down, and the cold clearness left showed things plainly, yet was not light. In front of the cabin−rows the small children of the place were screeching over their final romp and quarrel, as they did every evening; fowls and goats and pigs were settling down for the night with the squawks and bleats and squeals which also took place every evening; on the brown−hollowed grass−bank between Colgan's and O'Reilly's, old Morissy, the blind fiddler, was feebly scraping and twangling, according to his custom every evening, and, for that matter, all day long. Even the wisps of straw and scraps of paper blowing down the middle of the wide roadway seemed to have whirled over and over and caught in the rough patches of stone just so, as often as the sun had set. Close to the Joyces', Mick met Peter Maclean driving home a brood of ducklings. A broad and burly man, who says “shoo−shoo” to a high−piping cluster of tiny yellow ducks, and flourishes a long willow wand to keep them from straggling out of their compacted trot, does undoubtedly present rather an absurd appearance; yet I cannot explain why the sight should have seemed to prick like a sting through the wide weary disgust which Mick experienced as he stood in the twilit boreen waiting for Paddy to come out. He had scarcely a grunt to exchange for Peter's cheerful “Fine evenin'.” What does it signify in a universal desert whether evenings be fine or foul? Altogether, it was a bad time; and Mick acted wisely in taking precautions against its recurrence, especially as the obstacles which had confronted him nearly two years back were now more hope−baffling than ever. For the intervening months had not brought the desirable “thrifle more wit” to his unsteady brother Thady, who, on the contrary, was developing into one of those people whose good−for−nothingness is taken as a matter of course even by themselves; and a bolt was thus, so to speak, drawn across Mick's locked door.

He set off betimes on his long ramble. It was a cloudless July morning—the noon of summer by air and light as well as by the calendar. Even the barest tracts of the bog−land, which vary their aspect as little as may be from shifting season to season, were flecked with golden furze−blossom, and whitened with streaming tufts of fairy−cotton, and sun−warmed herbs were fragrant underfoot. Mick rather hurried over this stage of his “stravade,” partly because he foresaw a blazing hot day, and he wished to be among more broken ground, where there are sheltered hollows scooped in the “knockawns,” and cool patches under their bushes and boulders. He entered the region of these things before his shadow had shrunk to its briefest; for not so very far beyond Kilmacrone the smooth floor of the big bog crumples itself into crusts and ridges, as if it had caught the trick from its bounding ocean; and the nearer it comes to the shore the higher it heaves itself, until at last it is cut short by a sheer cliff wall, with storm−stunted brambles and furzes cowering along the edge, fathoms above a base−line of exuberant weed and foam. The long sea−frontage of this rock−rampart is fissured by only a few narrow clefts. On the left hand, facing oceanward, the coast is a labyrinth of mountain fiords, straits, and bays, where you may see great craggy shoulders and domed summits waver in their crystal calm at the flick of a gull's dipping wing, or add to the terror of the tempest as they start out black and unmoved behind rifts of swirling mists. On the right there is the same fretwork of land and water, but wrought in less high relief—a tract of lonely strands, where shells and

daisies whiten the grass, and pink−belled creepers trail, entangled with tawny−podded wrack, across the shingle. You are apt thereabouts to happen on clattering pebble−banks and curling foam when you are apparently deep among meadows and corn−land, or to come on sturdy green potato−drills round some corner where you had confidently supposed the unstable furrows of the sea. And the intricate ground−plan of the district must be long studied before you can always feel sure whether the low−shelving swarded edges by which you are walking frame salt or fresh water.

Mick was bound eventually for one of those ravines which cleave the cliffs' precipitous wall and give access to the shore, generally by a deep−sunken sandy boreen. Here, under a tall bank, there are a couple of cabins, besides another which, having lost its roof, may be reckoned as a half; so that Tullykillagin is not a large place, even as places go in its neighbourhood. He knew, however, that he could count upon getting something to eat at either of the two cabins first mentioned, and, indeed, at the bare−raftered one also, if, as often chanced, it was occupied by Tim Fottrel, the gatheremup; and this prospect served for an incentive, feeble enough, though it strengthened a little as the hours wore on. So languid, in fact, was his resolution that at one moment he thought he would just sthreel home again without going any farther; if he went aisy everybody would have cleared out of Kilmacrone before he got back. But at this time he was sitting among some broom−bushes, under which last year's withered black pods were strewn, and he determined that if there were an odd number of seeds in the first one he opened he would go on to Tullykillagin. There were nine in it, and he logically continued to loiter seaward.

He dawdled so much that when he came to the cliff the sun already hung low over the water, and as he walked along the edge his shadow stretched away far inland across the dappled pale and dark green of the furze−fretted sward. The sea unrolled a ceaseless scroll of faint wild−hyacinth colour, on which invisible breeze−wafts inscribed and erased mysterious curves and strokes like hieroglyphics. Here and there it showed deep purple stains; for a flight of little snowflake clouds were fluttering in from the Atlantic, followed at leisure by deep−folded, glistering drifts, now massed on the horizon−rim to muffle the descending sun. Yet that tide, with all its smoothness, showed a broad band of foam wherever it touched the pebbles, which lay dry before its sliding, for it was on its way in. It had nearly reached the cliff's foot in most places; but Mick presently came to a point where he looked down on a small field of very green grass, set as an oasis between the waves and the walling rock, with a miniature chaos of heaped−up boulders to left and right. A few of them were scattered over it, and even the highest of these wore a scarf of leathery flat sea−ribbon, in token of occasional submergence; but amongst them grew hawthorn and sloe bushes, and a clump of scarlet−tasselled fuchsia. To heighten the incongruity of its aspect, this pasture was inhabited by a large strawberry cow, who seemed to be enjoying the alternate mouthfuls of seaweed and woodbine, which she munched off a thickly wreathed boulder, untroubled by the fact that the meal bade fair to be her last, since the rising spring tide had already all but cut off access on either hand, and would still flow for some hours.

“Musha, now I'll be skivered,” said Mick, standing still, “if that's not Joe McEvoy's ould cow. You 'll be apt to experience a dampin', ould woman, if you don't quit out of there. Whethen, it's a quare man he is to lave the baste sthrayin' about permiscuous in the welther of the tide.”

He peered over the edge of the cliff, evidently mistrusting its smooth face; and then he threw several stones and clods at the cow, with shouts of “Hi, out of that!” and “Shoo along!” But his missiles fell short of their mark, and if his voice reached her, she treated it with the placid disregard of which her kind are mistress on such occasions, and never raised her crumple−horned head.

“Have it your own way, then,” said Mick, cynically; “it's nothin' to me if you've a mind to thry a taste of swimmin' under wather.”

He had not, however, strolled much farther when he met with somebody who was vastly more concerned about the animal's impending fate. This was old Joe McEvoy himself, who, out of the mouth of a steep, sandy boreen, sprang up suddenly, like a jack−fn−the−box−one of the shock−wigged, saturnine−complexioned pattern. But no jack−in−the−box could have looked so flurriedly distracted, or have muttered to itself such queer execrations as he did, hobbling along.

“A year's loadin' of bad luck to the whoule of thim!” he was saying with gasps when Mick approached; “there's not a one of thim but 'ud do desthruction on herself sooner than lose a chanst to be annoyin' anybody, if she could conthrive it no other way.”

“If it's th' ould cow you're cursin',” said Mick, “she's down below yonder.”

“Och, tell me somethin' I dunno, you gomeral, not but what I'm nigh as big a one meself as can be, to go thrust her wid that little imp of mischief. Bad scran to it, I must give me stiff leg a rest, and she 'll be up here blatherin' after me before you can look round, you may bet your brogues she will.”

“Gomeral yourself and save your penny,” said Mick, whose temper was not at its best after his long day of hungry discontent. “And the divil a call you have to be onaisy about the crathur follyin' you anywheres. Stayin' where she is she's apt to be, until she gets the chanst of goin' out to say wid the turn of the tide, and that's like enough to happen her.”

“And who at all was talkin' of the cow follyin'? It's ould Biddy Duggan down below that nivir has her tongue off of me, nagglin' at me for lettin' the poor crathur pick her bit along the beach, and it a strip of the finest grass in the townland, when it's above wather, just goin' to loss. A couple of pints differ extry it does be makin' in the milkin' of a day she's grazed there. But it's threatenin' dhrowndin' and disthruction over it th' ould banshee is this great while; and plased she 'll be, rale plased and sot up. Sure, that's what goes agin' me, to be so far gratifyin' her, and herself as mischevious, harm−hopin' an ould toad as iver I hated the sight of—Och, bejabers, didn't I tell you so? It's herself comin' gabble−gobblin' up.”

As he spoke, a very small, meagre, raggged old woman emerged swiftly from the lane, accompanied by one younger and stouter and less nimble of foot, her temporary neighbour, Mrs. Gatheremup. Mrs. Duggan seemed to bear out Joe's character of her; for now, like Spenser's hag Occasion, “ever as she went her tongue did walk,” and the path it took was not one of peace. “Maybe, after this happenin', some she could name might have the wit to believe what other people tould thim, who knew bitter than to be thinkin' to feed a misfortnit crathur of an ould cow on sand and sayweed as if she was a sayl or a saygull, and it a scandal to the place to behould her foostherin' along down there wid the waves' edges slitherin' up to her nose, and she sthrivin' to graze, and the slippery stones fit to break her neck.” Such was the purport of Mrs. Duggan's remarks, which were punctuated by Joe McEvoy's peremptory requests that she would lave gabbin' and givin' impidence, and his appeals to the others to inform him whether they weren't all to be pitied for havin' to put up wid the ould screech−owl's foolish talk.

“Sure, that's the way they do be keepin' it up continial, Micky lad,” Mrs. Fottrel called to him, shrilly, as if athwart gusts of high wind. “I'll pass yon me word the two of thim 'll stand at their doors of an evenin” and give bad langwidge to aich other across the breadth of the road till they have us all fairly moidhered wid the bawls of thim, and I on'y wonder the thatch doesn't take and slip down on their ould heads.”

“Belike it's lave of the likes of YOU I ought to be axin' where I'm to git grazin' for me own cattle?” a growl of sarcastic thunder was just then observing, to which flashed a scathing response: “And, bedad, then, it's lave you had a right to be axin' afore you sent off me poor son Hughey's bit of a Pat, to be wastin' his time mindin' your ould scarecrow and gettin' himself dhrownded in the tide. It's no thanks to you if the innicent child isn't as like as not lyin' this minute under six fut of could wather, instead of fetchin' me in the full of me kettle that I'm roarin' to him for this half−hour, and niver a livin' sinner widin sight or—”

“Saints above! is little Pat strayin' along wid the cow?” said Mrs. Fottrel, much aghast. “I was noticin' I didn't see him anywheres this evenin'. What's to become of him down there, and it risin' beyond the heighth of iverythin' as fast as it can flow? Sure, this mornin' 't was wallopin' itself agin' the wall, back of our place, fit to swally all before it.”

“Why didn't you tell me the child was below?” said Mick. “I'd lep down there and fetch him up aisy enough; on'y there was no mortial use goin' after the cow, for niver a crathur that took its stand on four hoofs 'ud git its own len'th up the cliff, unless it might be some little divil of a goat. And the wather's dhrowndin'−deep alongside it afore now.”

“Musha, good gracious! sure, all I done was to bid the spalpeen be keepin' an eye on her now and agin while he would be playin' about there,” said Joe; “and it's twinty chances if ivir he did at all. Trapesed off wid himself somewheres; he'll be right enough be this time. 'T is n't the likes of him to go to loss, it's the quare five−poun' note he'd fetch at Athenry fair.”

“He might ha' broke his legs climbin' disp'rit on the rocks,” said Mrs. Fottrel, unconvinced by the argument from unsaleability,” and be lyin' there now waitin' for the say−waves to wash the life out of him. Heaven pity the crathur!”

“Sure, I 'll step down and see what's gone wid him,” said Mick.

The descent of the cliff, though not riskless, was no great feat for an active youth, and Mick accomplished it

safely, but to little purpose, he thought at first, since the irreclaimable cow appeared to be the sole denizen of the shrinking beach. However, when he had shouted and scrambled for some time without result, he came abruptly upon a nook among the piled−up rocks, where a very small black−headed boy in tattered petticoats was digging the sandy floor with a razor−shell.

“Och, it's there you are,” said Mick, stepping down from a weedy ledge; “and what have you in it at all that you didn't hear me bawlin' to you?”

“Throops,” said Pat, gloatingly, almost too absorbed t o glance off his work; “it's Ballyclavvy, the way it did be in the school readin'−book at Duffclane. There's the Roossian guns” (he pointed to a row of black−mouthed mussel−shells, mounted on periwinkle carriages), “and here's the sides of the valley I'm makin'; long and narrer it was. Just step round and look at it from where I am, Micky, but don't be clumpin' your fut on the French cavalary.”

“The divil's in it all,” said Mick, with a sudden bitter vehemence, which he accounted for to himself by adding, as he pointed toward the seething white line: “D' you see where that's come to, you little bosthoon? And you sittin' grubbin' away here as if you were pitaty−diggin' a dozen mile inland.”

Pat looked in the desired direction, but misapprehended the object to be the western sky, where an overblown fiery rose seemed to have scattered all its petals broadcast. “Sure, that's on'y the sun settin' red like,” he explained, indifferently, and would have resumed his excavations if he had not been seized and hustled half−way up the cliff before he could disengage his mind from his brigades and batteries. Both heads soon bobbed up over the edge without accident; for Pat climbed like a monkey when once he had grasped the situation. His grandmother's attitude toward Joe McEvoy constrained her to receive him effusively as prey snatched from the foaming jaws of death; but it was out of Mrs. Fottrel's pocket that a peppermint−drop came to sweetly seal his new lease of life.

“And what are you after now, Mick?” she said, observing that, instead of drawing himself up to level ground, he stood poised on an uncomfortable perch, and looked back the steep way he had come.

“I'm thinkin' to slip down agin,” he said, “and see if be any manner of manes I could hurroosha th' ould baste round the rocks yonder. The wather mightn't be altogither too deep there yit; at all evints, she's between the divil and the deep say where she is now; it's just a chanst.”

“Sorra a much,” said Joe, disconsolately; “scarce worth breakin' your bones after, any way.”

“Bones, how are you? Sure, there's no call to be breakin' bones in the matter,” said Mick, beginning to descend. This was true enough, if he had minded what he was about; but then he did not. So far from it, he was saying to himself, “One 'ud ha' thought now she might ha' took a sort of pride in it,” when the bottom of the world seemed to drop away from under his feet, and his irrelevant meditations ended in a shattering thud down on the rocky pavement a long way below. He never heard the shouts and shrieks which the incident occasioned above his head. Once only he became dimly conscious of a quivering network of prismatic flashes, which he could not see through, and a booming throb in his ears, which made him murmur dazedly: “Wirra, I thought I'd got beyond hearin' of them drums.” In another moment: “What's took me?” he said, with a start. But the depths he sank among remain always dark and silent.

Next day messengers from Tullykillagin told Mrs. Doherty that the Lord had “took” her son Mick, and that “he had gone out to say wid the tide, before they could get anybody to him, and there was no tellin' where he might be swep' up, if ever he came to shore at all.”

“And the quarest part of it was that Joe McEvoy's ould cow that he went after had legged herself up, somehow, on the rocks out of reach, and niver a harm on her when they found her in the mornin'. But she'd been all of a could quiver ever since, and himself doubted if she'd rightly git over it—might the divil mend her, and she after bein' the death of a fine young man. Sure, every sowl up at Tullykillagin was rale annoyed about it. Even ould Biddy Duggan, that was as cross−tempered as a weasel, did be frettin' for the lad; and Joe McEvoy was sittin' crooched like an ould wet hen, over his fire block out, that he hadn't the heart to be lightin'.”

Mrs. Doherty said she didn't know what talk they had of the Lord and the say and the ould cow; but she'd known well enough the way it was when Mick niver come home last night. He'd just took off after the souldiers, as he'd a great notion one time.

She was, as may have been observed, rather a dull−witted woman, and proportionately hard to convince against her will.

“A great notion intirely,” she said; “on'y she'd scarce have thought he'd go do such a thing on her in airnest.

And I runnin' away indoors yisterday out of the heighth of the divarsion, when the band−music was a thrate to be hearin', just to see his bit of supper wouldn't be late on him. And the grand little pitaty−cake I had for him; I may be throwin' it to the hins now, unless Molly might fancy a bit; for we 'll not be apt to set eyes on him this three year. Och, wirra! and he that contint at home, and niver a word out of him about the souldierin' this long while. If it had been poor Thady itself, 't would ha' been diff'rint; but Mick—I'd scarce ha' thought it of him; for he'd a dale of good−nature, Mrs. Geoghegan, ma'am."

"He had so, tub−be sure, woman dear," said Mrs. Geoghegan, "or he might be sittin' warm in here this minnit."

"The back of me hand to thim blamed ould throopers," said Mrs. Doherty, "that sets the lads wild wid their thrampin' around."

"Poor Mick would be better wid them than where he is now—God have mercy on his soul!" said a neighbour, solemnly.

But Mick's mother continued to bewail herself: "And I missin' the best of all the tunes they played, so Molly was tellin' me, for 'fraid he 'd be kep' waitin' for his supper, and he comin' home to me hungry; and now—There's a terrible len'th of time in three year. I wouldn't ha' believed he'd ha' done it on me."

THE RIVAL DREAMERS

BY JOHN BANIM

Mr. Washington Irving has already given to the public a version of an American legend, which, in a principal feature, bears some likeness to the following transcript of a popular Irish one. It may, however, be interesting to show this very coincidence between the descendants of a Dutch transatlantic colony and the native peasantry of Ireland, in the superstitious annals of both. Our tale, moreover, will be found original in all its circumstances, that alluded to only excepted.

Shamus Dempsey returned a silent, plodding, sorrowful man, though a young one, to his poor home, after seeing laid in the grave his aged, decrepit father. The last rays of the setting sun were glorious, shooting through the folds of their pavilion of scarlet clouds; the last song of the thrush, chanted from the bough nearest to his nest, was gladdening; the abundant though but half−matured crops around breathed of hope for the future. But Shamus's bosom was covered with the darkness that inward sunshine alone can illumine. The chord that should respond to song and melody had snapped in it; for him the softly undulating fields of light−green wheat, or the silken−surfaced patches of barley, made a promise in vain. He was poor, penniless, friendless, and yet groaning under responsibilities; worn out by past and present suffering, and without a consoling prospect. His father's corpse had just been buried by a subscription among his neighbours, collected in an old glove, a penny or a half−penny from each, by the most active of the humble community to whom his sad state was a subject of pity. In the wretched shed which he called “home,” a young wife lay on a truss of straw, listening to the hungry cries of two little children, and awaiting her hour to become the weeping mother of a third. And the recollection that but for an act of domestic treachery experienced by his father and himself, both would have been comfortable and respectable in the world, aggravated the bitterness of the feeling in which Shamus contemplated his lot. He could himself faintly call to mind a time of early childhood, when he lived with his parents in a roomy house, eating and sleeping and dressing well, and surrounded by servants and workmen; he further remembered that a day of great affliction came, upon which strange and rude persons forced their way into the house; and, for some cause his infant observation did not reach, father, servants, and workmen (his mother had just died) were all turned out upon the road and doomed to seek the shelter of a mean roof. But his father's discourse, since he gained the years of manhood, supplied Shamus with an explanation of all these circumstances, as follows.

Old Dempsey had been the youngest son of a large farmer, who divided his lands between two elder children, and destined Shamus's father to the Church, sending him abroad for education, and, during its course, supplying him with liberal allowances. Upon the eve of ordination the young student returned home to visit his friends; was much noticed by neighbouring small gentry of each religion; at the house of one of the opposite persuasion from his met a sister of the proprietor, who had a fortune in her own right; abandoned his clerical views for her smiles; eloped with her; married her privately; incurred thereby the irremovable hostility of his own family; but, after a short time, was received, along with his wife, by his generous brother−in−law, under whose guidance both became reputably settled in the house to which Shamus's early recollections pointed and where, till he was about six years old, he passed indeed a happy childhood.

But, a little previous to this time, his mother's good brother died unmarried, and was succeeded by another of her brothers, who had unsuccessfully spent half his life as a lawyer in Dublin, and who, inheriting little of his predecessor's amiable character, soon showed himself a foe to her and her husband, professedly on account of her marriage with a Roman Catholic. He did not appear to their visit, shortly after his arrival in their neighbourhood, and he never condescended to return it. The affliction experienced by his sensitive sister from his conduct entailed upon her a premature accouchement, in which, giving birth to a lifeless babe, she unexpectedly died. The event was matter of triumph rather than of sorrow to her unnatural brother. For, in the first place, totally unguarded against the sudden result, she had died intestate; in the next place, he discovered that her private marriage had been celebrated by a Roman Catholic priest, consequently could not, according to law, hold good; and again, could not give to her nominal husband any right to her property, upon which both had hitherto lived, and which

was now the sole means of existence to Shamus's father.

The lawyer speedily set to work upon these points, and with little difficulty succeeded in supplying for Shamus's recollections a day of trouble, already noticed. In fact, his father and he, now without a shilling, took refuge in a distant cabin, where, by the sweat of his parent's brow, as a labourer in the fields, the ill−fated hero of this story was scantily fed and clothed, until maturer years enabled him to relieve the old man's hand of the spade and sickle, and in turn labour for their common wants.

Shamus, becoming a little prosperous in the funeral we now see Shamus returning, and to such a home does he bend his heavy steps.

If to know that the enemy of his father and mother did not thrive on the spoils of his oppression could have yielded Shamus any consolation in his lot, he had long ago become aware of circumstances calculated to give this negative comfort. His maternal uncle enjoyed, indeed, his newly acquired property only a few years after it came into his possession. Partly on account of his cruelty to his relations, partly from a meanness and vulgarity of character, which soon displayed itself in his novel situation, and which, it was believed, had previously kept him in the lowest walks of his profession as a Dublin attorney, he found himself neglected and shunned by the gentry of his neighbourhood. To grow richer than those who thus insulted him, to blazon abroad reports of his wealth, and to watch opportunities of using it to their injury, became the means of revenge adopted by the parvenu. His legitimate income not promising a rapid accomplishment of this plan, he ventured, using precautions that seemingly set suspicion at defiance, to engage in smuggling−adventures on a large scale, for which his proximity to the coast afforded a local opportunity. Notwithstanding all his pettifogging cleverness, the ex−attorney was detected, however, in his illegal traffic, and fined to an amount which swept away half his real property. Driven to desperation by the publicity of his failure, as well as by the failure itself, he tried another grand effort to retrieve his fortune; was again surprised by the revenue officers; in a personal struggle with them, at the head of his band, killed one of their body; immediately absconded from Ireland; for the last twenty years had not been authentically heard of, but, it was believed, lived under an assumed name in London, deriving an obscure existence from some mean pursuit, of which the very nature enabled him to gratify propensities to drunkenness and other vices, learned during his first career in life.

All this Shamus knew, though only from report, inasmuch as his uncle had exiled himself while he was yet a child, and without previously having become known to the eyes of the nephew he had so much injured. But if Shamus occasionally drew a bitter and almost savage gratification from the downfall of his inhuman persecutor, no recurrence to the past could alleviate the misery of his present situation.

He passed under one of the capacious open arches of the old abbey, and then entered his squalid shed reared against its wall, his heart as shattered and as trodden down as the ruins around him. No words of greeting ensued between him and his equally hopeless wife, as she sat on the straw of her bed, rocking to sleep, with feeble and mournful cries, her youngest infant. He silently lighted a fire of withered twigs on his ready−furnished hearthstone; put to roast among their embers a few potatoes which he had begged during the day; divided them between her and her crying children; and, as the moon rising high in the heavens warned him that night asserted her full empire over the departed day, Shamus sank down upon the couch from which his father's mortal remains had lately been borne, supperless himself, and dinnerless, too, but not hungry; at least not conscious or recollecting that he was.

His wife and little ones soon slept soundly, but Shamus lay for hours inaccessible to nature's claims for sleep as well as for food. From where he lay he could see, through the open front of his shed, out into the ruins abroad. After much abstraction in his own thoughts, the silence, the extent, and the peculiar desolation of the scene, almost spiritualised by the magic effect of alternate moonshine and darkness, of objects and of their parts, at last diverted his mind, though not to relieve it. He remembered distinctly, for the first time, where he was—an intruder among the dwellings of the dead; he called to mind, too, that the present was their hour for revealing themselves among the remote loneliness and obscurity of their crumbling and intricate abode. As his eye fixed upon a distant stream of cold light or of blank shadow, either the wavering of some feathery herbage from the walls or the flitting of some night−bird over the roofless aisle, made motion which went and came during the instant of his alarmed start, or else some disembodied sleeper around had challenged and evaded his vision so rapidly as to baffle even the accompaniment of thought. Shamus would, however, recur, during these entrancing aberrations, to his more real causes for terror; and he knew not, and to this day cannot distinctly tell, whether he

waked or slept, when a new circumstance absorbed his attention. The moon struck fully, under his propped roof, upon the carved slab he had appropriated as a hearthstone; and turning his eye to the spot, he saw the semblance of a man advanced in years, though not very old, standing motionless, and very steadfastly regarding him. The still face of the figure shone like marble in the night−beam, without giving any idea of the solidity of that material; the long and deep shadows thrown by the forehead over the eyes left those unusally expressive features vague and uncertain. Upon the head was a close−fitting black cap, the dress was a loose−sleeved, plaited garment of white, descending to the ground, and faced and otherwise checkered with black, and girded round the loins; exactly the costume which Shamus had often studied in a little framed and glazed print, hung up in the sacristy of the humble chapel recently built in the neighbourhood of the ruin by a few descendants of the great religious fraternity to whom, in its day of pride, the abbey had belonged. As he returned very inquisitively, though, as he avers, not now in alarm, the fixed gaze of his midnight visitor, a voice reached him, and he heard these strange words:

“Shamus Dempsey, go to London Bridge, and you will be a rich man.”

“How will that come about, your reverence?” cried Shamus, jumping up from the straw.

But the figure was gone; and stumbling among the black embers on the remarkable place where it had stood, he fell prostrate, experiencing a change of sensation and of observance of objects around, which might be explained by supposing a transition from a sleeping to a waking state of mind.

The rest of the night he slept little, thinking of the advice he had received, and of the mysterious personage who gave it. But he resolved to say nothing about his vision, particularly to his wife, lest, in her present state of health, the frightful story might distress her; and, as to his own conduct respecting it, he determined to be guided by the future; in fact, he would wait to see if his counsellor came again. He did come again, appearing in the same spot at the same hour of the night, and wearing the same dress, though not the same expression of feature; for the shadowy brows now slightly frowned, and a little severity mingled with the former steadfastness of look.

“Shamus Dempsey, why have you not gone to London Bridge, and your wife so near the time when she will want what you are to get by going there? Remember, this is my second warning.”

“Musha, your reverence, an' what am I to do on Lunnon Bridge?”

Again he rose to approach the figure; again it eluded him. Again a change occurred in the quality of the interest with which he regarded the admonition of his visitor. Again he passed a day of doubt as to the propriety of undertaking what seemed to him little less than a journey to the world's end, without a penny in his pocket, and upon the eve of his wife's accouchement, merely in obedience to a recommendation which, according to his creed, was not yet sufficiently strongly given, even were it under any circumstances to be adopted. For Shamus had often heard, and firmly believed, that a dream or a vision instructing one how to procure riches ought to be experienced three times before it became entitled to attention.

He lay down, however, half hoping that his vision might thus recommend itself to his notice It did so.

“Shamus Dempsey,” said the figure, looking more angry than ever, “you have not yet gone to London Bridge, although I hear your wife dying out to bid you go. And, remember, this s my third warning.”

“Why, then, tundher an' ouns, your reverence, just stop and tell me−”

Ere he could utter another word the holy visitant disappeared, in a real passion at Shamus's qualified curse; and at the same moment his confused senses recognised the voice of his wife, sending up from her straw pallet the cries that betoken a mother's distant travail. Exchaning a few words with her, he hurried away. professedly call up, at her cabin window, an old crane who sometimes attended the very poorest women in Nance Dempsey's situation.

“Hurry to her, Noreen, acuishla, and do the best it's the will of God to let you do. And tell her from me, Noreen—“ He stopped, drawing in his lip, and clutching his cudgel hard.

“Shamus, what ails you, avick?” asked old Noreen; “what ails you, to make the tears run down in the gray o' the morning?”

“Tell her from me,” continued Shamus, “that it's from the bottom o' the heart I 'll pray, morning and evening, and fresh and fasting, maybe, to give her a good time of it; and to show her a face on the poor child that's coming, likelier than the two that God sent afore it. And that I 'll be thinking o' picturing it to my own mind, though I'll never see it far away.”

“Musha, Shamus, what are you speaking of?”

“No Matter, Noreen, only God be wid you, and wid her, and wid the weenocks; and tell her what I bid you. More−be−token, tell her that poor Shamus quits her in her throuble wid more love from the heart out than he had for her the first day we came together; and I'll come back to her at any rate, sooner or later, richer or poorer, or as bare as I went; and maybe not so bare either. But God only knows. The top o' the morning to you, Noreen, and don't let her want the mouthful o' praties while I'm on my thravels. For this,” added Shamus, as he bounded off, to the consternation of old Noreen—“this is the very morning and the very minute that, if I mind the dhrame at all at all, I ought to mind it; ay, without ever turning back to get a look from her, that 'ud kill the heart in my body entirely.”

Without much previous knowledge of the road he was to take, Shamus walked and begged his way along the coast to the town where he might hope to embark for England. Here the captain of a merchantman agreed to let him work his passage to Bristol, whence he again walked and begged into London.

Without taking rest or food, Shamus proceeded to London Bridge, often put out of his course by wrong directions, and as often by forgetting and misconceiving true ones. It was with old London Bridge that Shamus had to do (not the old one last pulled down, but its more reverend predecessor), which, at that time, was lined at either side by quaintly fashioned houses, mostly occupied by shopkeepers, so that the space between presented perhaps the greatest thoroughfare then known in the Queen of Cities. And at about two o'clock in the afternoon, barefooted, ragged, fevered, and agitated, Shamus mingled with the turbid human stream, that roared and chafed over the as restless and as evanescent stream which buffeted the arches of old London Bridge. In a situation so novel to him, so much more extraordinary in the reality than his anticipation could have fancied, the poor and friendless stranger felt overwhelmed. A sense of forlornness, of insignificance, and of terror seized upon his faculties. From the stare or the sneers or the jostle of the iron−nerved crowd he shrank with glances of wild timidity, and with a heart as wildly timid as were his looks. For some time he stood or staggered about, unable to collect his thoughts, or to bring to mind what was his business there. But when Shamus became able to refer to the motive of his pauper journey from his native solitudes into the thick of such a scene, it was no wonder that the zeal of superstition totally subsided amid the astounding truths he witnessed. In fact, the bewildered simpleton now regarded his dream as the merest chimera. Hastily escaping from the thoroughfare, he sought out some wretched place of repose suited to his wretched condition, and there mooned himself asleep, in self−accusations at the thought of poor Nance at home, and in utter despair of all his future prospects.

At daybreak the next morning he awoke, a little less agitated, but still with no hope. He was able, however, to resolve upon the best course of conduct now left open to him; and he arranged immediately to retrace his steps to Ireland, as soon as he should have begged sufficient alms to speed him a mile on the road. With this intent he hastily issued forth, preferring to challenge the notice of chance passengers, even at the early hour of dawn, than to venture again, in the middle of the day, among the dreaded crowds of the vast city. Very few, indeed, were the passers−by whom Shamus met during his straggling and stealthy walk through the streets, and those of a description little able or willing to afford a half−penny to his humbled, whining suit, and to his spasmed lip and watery eye. In what direction he went Shamus did not know; but at last he found himself entering upon the scene of his yesterday's terror. Now, however, it presented nothing to renew its former impression. The shops at the sides of the bridge were closed, and the occasional stragglers of either sex who came along inspired Shamus, little as he knew of a great city, with aversion rather than with dread. In the quietness and security of his present position, Shamus was both courageous and weak enough again to summon up his dream.

“Come,” he said, “since I AM on Lunnon Bridge, I 'll walk over every stone of it, and see what good that will do.”

He valiantly gained the far end. Here one house, of all that stood upon the bridge, began to be opened; it was a public−house, and, by a sidelong glance as he passed, Shamus thought that, in the person of a red−cheeked, red−nosed, sunken−eyed, elderly man, who took down the window−shutters, he recognised the proprietor. This person looked at Shamus, in return, with peculiar scrutiny. The wanderer liked neither his regards nor the expression of his countenance, and quickened his steps onward until he cleared the bridge.

“But I 'll walk it over at the other side now,” he bethought, after allowing the publican time to finish opening his house and retire out of view.

But, repassing the house, the man still appeared, leaning against his door−jamb, and as if waiting for Shamus's return, whom, upon this second occasion, he eyed more attentively than before.

“Sorrow's in him,” thought Shamus, “have I two heads on me, that I'm such a sight to him? But who cares about his pair of ferret eyes? I 'll thrudge down the middle stone of it, at any rate!”

Accordingly, he again walked toward the public−house, keeping the middle of the bridge.

“Good−morrow, friend,” said the publican, as Shamus a third time passed his door.

“Sarvant kindly, sir,” answered Shamus, respectfully pulling down the brim of his hat, and increasing his pace.

“Am early hour you choose for a morning walk,” continued his new acquaintance.

“Brave and early, faix, sir,” said Shamus, still hurrying off.

“Stop a bit,” resumed the publican. Shamus stood still. “I see you're a countryman of mine —an Irishman; I'd know one of you at a look, though I'm a long time out of the country. And you're not very well off on London Bridge this morning, either.”

“No, indeed, sir,” replied Shamus, beginning to doubt his skill in physiognomy, at the stranger's kind address; “but as badly off as a body 'ud wish to be.”

“Come over to look for the work?”

“Nien, sir; but come out this morning to beg a ha'−penny, to send me a bit of the road home.”

“Well, here's a silver sixpence without asking. And you'd better sit on the bench by the door here, and eat a crust and a cut of cheese, and drink a drop of good ale, to break your fast.”

With profuse thanks Shamus accepted this kind invitation, blaming himself at heart for having allowed his opinion of the charitable publican to be guided by the expression of the man's features. “Handsome is that handsome does,” was Shamus's self−correcting reflection.

While eating his bread and cheese and drinking his strong ale, they conversed freely together, and Shamus's heart opened more and more to his benefactor. The publican repeatedly asked him what had brought him to London; and though, half out of prudence and half out of shame, the dreamer at first evaded the question, he felt it at last impossible to refuse a candid answer to his generous friend.

“Why, then, sir, only I am such a big fool for telling it to you, it's what brought me to Lunnon Bridge was a quare dhrame I had at home in Ireland, that tould me just to come here, and I'd find a pot of goold.” For such was the interpretation given by Shamus to the vague admonition of his visionary counsellor.

His companion burst into a loud laugh, saying after it:

“Pho, pho, man, don't be so silly as to put faith in nonsensical dreams of that kind. Many a one like it I have had, if I would bother my head with them. Why, within the last ten days, while you were dreaming of finding a pot of gold on London Bridge, I was dreaming of finding a pot of gold in Ireland.”

“Ullaloo, and were you, sir?” asked Shamus, laying down his empty pint.

“Ay, indeed; night after night an old friar with a pale face, and dressed all in white and black, and a black skull−cap on his head, came to me in a dream, and bid me go to Ireland, to a certain spot in a certain county that I know very well, and under the slab of his tomb, that has a cross and some old Romish letters on it, in an old abbey I often saw before now, I'd find a treasure that would make me a rich man all the days of my life.”

“Musha, sir,” asked Shamus, scarce able prudently to control his agitation,” and did he tell you that the treasure lay buried there ever so long under the open sky and the ould walls?”

“No; but he told me I was to find the slab covered in by a shed that a poor man had lately built inside the abbey for himself and his family.”

“Whoo, by the powers!” shouted Shamus, at last thrown off his guard by the surpassing joy derived from this intelligence, as well as by the effects of the ale; and at the same time he jumped up, cutting a caper with his legs, and flourishing his shillalah.

“Why, what's the matter with you?” asked his friend, glancing at him a frowning and misgiving look.

“We ax pardon, sir.” Shamus rallied his prudence. “An', sure, sorrow a thing is the matter wid me, only the dhrop, I believe, made me do it, as it ever and always does, good luck to it for the same. An' isn't what we were spaking about the biggest raumaush [Footnote: Nonsense.] undher the sun, sir? Only it's the laste bit in the world quare to me how you'd have the dhrame about your own country, that you didn't see for so many years, sir—for twenty long years, I think you said, sir?” Shamus had now a new object in putting his sly question.

“If I said so, I forgot,” answered the publican, his suspicions of Shamus at an end. “But it is about twenty years, indeed, since I left Ireland.”

“And by your speech, sir, and your dacency, I 'll engage you were in a good way in the poor place afore you left it?”

“You guess correctly, friend.” (The publican gave way to vanity.) “Before misfortunes came over me, I possessed, along with a good hundred acres besides, the very ground that the old ruin I saw in the foolish dream I told you stands upon.”

“An' so did my curse−o'−God's uncle,” thought Shamus, his heart's blood beginning to boil, though, with a great effort, he kept himself seemingly cool. “And this is the man fornent me, if he answers another word I 'll ax him. Faix, sir, and sure that makes your dhrame quarer than ever; and the ground the ould abbey is on, sir, and the good acres round it, did you say they lay somewhere in the poor county myself came from?”

“What county is that, friend?” demanded the publican, again with a studious frown.

“The ould County Monaghan, sure, sir,” replied Shamus, very deliberately.

“No, but the county of Clare,” answered his companion.

“Was it?” screamed Shamus, again springing up. The cherished hatred of twenty years imprudently bursting out, his uncle lay stretched at his feet, after a renewed flourish of his cudgel. “And do you know who you are telling it to this morning? Did you ever hear that the sisther you kilt left a bit of a gorsoon behind her, that one day or other might overhear you? Ay,” he continued, keeping down the struggling man, “IT IS poor Shamus Dempsey that's kneeling by you; ay, and that has more to tell you. The shed built over the old friar's tombstone was built by the hands you feel on your throttle, and that tombstone is his hearthstone; and,” continued Shamus, beginning to bind the prostrate man with a rope snatched from a bench near them, “while you lie here awhile, an' no one to help you, in the cool of the morning, I'll just take a start of you on the road home, to lift the flag and get the threasure; and follow me if you dare! You know there's good money bid for your head in Ireland—so here goes. Yes, faith, and wid this−THIS to help me on the way!” He snatched up a heavy purse which had fallen from his uncle's pocket in the struggle. “And sure, there's neither hurt nor harm in getting back a little of a body's own from you. A bright goodmorning, uncle dear!”

Shamus dragged his manacled relative into the shop, quickly shut to and locked the door, flung the key over the house into the Thames, and the next instant was running at headlong speed.

He was not so deficient in the calculations of common sense as to think himself yet out of his uncle's power. It appeared, indeed, pretty certain that, neither for the violence done to his person nor for the purse appropriated by his nephew, the outlawed murderer would raise a hue and cry after one who, aware of his identity, could deliver him up to the laws of his country. But Shamus felt certain that it would be a race between him and his uncle for the treasure that lay under the friar's tombstone. His simple nature supplied no stronger motive for a pursuit on the part of a man whose life now lay in the breath of his mouth. Full of his conviction, however, Shamus saw he had not a moment to lose until the roof of his shed in the old abbey again sheltered him. So, freely making use of his uncle's guineas, he purchased a strong horse in the outskirts of London, and, to the surprise if not under heavy suspicions of the vender, set off at a gallop upon the road by which he had the day before gained the great metropolis.

A ship was ready to sail at Bristol for Ireland; but, to Shamus's discomfiture, she waited for a wind. He got aboard, however, and in the darksome and squalid hold often knelt down, and, with clasped hands and panting breast, petitioned Heaven for a favourable breeze. But from morning until evening the wind remained as he had found it, and Shamus despaired. His uncle, meantime, might have reached some other port, and embarked for their country. In the depth of his anguish he heard a brisk bustle upon deck, clambered up to investigate its cause, and found the ship's sails already half unfurled to a wind that promised to bear him to his native shores by the next morning. The last light of day yet lingered in the heavens; he glanced, now under way, to the quay of Bristol. A group who had been watching the departure of the vessel turned round to note the approach to them of a man, who ran furiously toward the place where they stood, pointing after her, and evidently speaking with vehemence, although no words reached Shamus's ear. Neither was his eye sure of this person's features, but his heart read them distinctly. A boat shot from the quay; the man stood up in it, and its rowers made a signal.

Shamus stepped to the gangway, as if preparing to hurl his pursuer into the sea. The captain took a speaking−trumpet, and informing the boat that he could not stop an instant, advised her to wait for another merchantman, which would sail in an hour. And during and after his speech his vessel ploughed cheerily on, making as much way as she was adapted to accomplish.

Shamus's bosom felt lightened of its immediate terror, but not freed of apprehension for the future. The ship that was to sail in an hour haunted his thoughts; he did not leave the deck, and, although the night proved very dark, his anxious eyes were never turned from the English coast. Unusual fatigue and want of sleep now and then overpowered him, and his senses swam in a wild and snatching slumber; but from this he would start, crying out and clinging to the cordage, as the feverish dream of an instant presented him with the swelling canvas of a fast−sailing ship, which came, suddenly bursting through the gloom of midnight, alongside of his own. Morning dawned, really to unveil to him the object of his fears following almost in the wake of her rival. He glanced in the opposite direction, and beheld the shores of Ireland; in another hour he jumped upon them; but his enemy's face watched him from the deck of the companion vessel, now not more than a few ropes' lengths distant.

Shamus mounted a second good horse, and spurred toward home. Often did he look back, but without seeing any cause for increased alarm. As yet, however, the road had been level and winding, and therefore could not allow him to span much of it at a glance. After noon it ascended a high and lengthened hill surrounded by wastes of bog. As he gained the summit of this hill, and again looked back, a horseman appeared, sweeping to its foot. Shamus galloped at full speed down the now quickly falling road; then along its level continuation for about a mile; and then up another eminence, more lengthened, though not so steep as the former; and from it still he looked back, and caught the figure of the horseman breaking over the line of the hill he had passed. For hours such was the character of the chase, until the road narrowed and began to wind amid an uncultivated and uninhabited mountain wilderness. Here Shamus's horse tripped and fell; the rider, little injured, assisted him to his legs, and, with lash and spur, re−urged him to pursue his course. The animal went forward in a last effort, and for still another span of time well befriended his rider. A rocky valley, through which both had been galloping, now opened at its farther end, presenting to Shamus's eye, in the distance, the sloping ground, and the ruin which, with its mouldering walls, encircled his poor home; and the setting sun streamed golden rays through the windows and rents of the old abbey.

The fugitive gave a weak cry of joy, and lashed his beast again. The cry seemed to be answered by a shout; and a second time, after a wild plunge, the horse fell, now throwing Shamus off with a force that left him stunned. And yet he heard the hoofs of another horse come thundering down the rocky way; and, while he made a faint effort to rise on his hands and look at his pursuer, the horse and horseman were very near, and the voice of his uncle cried, “Stand!” at the same time that the speaker fired a pistol, of which the ball struck a stone at Shamus's foot. The next moment his uncle, having left his saddle, stood over him, presenting a second pistol, and he spoke in a low but distinct voice.

“Spawn of a beggar! This is not merely for the chance of riches given by our dreams, though it seems, in the teeth of all I ever thought, that the devil tells truth at last. No, nor it is not quite for the blow; but it IS to close the lips that, with a single word, can kill me. You die to let me live!”

“Help!” aspirated Shamus's heart, turning itself to Heaven. “Help me but now, not for the sake of the goold either, but for the sake of them that will be left on the wild world widout me; for them help me, great God!”

Hitherto his weakness and confusion had left him passive. Before his uncle spoke the last words, his silent prayer was offered, and Shamus had jumped upon his assailant. They struggled and dragged each other down. Shamus felt the muzzle of the pistol at his breast; heard it snap—but only snap; he seized and mastered it, and once more the uncle was at the mercy of his nephew. Shamus's hand was raised to deal a good blow; but he checked himself, and addressed the almost senseless ears of his captive.

“No; you're my mother's blood, and a son of hers will never draw it from your heart; but I can make sure of you again; stop a bit.”

He ran to his own prostrate horse, took off its bridle and its saddle−girth, and with both secured his uncle's limbs beyond all possibility of the struggler being able to escape from their control.

“There,” resumed Shamus; “lie there till we have time to send an ould friend to see you, that, I'll go bail, will take good care of your four bones. And do you know where I'm going now? You tould me, on Lunnon Bridge, that you knew THAT, at least,” pointing to the abbey; “ay, and the quare ould hearthstone that's to be found in it. And so, look at this, uncle, honey.” He vaulted upon his relative's horse. “I'm just goin' to lift it off o' the barrel−pot full of good ould goold, and you have only to cry halves, and you'll get it, as, sure as that the big divil is in the town you came from.”

Nance Dempsey was nursing her new−born babe, sitting up in her straw, and doing very well after her late

illness, when old Noreen tottered in from the front of the ruin to tell her that “the body they were just speaking about was driving up the hill mad, like as if't was his own sperit in great throuble.” And the listener had not recovered from her surprise when Shamus ran into the shed, flung himself, kneeling, by her side, caught her in his arms, then seized her infant, covered it with kisses, and then, roughly throwing it in her lap, turned to the fireplace, raised one of the rocky seats lying near it, poised the ponderous mass over the hearthstone, and shivered into pieces, with one crash, that solid barrier between him and his visionary world of wealth.

“It's cracked he is out an' out of a certainty,” said Nance, looking terrified at her husband.

“Nothing else am I,” shouted Shamus, after groping under the broken slab; “an', for a token, get along wid yourself out of this, ould gran!”

He started up and seized her by the shoulder. Noreen remonstrated. He stooped for a stone; she ran; he pursued her to the arches of the ruin. She stopped half−way down the descent. He pelted her with clods to the bottom, and along a good piece of her road homeward, and then danced back into his wife's presence.

“Now, Nance,” he cried, “now that we're by ourselves, what noise is this like?”

“And he took out han'fuls after han'fuls of the ould goold afore her face, my dear,” added the original narrator of this story.

“An' after the gaugers and their crony, Ould Nick, ran off wid the uncle of him, Nance and he and the childer lived together in their father's and mother's house; and if they didn't live and die happy, I wish that you and I may.”

NEAL MALONE

BY WILLIAM CARLETON

There never was a greater−souled or doughtier tailor than little Neal Malone. Though but four feet four in height, he paced the earth with the courage and confidence of a giant; nay, one would have imagined that he walked as if he feared the world itself was about to give way under him. Let no one dare to say in future that a tailor is but the ninth part of a man. That reproach has been gloriously taken away from the character of the cross−legged corporation by Neal Malone. He has wiped it off like a stain from the collar of a secondhand coat; he has pressed this wrinkle out of the lying front of antiquity; he has drawn together this rent in the respectability of his profession. No. By him who was breeches−maker to the gods,—that is, except, like Highlanders, they eschewed inexpressibles,—by him who cut Jupiter's frieze jocks for winter, and eke by the bottom of his thimble, we swear that Neal Malone was MORE than the ninth part of a man.

Setting aside the Patagonians, we maintain that two thirds of mortal humanity were comprised in Neal; and perhaps we might venture to assert that two thirds of Neal's humanity were equal to six thirds of another man's. It is right well known that Alexander the Great was a little man, and we doubt whether, had Alexander the Great been bred to the tailoring business, he would have exhibited so much of the hero as Neal Malone. Neal was descended from a fighting family, who had signalised themselves in as many battles as ever any single hero of antiquity fought. His father, his grandfather, and his great−grandfather were all fighting men, and his ancestors in general, up, probably, to Con of the Hundred Battles himself. No wonder, therefore, that Neal's blood should cry out against the cowardice of his calling; no wonder that he should be an epitome of all that was valorous and heroic in a peaceable man, for we neglected to inform the reader that Neal, though “bearing no base mind,” never fought any man in his own person. That, however, deducted nothing from his courage. If he did not fight it was simply because he found cowardice universal. No man would engage him; his spirit blazed in vain; his thirst for battle was doomed to remain unquenched, except by whisky, and this only increased it. In short, he could find no foe. He has often been known to challenge the first cudgel−players and pugilists of the parish, to provoke men of fourteenstone weight, and to bid mortal defiance to faction heroes of all grades−but in vain. There was that in him which told them that an encounter with Neal would strip them of their laurels. Neal saw all this with a lofty indignation; he deplored the degeneracy of the times, and thought it hard that the descendant of such a fighting family should be doomed to pass through life peaceably, whilst so many excellent rows and riots took place around him. It was a calamity to see every man's head broken but his own; a dismal thing to observe his neighbours go about with their bones in bandages, yet his untouched, and his friends beat black and blue, whilst his own cuticle remained unscoloured.

“Blur an' agers!” exclaimed Neal one day, when half tipsy in the fair, “am I never to get a bit o' figtin'? Is there no cowardly spalpeen to stand afore Neal Malone? Be this an' be that, I'm blue−mowlded for want of a batin'! I'm disgracin' my relations by the life I'm ladin'! Will none o' ye fight me aither for love, money, or whisky, frind or inimy, an' bad luck to ye? I don't care a traneen which, only out o' pure frindship, let us have a morsel o' the rale kick−up,'t any rate. Frind or inimy, I say agin, if you regard me; sore THAT makes no differ, only let us have the fight.”

This excellent heroism was all wasted; Neal could not find a single adversary. Except he divided himself like Hotspur, and went to buffets one hand against the other, there was no chance of a fight; no person to be found sufficiently magnanimous to encounter the tailor. On the contrary, every one of his friends—or, in other words, every man in the parish—was ready to support him. He was clapped on the back until his bones were nearly dislocated in his body, and his hand shaken until his arm lost its cunning at the needle for half a week afterward. This, to be sure, was a bitter business, a state of being past endurance. Every man was his friend—no man was his enemy. A desperate position for any person to find himself in, but doubly calamitous to a martial tailor.

Many a dolourous complaint did Neal make upon the misfortune of having none to wish him ill; and what rendered this hardship doubly oppressive was the unlucky fact that no exertions of his, however offensive, could

procure him a single foe. In vain did he insult, abuse, and malign all his acquaintances. In vain did he father upon them all the rascality and villainy he could think of; he lied against them with a force and originality that would have made many a modern novelist blush for want of invention—but all to no purpose. The world for once became astonishingly Christian; it paid back all his efforts to excite its resentment with the purest of charity; when Neal struck it on the one cheek, it meekly turned unto him the other. It could scarcely be expected that Neal would bear this. To have the whole world in friendship with a man is beyond doubt an affliction. Not to have the face of a single enemy to look upon would decidedly be considered a deprivation of many agreeable sensations by most people as well as by Neal Malone. Let who might sustain a loss or experience a calamity, it was a matter of indifference to Neal. They were only his friends, and he troubled neither his head nor his heart about them.

Heaven help us! There is no man without his trials; and Neal, the reader perceives, was not exempt from his. What did it avail him that he carried a cudgel ready for all hostile contingencies, or knit his brows and shook his kippeen at the fiercest of his fighting friends? The moment he appeared they softened into downright cordiality. His presence was the signal of peace; for, notwithstanding his unconquerable propensity to warfare, he went abroad as the genius of unanimity, though carrying in his bosom the redoubtable disposition of a warrior; just as the sun, though the source of light himself, is said to be dark enough at bottom.

It could not be expected that Neal, with whatever fortitude he might bear his other afflictions, could bear such tranquillity like a hero. To say that he bore it as one would be basely to surrender his character; for what hero ever bore a state of tranquillity with courage? It affected his cutting out! It produced what Burton calls “a windie melancholie,” which was nothing else than an accumulation of courage that had no means of escaping, if courage can, without indignity, be ever said to escape. He sat uneasy on his lap−board. Instead of cutting out soberly, he flourished his scissors as if he were heading a faction; he wasted much chalk by scoring his cloth in wrong places, and even caught his hot goose without a holder. These symptoms alarmed his friends, who persuaded him to go to a doctor. Neal went to satisfy them; but he knew that no prescription could drive the courage out of him, that he was too far gone in heroism to be made a coward of by apothecary stuff. Nothing in the pharmacopoeia could physic him into a pacific state. His disease was simply the want of an enemy, and an unaccountable superabundance of friendship on the part of his acquaintances. How could a doctor remedy this by a prescription? Impossible. The doctor, indeed, recommended blood−letting; but to lose blood in a peaceable manner was not only cowardly, but a bad cure for courage. Neal declined it: he would lose no blood for any man until he could not help it; which was giving the character of a hero at a single touch. HIS blood was not to be thrown away in this manner; the only lancet ever applied to his relations was the cudgel, and Neal scorned to abandon the principles of his family.

His friends, finding that he reserved his blood for more heroic purposes than dastardly phlebotomy, knew not what to do with him. His perpetual exclamation was, as we have already stated, “I'm blue−mowlded for want of a batin'!” They did everything in their power to cheer him with the hope of a drubbing; told him he lived in an excellent country for a man afflicted with his malady; and promised, if it were at all possible, to create him a private enemy or two, who, they hoped in heaven, might trounce him to some purpose.

This sustained him for a while; but as day after day passed and no appearance of action presented itself, he could not choose but increase in courage. His soul, like a sword−blade too long in the scabbard, was beginning to get fuliginous by inactivity. He looked upon the point of his own needle and the bright edge of his scissors with a bitter pang when he thought of the spirit rusting within him; he meditated fresh insults, studied new plans, and hunted out cunning devices for provoking his acquaintances to battle, until by degrees he began to confound his own brain and to commit more grievous oversights in his business than ever. Sometimes he sent home to one person a coat with the legs of a pair of trousers attached to it for sleeves, and despatched to another the arms of the aforesaid coat tacked together as a pair of trousers. Sometimes the coat was made to button behind instead of before; and he frequently placed the pockets in the lower part of the skirts, as if he had been in league with cutpurses.

This was a melancholy situation, and his friends pitied him accordingly.

“Don't be cast down, Neal,” said they; “your friends feel for you, poor fellow.”

“Divil carry my frinds,” replied Neal; “sure, there's not one o' yez frindly enough to be my inimy. Tare an' ouns! what'll I do? I'm blue−mowlded for want of a batin'!”

Seeing that their consolation was thrown away upon him, they resolved to leave him to his fate; which they

had no sooner done then Neal had thoughts of taking to the Skiomachia as a last remedy. In this mood he looked with considerable antipathy at his own shadow for several nights; and it is not to be questioned but that some hard battles would have taken place between them had it not been for the cunning of the shadow, which declined to fight him in any other position than with its back to the wall. This occasioned him to pause, for the wall was a fearful antagonist, inasmuch as it knew not when it was beaten; but there was still an alternative left. He went to the garden one clear day about noon, and hoped to have a bout with the shade free from interruption. Both approached, apparently eager for the combat and resolved to conquer or die, when a villainous cloud, happening to intercept the light, gave the shadow an opportunity of disappearing, and Neal found himself once more without an opponent.

"It's aisy known," said Neal, "you haven't the BLOOD in you, or you'd come to the scratch like a man."

He now saw that fate was against him, and that any further hostility toward the shadow was only a tempting of Providence. He lost his health, spirits, and everything but his courage. His countenance became pale and peaceful−looking; the bluster departed from him; his body shrank up like a withered parsnip. Thrice was he compelled to take in his clothes, and thrice did he ascertain that much of his time would be necessarily spent in pursuing his retreating person through the solitude of his almost deserted garments.

God knows it is difficult to form a correct opinion upon a situation so parodoxical as Neal's was. To be reduced to skin and bone by the downright friendship of the world was, as the sagacious reader will admit, next to a miracle. We appeal to the conscience of any man who finds himself without an enemy whether he be not a greater skeleton than the tailor; we will give him fifty guineas provided he can show a calf to his leg. We know he could not; for the tailor had none, and that was because he had not an enemy. No man in friendship with the world ever has calves to his legs. To sum up all in a parodox of our own invention, for which we claim the full credit of originality, we now assert that more men have risen in the world by the injury of their enemies than have risen by the kindness of their friends. You may take this, reader, in any sense; apply it to hanging if you like; it is still immutably and immovably true.

One day Neal sat cross−legged, as tailors usually sit, in the act of pressing a pair of breeches; his hands were placed, backs up, upon the handle of his goose, and his chin rested upon the backs of his hands. To judge from his sorrowful complexion, one would suppose that he sat rather to be sketched as a picture of misery or of heroism in distress than for the industrious purpose of pressing the seams of a garment. There was a great deal of New Burlington Street pathos in his countenance; his face, like the times, was rather out of joint; "the sun was just setting, and his golden beams fell, with a saddened splendor, athwart the tailor's—" The reader may fill up the picture.

In this position sat Neal when Mr. O'Connor, the schoolmaster, whose inexpressibles he was turning for the third time, entered the workshop. Mr. O'Connor himself was as finished a picture of misery as the tailor. There was a patient, subdued kind of expression in his face which indicated a very fair portion of calamity; his eye seemed charged with affliction of the first water; on each side of his nose might be traced two dry channels, which, no doubt, were full enough while the tropical rains of his countenance lasted. Altogether, to conclude from appearances, it was a dead match in affliction between him and the tailor; both seemed sad, fleshless, and unthriving.

"Misther O'Connor," said the tailor, when the schoolmaster entered, "won't you be pleased to sit down?"

Mr. O'Connor sat; and, after wiping his forehead, laid his hat upon the lap−board, put his half−handkerchief in his pocket, and looked upon the tailor. The tailor, in return, looked upon Mr. O'Connor; but neither of them spoke for some minutes. Neal, in fact, appeared to be wrapped up in his own misery, and Mr. O'Connor in his; or, as we often have much gratuitous sympathy for the distresses of our friends, we question but the tailor was wrapped up in Mr. O'Connor's misery, and Mr. O'Connor in the tailor's.

Mr. O'Connor at length said: "Neal, are my inexpressibles finished?"

"I am now pressin' your inexpressibles," replied Neal; "but, be my sowl, Mr. O'Connor, it's not your inexpressibles I'm thinkin' of. I'm not the ninth part o' what I was. I'd hardly make paddin' for a collar now."

"Are you able to carry a staff still, Neal?"

"I've a light hazel one that's handy," said the tailor, "but where's the use o' carryin' it whin I can get no one to fight wid? Sure, I'm disgracin' my relations by the life I'm ladin'. I 'll go to my grave widout ever batin' a man or bein' bate myself; that's the vexation. Divil the row ever I was able to kick up in my life; so that I'm fairly

blue−mowlded for want of a batin'. But if you have patience—”

“Patience!” said Mr. O'Connor, with a shake of the head that was perfectly disastrous even to look at,—“patience, did you say, Neal?”

“Ay,” said Neal, “an' be my sowl, if you deny that I said patience I 'll break your head!”

“Ah, Neal,” returned the other, “I don't deny it; for, though I'm teaching philosophy, knowledge, and mathematics every day in my life, yet I'm learning patience myself both night and day. No, Neal; I have forgotten to deny anything. I have not been guilty of a contradiction, out of my own school, for the last fourteen years. I once expressed the shadow of a doubt about twelve years ago, but ever since I have abandoned even doubting. That doubt was the last expiring effort at maintaining my domestic authority—but I suffered for it.”

“Well,” said Neal, “if you have patience, I 'll tell you what afflicts me from beginnin' to endin'.”

“I WILL have patience,” said Mr. O'Connor; and he accordingly heard a dismal and indignant tale from the tailor.

“You have told me that fifty times over,” said Mr. O'Connor, after hearing the story. “Your spirit is too martial for a pacific life. If you follow my advice, I will teach you how to ripple the calm current of your existence to some purpose. MARRY A WIFE. For twenty−five years I have given instruction in three branches, namely, philosophy, knowledge, and mathematics. I am also well versed in matrimony, and I declare that, upon my misery and by the contents of all my afflictions, it is my solemn and melancholy opinion that, if you marry a wife, you will, before three months pass over your concatenated state, not have a single complaint to make touching a superabundance of peace or tranquillity or a love of fighting.”

“Do you mane to say that any woman would make me afeard?” said the tailor, deliberately rising up and getting his cudgel. “I 'll thank you merely to go over the words agin, till I thrasy you widin an inch of your life. That's all”

“Neal,” said the schoolmaster, meekly, “I won't fight; I have been too often subdued ever to presume on the hope of a single victory. My spirit is long since evaporated; I am like one of your own shreds, a mere selvage. Do you not know how much my habiliments have shrunk in even within the last five years? Hear me, Neal, and venerate my words as if they proceeded from the lips of a prophet. If you wish to taste the luxury of being subdued—if you are, as you say, blue−moulded for want of a beating, and sick at heart of a peaceful existence—why, marry a wife. Neal, send my breeches home with all haste, for they are wanted, you understand. Farewell.”

Mr. O'Connor, having thus expressed himself, departed; and Neal stood, with the cudgel in his hand, looking at the door out of which he passed, with an expression of fierceness, contempt, and reflection strongly blended on the ruins of his once heroic visage.

Many a man has happiness within his reach if he but knew it. The tailor had been hitherto miserable because he pursued a wrong object. The schoolmaster, however, suggested a train of thought upon which Neal now fastened with all the ardour of a chivalrous temperament. Nay, be wondered that the family spirit should have so completely seized upon the fighting side of his heart as to preclude all thoughts of matrimony; for he could not but remember that his relations were as ready for marriage as for fighting. To doubt this would have been to throw a blot upon his own escutcheon. He therefore very prudently asked himself to whom, if he did not marry, should he transmit his courage. He was a single man, and, dying as such, he would be the sole depository of his own valor, which, like Junius's secret, must perish with him. If he could have left it as a legacy to such of his friends as were most remarkable for cowardice, why, the case would be altered: but this was impossible, and he had now no other means of preserving it to posterity than by creating a posterity to inherit it. He saw, too, that the world was likely to become convulsed. Wars, as everybody knew, were certain to break out; and would it not be an excellent opportunity for being father to a colonel, or perhaps a general, that might astonish the world?

The change visible in Neal after the schoolmaster's last visit absolutely thunderstruck all who knew him. The clothes which he had rashly taken in to fit his shrivelled limbs were once more let out. The tailor expanded with a new spirit; his joints ceased to be supple, as in the days of his valor; his eye became less fiery but more brilliant. From being martial, he got desperately gallant; but, somehow, he could not afford to act the hero and lover both at the same time. This, perhaps, would be too much to expect from a tailor. His policy was better. He resolved to bring all his available energy to bear upon the charms of whatever fair nymph he should select for the honour of matrimony; to waste his spirit in fighting would, therefore, be a deduction from the single purpose in view.

The transition from war to love is by no means so remarkable as we might at first imagine. We quote Jack Falstaff in proof of this; or, if the reader be disposed to reject our authority, then we quote Ancient Pistol himself—both of whom we consider as the most finished specimens of heroism that ever carried a safe skin. Acres would have been a hero had he worn gloves to prevent the courage from oozing out at his palms, or not felt such an unlucky antipathy to the “snug lying in the Abbey”; and as for Captain Bobadil, he never had an opportunity of putting his plan for vanquishing an army into practice. We fear, indeed, that neither his character nor Ben Jonson's knowledge of human nature is properly understood; for it certainly could not be expected that a man whose spirit glowed to encounter a whole host could, without tarnishing his dignity, if closely pressed, condescend to fight an individual. But as these remarks on courage may be felt by the reader as an invidious introduction of a subject disagreeable to him, we beg to hush it for the present and return to the tailor.

No sooner had Neal begun to feel an inclination to matrimony than his friends knew that his principles had veered by the change now visible in his person and deportment. They saw he had ratted from courage and joined love. Heretofore his life had been all winter, darkened by storm and hurricane. The fiercer virtues had played the devil with him; every word was thunder, every look lightning; but now all that had passed away. Before he was the FORTITER IN RE; at present he was the SUAVITER IN MODO. His existence was perfect spring, beautifully vernal. All the amiable and softer qualities began to bud about his heart; a genial warmth was diffused over him; his soul got green within him; every day was serene, and if a cloud happened to become visible, there was a roguish rainbow astride of it, on which sat a beautiful Iris that laughed down at him and seemed to say, “Why the dickens, Neal, don't you marry a wife?”

Neal could not resist the afflatus which decended on him; an ethereal light dwelled, he thought, upon the face of nature; the colour of the cloth which he cut out from day to day was, to his enraptured eye, like the colour of Cupid's wings—all purple; his visions were worth their weight in gold; his dreams a credit to the bed he slept on; and his feelings, like blind puppies, young and alive to the milk of love and kindness which they drew from his heart. Most of this delight escaped the observation of the world, for Neal, like your true lover, became shy and mysterious. It is difficult to say what he resembled; no dark lantern ever had more light shut up within itself than Neal had in his soul, although his friends were not aware of it. They knew, indeed, that he had turned his back upon valor; but beyond this their knowledge did not extend.

Neal was shrewd enough to know that what he felt must be love; nothing else could distend him with happiness until his soul felt light and bladderlike but love. As an oyster opens when expecting the tide, so did his soul expand at the contemplation of matrimony. Labour ceased to be a trouble to him; he sang and sewed from morning till night; his hot goose no longer burned him, for his heart was as hot as his goose; the vibrations of his head, at each successive stitch, were no longer sad and melancholy. There was a buoyant shake of exultation in them which showed that his soul was placid and happy within him.

Endless honour be to Neal Malone for the originality with which he managed the tender sentiment! He did not, like your commonplace lovers, first discover a pretty girl and afterward become enamoured of her. No such thing; he had the passion prepared beforehand—cut out and made up, as it were, ready for any girl whom it might fit. This was falling in love in the abstract, and let no man condemn it without a trial, for many a long−winded argument could be urged in its defence. It is always wrong to commence business without capital, and Neal had a good stock to begin with. All we beg is that the reader will not confound it with Platonism, which never marries; but he is at full liberty to call it Socratism, which takes unto itself a wife and suffers accordingly.

Let no one suppose that Neal forgot the schoolmaster's kindness, or failed to be duly grateful for it. Mr. O'Connor was the first person whom he consulted touching his passion. With a cheerful soul he waited on that melancholy and gentleman−like man, and in the very luxury of his heart told him that he was in love.

“In love, Neal!” said the schoolmaster. “May I inquire with whom?”

“Wid nobody in particular yet,” replied Neal; “but o' late I'm got divilish fond o' the girls in general.”

“And do you call that being in love, Neal?” said Mr. O'Connor.

“Why, what else would I call it?” returned the tailor. “Am n't I fond o' them?”

“Then it must be what is termed the 'universal passion,' Neal,” observed Mr. O'Connor, “although it is the first time I have seen such an illustration of it as you present in your own person.”

“I wish you would advise me how to act,” said Neal; “I'm as happy as a prince since I began to get fond o' them an' to think o' marriage.”

The schoolmaster shook his head again, and looked rather miserable. Neal rubbed his hands with glee, and looked perfectly happy. The schoolmaster shook his head again, and looked more miserable than before. Neal's happiness also increased on the second rubbing.

Now, to tell the secret at once, Mr. O'Connor would not have appeared so miserable were it not for Neal's happiness; nor Neal so happy were it not for Mr. O'Connor's misery. It was all the result of contrast; but this you will not understand unless you be deeply read in modern novels.

Mr. O'Connor, however, was a man of sense, who knew, upon this principle, that the longer he continued to shake his head the more miserable he must become, and the more also would he increase Neal's happiness; but he had no intention of increasing Neal's happiness at his own expense—for, upon the same hypothesis, it would have been for Neal's interest had he remained shaking his head there and getting miserable until the day of judgment. He consequently declined giving the third shake, for he thought that plain conversation was, after all, more significant and forcible than the most eloquent nod, however ably translated.

“Neal,” said he, “could you, by stretching your imagination, contrive to rest contented with nursing your passion in solitude, and love the sex at a distance?”

“How could I nurse and mind my business?” replied the tailor. “I'll never nurse so long as I'll have the wife; and as for 'magination, it depends upon the grain o'it whether I can stretch it or not. I don't know that I ever made a coat o'it in my life.”

“You don't understand me, Neal,” said the schoolmaster. “In recommending marriage, I was only driving one evil out of you by introducing another. Do you think that, if you abandoned all thoughts of a wife, you would get heroic again—that is, would you take once more to the love of fighting?”

“There is no doubt but I would,” said the tailor; “if I miss the wife, I'll kick up such a dust as never was seen in the parish, an' you're the first man that I'll lick. But now that I'm in love,” he continued, “sure, I ought to look out for the wife.”

“Ah, Neal,” said the schoolmaster, “you are tempting destiny; your temerity be, with all its melancholy consequences, upon your own head.”

“Come,” said the tailor; “it wasn't to hear you groaning to the tune o' 'Dhrimmindhoo,' or 'The old woman rockin' her cradle,' that I came; but to know if you could help me in makin' out the wife. That's the discoorse.”

“Look at me, Neal,” said the schoolmaster, solemnly. “I am at this moment, and have been any time for the last fifteen years, a living CAVETO against matrimony. I do not think that earth possesses such a luxury as a single solitary life. Neal, the monks of old were happy men; they were all fat and had double chins; and, Neal, I tell you that all fat men are in general happy. Care cannot come at them so readily as at a thin man; before it gets through the strong outworks of flesh and blood with which they are surrounded, it becomes treacherous to its original purpose, joins the cheerful spirits it meets in the system, and dances about the heart in all the madness of mirth; just like a sincere ecclesiastic who comes to lecture a good fellow against drinking, but who forgets his lecture over his cups, and is laid under the table with such success that he either never comes to finish his lecture, or comes often to be laid under the table. Look at me, Neal, how wasted, fleshless, and miserable I am. You know how my garments have shrunk in, and what a solid man I was before marriage. Neal, pause, I beseech you; otherwise you stand a strong chance of becoming a nonentity like myself.”

“I don't care what I become,” said the tailor; “I can't think that you'd be so unreasonable as to expect that any o' the Malones should pass out o' the world widout either bein' bate or marrid. Have reason, Mr. O'Connor, an' if you can help me to the wife I promise to take in your coat the next time for nothin'.”

“Well, then,” said Mr. O'Connor, “what would you think of the butcher's daughter, Biddy Neil? You have always had a thirst for blood, and here you may have it gratified in an innocent manner, should you ever become sanguinary again. 'T is true, Neal, she is twice your size and possesses three times your strength; but for that very reason, Neal, marry her if you can. Large animals are placid; and Heaven preserve those bachelors whom I wish well from a small wife; 't is such who always wield the sceptre of domestic life and rule their husbands with a rod of iron.”

“Say no more, Mr. O'Connor,” replied the tailor; “she's the very girl I'm in love wid, an' never fear but I'll overcome her heart if it can be done by man. Now, step over the way to my house, an' we'll have a sup on the head o' it. Who's that calling?”

“Ah, Neal, I know the tones—there's a shrillness in them not to be mistaken. Farewell! I must depart; you

have heard the proverb, 'Those who are bound must obey.' Young Jack, I presume, is squalling, and I must either nurse him, rock the cradle, or sing comic tunes for him, though Heaven knows with what a disastrous heart I often sing, 'Begone, dull care,' the 'Rakes of Newcastle,' or, 'Peas upon a Trencher.' Neal, I say again, pause before you take this leap in the dark. Pause, Neal, I entreat you. Farewell!"

Neal, however, was gifted with the heart of an Irishman, and scorned caution as the characteristic of a coward; he had, as it appeared, abandoned all design of fighting, but the courage still adhered to him even in making love. He consequently conducted the siege of Biddy Neil's heart with a degree of skill and valor which would not have come amiss to Marshal Gerald at the siege of Antwerp. Locke or Dugald Stewart, indeed, had they been cognisant of the tailor's triumph, might have illustrated the principle on which he succeeded; as to ourselves, we can only conjecture it. Our own opinion is that they were both animated with a congenial spirit. Biddy was the very pink of pugnacity, and could throw in a body−blow or plant a facer with singular energy and science. Her prowess hitherto had, we confess, been displayed only within the limited range of domestic life; but should she ever find it necessary to exercise it upon a larger scale, there was no doubt whatsoever, in the opinion of her mother, brothers, and sisters, every one of whom she had successively subdued, that she must undoubtedly distinguish herself. There was certainly one difficulty which the tailor had NOT to encounter in the progress of fats courtship: the field was his own, he had not a rival to dispute his claim. Neither was there any opposition given by her friends; they were, on the contrary, all anxious for the match; and when the arrangements were concluded, Neal felt his hand squeezed by them in succession, with an expression more resembling condolence than joy. Neal, however, had been bred to tailoring, and not to metaphysics; he could cut out a coat very well, but we do not say that he could trace a principle —as what tailor, except Jeremy Taylor, could?

There was nothing particular in the wedding. Mr. O'Connor was asked by Neal to be present at it; but he shook his head, and told him that he had not courage to attend it or inclination to witness any man's sorrows but his own. He met the wedding−party by accident, and was heard to exclaim with a sigh as they flaunted past him in gay exuberance of spirits: "Ah, poor Neal! he is going like one of her father's cattle to the shambles! Woe is me for having suggested matrimony to the taylor! He will not long be under the necessity of saying that he is 'blue−moulded for want of a beating.' The butcheress will fell him like a Kerry ox, and I may have his blood to answer for and his discomfiture to feel for in addition to my own miseries."

On the evening of the wedding−day, about the hour of ten o'clock, Neal, whose spirits were uncommonly exalted, for his heart luxuriated within him, danced with his bridesmaid; after the dance he sat beside her, and got eloquent in praise of her beauty; and it is said, too, that he whispered to her and chucked her chin with considerable gallantry. The tête−à−tête continued for some time without exciting particular attention, with one exception; but THAT exception was worth a whole chapter of general rules. Mrs. Malone rose up, then sat down again and took off a glass of the native; she got up a second time; all the wife rushed upon her heart. She approached them, and, in a fit of the most exquisite sensibility, knocked the bridesmaid down, and gave the tailor a kick of affecting pathos upon the inexpressibles. The whole scene was a touching one on both sides. The tailor was sent on all−fours to the floor, but Mrs. Malone took him quietly up, put him under her arm as one would a lap−dog, and with stately step marched away to the connubial apartment, in which everything remained very quiet for the rest of the night.

The next morning Mr. O'Connor presented himself to congratulate the tailor on his happiness. Neal, as his friend, shook hands with him, gave the schoolmaster's fingers a slight squeeze, such as a man gives who would gently entreat your sympathy. The schoolmaster looked at him, and thought he shook his head. Of this, however, he could not be certain; for, as he shook his own during the moment of observation, he concluded that it might be a mere mistake of the eye, or, perhaps, the result of a mind predisposed to be credulous on the subject of shaking heads.

We wish it were in our power to draw a veil, or curtain, or blind of some description, over the remnant of the tailor's narrative that is to follow; but as it is the duty of every faithful historian to give the secret causes of appearances which the world in general does not understand, so we think it but honest to go on, impartially and faithfully, without shrinking from the responsibility that is frequently annexed to truth.

For the first three days after matrimony Neal felt like a man who had been translated to a new and more lively state of existence. He had expected, and flattered himself, that the moment this event should take place he would once more resume his heroism, and experience the pleasure of a drubbing. This determination he kept a profound

secret; nor was it known until a future period, when he disclosed it to Mr. O'Connor. He intended, therefore, that marriage should be nothing more than a mere parenthesis in his life—a kind of asterisk, pointing, in a note at the bottom, to this single exception in his general conduct—a nota bene to the spirit of a martial man, intimating that he had been peaceful only for a while. In truth, he was, during the influence of love over him and up to the very day of his marriage, secretly as blue−moulded as ever for want of a beating. The heroic penchant lay snugly latent in his heart, unchecked and unmodified. He flattered himself that he was achieving a capital imposition upon the world at large, that he was actually hoaxing mankind in general, and that such an excellent piece of knavish tranquillity had never been perpetrated before his time.

On the first week after his marriage there chanced to be a fair in the next market−town. Neal, after breakfast, brought forward a bunch of shillalahs, in order to select the best; the wife inquired the purpose of the selection, and Neal declared that he was resolved to have a fight that day if it were to be had, he said, for “love or money.” “The truth is,” he exclaimed, strutting with fortitude about the house, “the truth is, that I've DONE the whole of yez—I'm as blue−mowlded as ever for want of a batin'.”

“Don't go,” said the wife.

“I WILL go,” said Neal, with vehemence; “I 'll go if the whole parish was to go to prevint me.”

In about another half−hour Neal sat down quietly to his business instead of going to the fair!

Much ingenious speculation might be indulged in upon this abrupt termination to the tailor's most formidable resolution; but, for our own part, we will prefer going on with the narrative, leaving the reader at liberty to solve the mystery as he pleases. In the meantime we say this much; let those who cannot make it out carry it to their tailor; it is a tailor's mystery, and no one has so good a right to understand it—except, perhaps, a tailor's wife.

At the period of his matrimony Neal had become as plump and as stout as he ever was known to be in his plumpest and stoutest days. He and the schoolmaster had been very intimate about this time; but we know not how it happened that soon afterward he felt a modest, bride−like reluctance in meeting with that afflicted gentleman. As the eve of his union approached, he was in the habit, during the schoolmaster's visits to his workshop, of alluding, in rather a sarcastic tone, considering the unthriving appearance of his friend, to the increasing lustiness of his person. Nay, he has often leaped up from his lap−board, and, in the strong spirit of exultation, thrust out his leg in attestation of his assertion, slapping it, moreover, with a loud laugh of triumph that sounded like a knell to the happiness of his emaciated acquaintance. The schoolmaster's philosophy, however, unlike his flesh, never departed from him; his usual observation was, “Neal, we are both receding from the same point; you increase in flesh, whilst I, Heaven help me, am fast diminishing.”

The tailor received these remarks with very boisterous mirth, whilst Mr. O'Connor simply shook his head and looked sadly upon his limbs, now shrouded in a superfluity of garments, somewhat resembling a slender thread of water in a shallow summer stream nearly wasted away and surrounded by an unproportionate extent of channel.

The fourth month after the marriage arrived, Neal, one day near its close, began to dress himself in his best apparel. Even then, when buttoning his waistcoat, he shook his head after the manner of Mr. O'Connor, and made observations upon the great extent to which it over−folded him.

“Well,” thought he with a sigh, “this waistcoat certainly DID fit me to a T; but it's wonderful to think how—cloth stretches!”

“Neal,” said the wife, on perceiving him dressed, “where are you bound for?”

“Faith, FOR LIFE” replied Neal, with a mitigated swagger; “and I'd as soon, if it had been the will of Provid—”

He paused.

“Where are you going?” asked the wife a second time.

“Why,” he answered, “only to dance at Jemmy Connolly's; I 'll be back early.”

“Don't go,” said the wife.

“I'll go,” said Neal, “if the whole counthry was to prevint me. Thunder an' lightnin', woman, who am I?” he exclaimed, in a loud, but rather infirm voice. “Am n't I Neal Malone, that never met a MAN who'd fight him? Neal Malone, that was never beat by MAN! Why, tare an' ouns, woman! Whoo! I'll get enraged some time, an' play the divil! Who's afeard, I say?”

“DON'T GO,” added the wife a third time, giving Neal a significant look in the face.

In about another half−hour Neal sat down quietly to his business instead of going to the dance!

Neal now turned himself, like many a sage in similar circumstances, to philosophy; that is to say, he began to shake his head upon principle, after the manner of the schoolmaster. He would, indeed, have preferred the bottle upon principle; but there was no getting at the bottle except through the wife, and it so happened that by the time it reached him there was little consolation left in it. Neal bore all in silence; for silence, his friend had often told him, was a proof of wisdom.

Soon after this, Neal one evening met Mr. O'Connor by chance upon a plank which crossed a river. This plank was only a foot in breadth, so that no two individuals could pass each other upon it. We cannot find words in which to express the dismay of both on finding that they absolutely glided past each other without collision.

Both paused and surveyed each other solemnly; but the astonishment was all on the side of Mr. O'Connor.

“Neal,” said the schoolmaster, “by all the household gods, I conjure you to speak, that I may be assured you live!”

The ghost of a blush crossed the churchyard visage of the tailor.

“Oh!” he exclaimed, “why the divil did you tempt me to marry a wife?”

“Neal,” said his friend, “answer me in the most solemn manner possible; throw into your countenance all the gravity you can assume; speak as if you were under the hands of the hangman, with the rope about your neck, for the question is indeed a trying one which I am about to put. Are you still 'blue−moulded for want of a beating'?”

The tailor collected himself to make a reply; he put one leg out—the very leg which he used to show in triumph to his friend, but, alas, how dwindled! He opened his waistcoat and lapped it round him until he looked like a weasel on its hind legs. He then raised himself up on his tiptoes, and, in an awful whisper, replied, “No!!! the divil a bit I'm blue−mowlded for want of a batin'!”

The schoolmaster shook his head in his own miserable manner; but, alas! he soon perceived that the tailor was as great an adept at shaking the head as himself. Nay, he saw that there was a calamitous refinement, a delicacy of shake in the tailor's vibrations, which gave to his own nod a very commonplace character.

The next day the tailor took in his clothes; and from time to time continued to adjust them to the dimensions of his shrinking person. The schoolmaster and he, whenever they could steal a moment, met and sympathised together. Mr. O'Connor, however, bore up somewhat better than Neal. The latter was subdued in heart and in spirit, thoroughly, completely, and intensely vanquished. His features became sharpened by misery, for a termagant wife is the whetstone on which all the calamities of a henpecked husband are painted by the devil. He no longer strutted as he was wont to do, he no longer carried a cudgel as if he wished to wage a universal battle with mankind. He was now a married man. Sneakingly, and with a cowardly crawl, did he creep along, as if every step brought him nearer to the gallows. The schoolmaster's march of misery was far slower than Neal's, the latter distanced him. Before three years passed he had shrunk up so much that he could not walk abroad of a windy day without carrying weights in his pockets to keep him firm on the earth which he once trod with the step of a giant. He again sought the schoolmaster, with whom, indeed, he associated as much as possible. Here he felt certain of receiving sympathy; nor was he disappointed. That worthy but miserable man and Neal often retired beyond the hearing of their respective wives, and supported each other by every argument in their power. Often have they been heard in the dusk of evening singing behind a remote hedge that melancholy ditty, “Let us BOTH be unhappy together,” which rose upon the twilight breeze with a cautious quaver of sorrow truly heartrending and lugubrious.

“Neal,” said Mr. O'Connor on one of those occasions, “here is a book which I recommend to your perusal; it is called 'The Afflicted Man's Companion'; try if you cannot glean some consolation out of it.”

“Faith,” said Neal, “I'm forever oblaged to you, but I don't want it. I've had 'The Afflicted Man's Companion' too long, and not an atom o' consolation I can get out of it. I have ONE o' them, I tell you; but, be my sowl, I'll not undertake A PAIR o' them. The very name's enough for me.” They then separated.

The tailor's vis vitae must have been powerful or he would have died. In two years more his friends could not distinguish him from his own shadow, a circumstance which was of great inconvenience to him. Several grasped at the hand of the shadow instead of his; and one man was near paying it five and sixpence for making a pair of small−clothes. Neal, it is true, undeceived him with some trouble, but candidly admitted that he was not able to carry home the money. It was difficult, indeed, for the poor tailor to bear what he felt; it is true he bore it as long as he could; but at length he became suicidal, and often had thoughts of “making his own quietus with his bare bodkin.” After many deliberations and afflictions, he ultimately made the attempt; but, alas! he found that the

blood of the Malones refused to flow upon so ignominious an occasion. So HE solved the phenomenon; although the truth was that his blood was not “i' the vein” for it; none was to be had. What then was to be done? He resolved to get rid of life by some process, and the next that occurred to him was hanging. In a solemn spirit he prepared a selvage, and suspended himself from the rafter of his workshop. But here another disappointment awaited him, he would not hang. Such was his want of gravity that his own weight proved insufficient to occasion his death by mere suspension. His third attempt was at drowning; but he was too light to sink; all the elements, all his own energies, joined themselves, he thought, in a wicked conspiracy to save his life. Having thus tried every avenue to destruction, and failed in all, he felt like a man doomed to live forever. Henceforward he shrank and shrivelled by slow degrees, until in the course of time he became so attenuated that the grossness of human vision could no longer reach him.

This, however, could not last always. Though still alive, he was to all intents and purposes imperceptible. He could only now be heard; he was reduced to a mere essence; the very echo of human existence, vox etpraeterea nihil. It is true the schoolmaster asserted that he occasionally caught passing glimpses of him; but that was because he had been himself nearly spiritualised by affliction, and his visual ray purged in the furnace of domestic tribulation. By−and−by Neal's voice lessened, got fainter and more indistinct, until at length nothing but a doubtful murmur could be heard, which ultimately could scarcely be distinguished from a ringing in the ears.

Such was the awful and mysterious fate of the tailor, who, as a hero, could not, of course, die; he merely dissolved like an icicle, wasted into immateriality, and finally melted away beyond the perception of mortal sense. Mr. O'Connor is still living, and once more in the fulness of perfect health and strength. His wife, however, we may as well hint, has been dead more than two years.

THE BANSHEE

(ANONYMOUS)

Of all the superstitions prevalent amongst the natives of Ireland at any period, past or present, there is none so grand or fanciful, none which has been so universally assented to or so cordially cherished, as the belief in the existence of the banshee. There are very few, however remotely acquainted with Irish life or Irish history, but must have heard or read of the Irish banshee; still, as there are different stories and different opinions afloat respecting this strange being, I think a little explanation concerning her appearance, functions, and habits will not be unacceptable to my readers.

The banshee, then, is said to be an immaterial and immortal being, attached, time out of mind, to various respectable and ancient families in Ireland, and is said always to appear to announce, by cries and lamentations, the death of any member of that family to which she belongs. She always comes at night, a short time previous to the death of the fated one, and takes her stand outside, convenient to the house, and there utters the most plaintive cries and lamentations, generally in some unknown language, and in a tone of voice resembling a human female. She continues her visits night after night, unless vexed or annoyed, until the mourned object dies, and sometimes she is said to continue about the house for several nights after. Sometimes she is said to appear in the shape of a most beautiful young damsel, and dressed in the most elegant and fantastic garments; but her general appearance is in the likeness of a very old woman, of small stature and bending and decrepit form, enveloped in a winding−sheet or grave−dress, and her long, white, hoary hair waving over her shoulders and descending to her feet. At other times she is dressed in the costume of the middle ages—the different articles of her clothing being of the richest material and of a sable hue. She is very shy and easily irritated, and, when once annoyed or vexed, she flies away, and never returns during the same generation. When the death of the person whom she mourns is contingent, or to occur by unforeseen accident, she is particularly agitated and troubled in her appearance, and unusually loud and mournful in her lamentations. Some would fain have it that this strange being is actuated by a feeling quite inimical to the interests of the family which she haunts, and that she comes with joy and triumph to announce their misfortunes. This opinion, however, is rejected by most people, who imagine her their most devoted friend, and that she was, at some remote period, a member of the family, and once existed on the earth in life and loveliness. It is not every Irish family can claim the honour of an attendant banshee; they must be respectably descended, and of ancient line, to have any just pretensions to a warning spirit. However, she does not appear to be influenced by the difference of creed or clime, provided there be no other impediment, as several Protestant families of Norman and Anglo−Saxon origin boast of their own banshee; and to this hour several noble and distinguished families in the country feel proud of the surveillance of that mysterious being. Neither is she influenced by the circumstances of rank or fortune, as she is oftener found frequenting the cabin of the peasant than the baronial mansion of the lord of thousands. Even the humble family to which the writer of this tale belongs has long claimed the honourable appendage of a banshee; and it may, perhaps, excite an additional interest in my readers when I inform them that my present story is associated with her last visit to that family.

Some years ago there dwelt in the vicinity of Mountrath, in the Queen's County, a farmer, whose name for obvious reasons we shall not at present disclose. He never was married, and his only domestics were a servant−boy and an old woman, a housekeeper, who had long been a follower or dependent of the family. He was born and educated in the Roman Catholic Church, but on arriving at manhood, for reasons best known to himself, he abjured the tenets of that creed and conformed to the doctrines of Protestantism. However, in after years he seemed to waver, and refused going to church, and by his manner of living seemed to favour the dogmas of infidelity or atheism. He was rather dark and reserved in his manner, and oftentimes sullen and gloomy in his temper; and this, joined with his well−known disregard of religion, served to render him somewhat unpopular amongst his neighbours and acquaintances. However, he was in general respected, and was never insulted or annoyed. He was considered as an honest, inoffensive man, and as he was well supplied with firearms and ammunition,—in the use of which he was well practised, having, in his early days, served several years in a

yeomanry corps,—few liked to disturb him, even had they been so disposed. He was well educated, and decidedly hostile to every species of superstition, and was constantly jeering his old housekeeper, who was extremely superstitious, and pretended to be entirely conversant with every matter connected with witchcraft and the fairy world. He seldom darkened a neighbour's door, and scarcely ever asked any one to enter his, but generally spent his leisure hours in reading, of which he was extremely fond, or in furbishing his firearms, to which he was still more attached, or in listening to and laughing at the wild and blood−curdling stories of old Moya, with which her memory abounded. Thus he spent his time until the period at which our tale commences, when he was about fifty years of age, and old Moya, the housekeeper, had become extremely feeble, stooped, and of very ugly and forbidding exterior. One morning in the month of November, A.D. 1818, this man arose before daylight, and on coming out of the apartment where he slept he was surprised at finding old Moya in the kitchen, sitting over the raked−up fire, and smoking her tobacco−pipe in a very serious and meditative mood.

“Arrah, Moya,” said he, “what brings you out of your bed so early?”

“Och musha, I dunna,” replied the old woman; “I was so uneasy all night that I could not sleep a wink, and I got up to smoke a blast, thinkin' that it might drive away the weight that's on my heart.”

“And what ails you, Moya? Are you sick, or what came over you?”

“No, the Lord be praised! I am not sick, but my heart is sore, and there's a load on my spirits that would kill a hundred.”

“Maybe you were dreaming, or something that way,” said the man, in a bantering tone, and suspecting, from the old woman's grave manner, that she was labouring under some mental delusion.

“Dreaming!” reechoed Moya, with a bitter sneer; “ay, dreaming. Och, I wish to God I was ONLY DREAMING; but I am very much afraid it is worse than that, and that there is trouble and misfortune hanging over uz.”

“And what makes you think so, Moya?” asked he, with a half−suppressed smile.

Moya, aware of his well−known hostility to every species of superstition, remained silent, biting her lips and shaking her gray head prophetically.

“Why don't you answer me, Moya?” again asked the man.

“Och,” said Moya, “I am heart−scalded to have it to tell you, and I know you will laugh at me; but, say what you will, there is something bad over uz, for the banshee was about the house all night, and she has me almost frightened out of my wits with her shouting and bawling.”

The man was aware of the banshee's having been long supposed to haunt his family, but often scouted that supposition; yet, as it was some years since he had last heard of her visiting the place, he was not prepared for the freezing announcement of old Moya. He turned as pale as a corpse, and trembled excessively; at last, recollecting himself, he said, with a forced smile:

“And how do you know it was the banshee, Moya?”

“How do I know?” reiterated Moya, tauntingly. “Didn't I see and hear her several times during the night? and more than that, didn't I hear the dead−coach rattling round the house, and through the yard, every night at midnight this week back, as if it would tear the house out of the foundation?”

The man smiled faintly; he was frightened, yet was ashamed to appear so. He again said:

“And did you ever see the banshee before, Moya?”

“Yes,” replied Moya, “often. Didn't I see her when your mother died? Didn't I see her when your brother was drowned? and sure, there wasn't one of the family that went these sixty years that I did not both see and hear her.”

“And where did you see her, and what way did she look to−night?”

“I saw her at the little window over my bed; a kind of reddish light shone round the house; I looked up, and there I saw her old, pale face and glassy eyes looking in, and she rocking herself to and fro, and clapping her little, withered hands, and crying as if her very heart would break.”

“Well, Moya, it's all imagination; go, now, and prepare my breakfast, as I want to go to Maryborough to−day, and I must be home early.”

Moya trembled; she looked at him imploringly and said: “For Heaven's sake, John, don't go to−day; stay till some other day, and God bless you; for if you go to−day I would give my oath there will something cross you that's bad.”

“Nonsense, woman!” said he; “make haste and get me my breakfast.”

Moya, with tears in her eyes, set about getting the breakfast ready; and whilst she was so employed John was engaged in making preparations for his journey.

Having now completed his other arrangements, he sat down to breakfast, and, having concluded it, he arose to depart.

Moya ran to the door, crying loudly; she flung herself on her knees, and said: “John, John, be advised. Don't go to−day; take my advice; I know more of the world than you do, and I see plainly that if you go you will never enter this door again with your life.”

Ashamed to be influenced by the drivellings of an old cullough, he pushed her away with his hand, and, going out to the stable, mounted his horse and departed. Moya followed him with her eyes whilst in sight; and when she could no longer see him, she sat down at the fire and wept bitterly.

It was a bitter cold day, and the farmer, having finished his business in town, feeling himself chilly, went into a public−house to have a tumbler of punch and feed his horse; there he met an old friend, who would not part with him until he would have another glass with him and a little conversation, as it was many years since they had met before. One glass brought another, and it was almost duskish ere John thought of returning, and, having nearly ten miles to travel, it would be dark night before he could get home. Still his friend would not permit him to go, but called for more liquor, and it was far advanced in the night before they parted. John, however, had a good horse, and, having had him well fed, he did not spare whip or spur, but dashed along at a rapid pace through the gloom and silence of the winter's night, and had already distanced the town upward of five miles, when, on arriving at a very desolate part of the road, a gunshot, fired from behind the bushes, put an end to his mortal existence. Two strange men, who had been at the same public−house in Maryborough drinking, observing that he had money and learning the road that he was to travel, conspired to rob and murder him, and waylaid him in this lonely spot for that horrid purpose.

Poor Moya did not go to bed that night, but sat at the fire, every moment impatiently expecting his return. Often did she listen at the door to try if she could hear the tramp of the horse's footsteps approaching. But in vain; no sound met her ear except the sad wail of the night wind, moaning fitfully through the tall bushes which surrounded the ancient dwelling, or the sullen roar of a little dark river, which wound its way through the lowlands at a small distance from where she stood. Tired with watching, at length she fell asleep on the hearth−stone; but that sleep was disturbed and broken, and frightful and appalling dreams incessantly haunted her imagination.

At length the darksome morning appeared struggling through the wintry clouds, and Moya again opened the door to look out. But what was her dismay when she found the horse standing at the stable door without his rider, and the saddle all besmeared with clotted blood. She raised the death−cry; the neighbours thronged round, and it was at once declared that the hapless man was robbed and murdered. A party on horseback immediately set forward to seek him, and on arriving at the fatal spot he was found stretched on his back in the ditch, his head perforated with shot and slugs, and his body literally immersed in a pool of blood. On examining him it was found that his money was gone, and a valuable gold watch and appendages abstracted from his pocket. His remains were conveyed home, and, after having been waked the customary time, were committed to the grave of his ancestors in the little green churchyard of the village.

Having no legitimate children, the nearest heir to his property was a brother, a cabinet−maker, who resided in London. A letter was accordingly despatched to the brother announcing the sad catastrophe, and calling on him to come and take possession of the property; and two men were appointed to guard the place until he should arrive.

The two men delegated to act as guardians, or, as they are technically termed, “keepers,” were old friends and comrades of the deceased, and had served with him in the same yeomanry corps. Jack O'Malley was a Roman Catholic—a square, stout−built, and handsome fellow, with a pleasant word for every one, and full of that gaiety, vivacity, and nonchalance for which the Roman Catholic peasantry of Ireland are so particularly distinguished. He was now about forty−five years of age, sternly attached to the dogmas of his religion, and always remarkable for his revolutionary and anti−British principles. He was brave as a lion, and never quailed before a man; but, though caring so little for a LIVING man, he was extremely afraid of a DEAD one, and would go ten miles out of his road at night to avoid passing a “rath,” or “haunted bush.” Harry Taylor, on the other hand, was a staunch Protestant; a tall, genteel−looking man, of proud and imperious aspect, and full of reserve and hauteur—the natural consequence of a consciousness of political and religious ascendency and superiority of intelligence and

education, which so conspicuously marked the demeanour of the Protestant peasantry of those days. Harry, too, loved his glass as well as Jack, but was of a more peaceful disposition, and as he was well educated and intelligent, he was utterly opposed to superstition, and laughed to scorn the mere idea of ghosts, goblins, and fairies. Thus Jack and Harry were diametrically opposed to each other in every point except their love of the cruiskeen, yet they never failed to seize every opportunity of being together; and, although they often blackened each other's eyes in their political and religious disputes, yet their quarrels were always amicably settled, and they never found themselves happy but in each other's society.

It was now the sixth or seventh night that Jack and Harry, as usual, kept their lonely watch in the kitchen of the murdered man. A large turf fire blazed brightly on the hearth, and on a bed of straw in the ample chimney−corner was stretched old Moya in a profound sleep. On the hearthstone, between the two friends, stood a small oak table, on which was placed a large decanter of whisky, a jug of boiled water, and a bowl of sugar; and, as if to add an idea of security to that of comfort, on one end of the table were placed in saltier a formidable−looking blunderbuss and a brace of large brass pistols. Jack and his comrade perpetually renewed their acquaintance with the whisky−bottle, and laughed and chatted and recounted the adventures of their young days with as much hilarity as if the house which now witnessed their mirth never echoed to the cry of death or blood. In the course of conversation Jack mentioned the incident of the strange appearance of the banshee, and expressed a hope that she would not come that night to disturb their carouse.

“Banshee the devil!” shouted Harry; “how superstitious you papists are! I would like to see the phiz of any man, dead or alive, who dare make his appearance here to−night.” And, seizing the blunderbuss, and looking wickedly at Jack, he vociferated, “By Hercules, I would drive the contents of this through their sowls who dare annoy us.”

“Better for you to shoot your mother than fire at the banshee, anyhow,” remarked Jack.

“Psha!” said Harry, looking contemptuously at his companion. “I would think no more of riddling the old jade's hide than I would of throwing off this tumbler;” and, to suit the action to the word, he drained off another bumper of whisky−punch.

“Jack,” says Harry, “now that we are in such prime humour, will you give us a song?”

“With all the veins of my heart,” says Jack. “What will it be?”

“Anything you please; your will must be my pleasure,” answered Harry.

Jack, after coughing and clearing his pipes, chanted forth, in a bold and musical voice, a rude rigmarole called “The Royal Blackbird,” which, although of no intrinsic merit, yet, as it expressed sentiments hostile to British connection and British government and favourable to the house of Stewart, was very popular amongst the Catholic peasantry of Ireland, whilst, on the contrary, it was looked upon by the Protestants as highly offensive and disloyal. Harry, however, wished his companion too well to oppose the song, and he quietly awaited its conclusion.

“Bravo, Jack,” said Harry, as soon as the song was ended; “that you may never lose your wind.”

“In the king's name now I board you for another song,” says Jack.

Harry, without hesitation, recognised his friend's right to demand a return, and he instantly trolled forth, in a deep, sweet, and sonorous voice, the following:

SONG.

“Ho, boys, I have a song divine! Come, let us now in concert join, And toast the bonny banks of Boyne—The Boyne of 'Glorious Memory.'

“On Boyne's famed banks our fathers bled; Boyne's surges with their blood ran red; And from the Boyne our foemen fled—Intolerance, chains, and slavery.

“Dark superstition's blood−stained sons Pressed on, but 'crack' went William's guns, And soon the gloomy monster runs—Fell, hydra−headed bigotry.

“Then fill your glasses high and fair, Let shouts of triumph rend the air, Whilst Georgy fills the regal chair We'll never bow to Popery.”

Jack, whose countenance had, from the commencement of the song, indicated his aversion to the sentiments it expressed, now lost all patience at hearing his darling “Popery” impugned, and, seizing one of the pistols which lay on the table and whirling it over his comrade's head, swore vehemently that he would “fracture his skull if he did not instantly drop that blackguard Orange lampoon.”

"Aisy, avhic," said Harry, quietly pushing away the upraised arm; "I did not oppose your bit of treason awhile ago, and besides, the latter end of my song is more calculated to please you than to irritate your feelings."

Jack seemed pacified, and Harry continued his strain.

"And fill a bumper to the brim—
A flowing one—and drink to him
Who, let the world go sink or swim,
Would arm for Britain's liberty.

"No matter what may be his hue,
Or black, or white, or green, or blue,
Or Papist, Paynim, or Hindoo,
We'll drink to him right cordially."

Jack was so pleased with the friendly turn which the latter part of Harry's song took that he joyfully stretched out his hand, and even joined in chorus to the concluding stanza.

The fire had now decayed on the hearth, the whisky−bottle was almost emptied, and the two sentinels, getting drowsy, put out the candle and laid down their heads to slumber. The song and the laugh and the jest were now hushed, and no sound was to be heard but the incessant "click, click," of the clock in the inner room and the deep, heavy breathing of old Moya in the chimney−corner.

They had slept they knew not how long when the old hag awakened with a wild shriek. She jumped out of bed, and crouched between the men; they started up, and asked her what had happened.

"Oh!" she exclaimed; "the banshee, the banshee! Lord have mercy on us! she is come again, and I never heard her so wild and outrageous before."

Jack O'Malley readily believed old Moya's tale; so did Harry, but he thought it might be some one who was committing some depredation on the premises. They both listened attentively, but could hear nothing; they opened the kitchen door, but all was still; they looked abroad; it was a fine, calm night, and myriads of twinkling stars were burning in the deep−blue heavens. They proceeded around the yard and hay−yard; but all was calm and lonely, and no sound saluted their ears but the shrill barking of some neighbouring cur, or the sluggish murmuring of the little tortuous river in the distance. Satisfied that "all was right," they again went in, replenished the expiring fire, and sat down to finish whatever still remained in the whisky−bottle.

They had not sat many minutes when a wild, unearthly cry was heard without.

"The banshee again," said Moya, faintly. Jack O'Malley's soul sank within him; Harry started up and seized the blunderbuss; Jack caught his arm. "No, no, Harry, you shall not; sit down; there's no fear—nothing will happen us."

Harry sat down, but still gripped the blunderbuss, and Jack lit his tobacco−pipe, whilst the old woman was on her knees, striking her breast, and repeating her prayers with great vehemence.

The sad cry was again heard, louder and fiercer than before. It now seemed to proceed from the window, and again it appeared as if issuing from the door. At times it would seem as if coming from afar, whilst again it would appear as if coming down the chimney or springing from the ground beneath their feet. Sometimes the cry resembled the low, plaintive wail of a female in distress, and in a moment it was raised to a prolonged yell, loud and furious, and as if coming from a thousand throats; now the sound resembled a low, melancholy chant, and then was quickly changed to a loud, broken, demoniac laugh. It continued thus, with little intermission, for about a quarter of an hour, when it died away, and was succeeded by a heavy, creaking sound, as if of some large waggon, amidst which the loud tramp of horses' footsteps might be distinguished, accompanied with a strong, rushing wind. This strange noise proceeded round and round the house two or three times, then went down the lane which led to the road, and was heard no more. Jack O'Malley stood aghast, and Harry Taylor, with all his philosophy and scepticism, was astonished and frightened.

"A dreadful night this, Moya," said Jack.

"Yes," said she, "that is the dead−coach; I often heard it before, and have sometimes seen it."

"Seen, did you say?" said Harry; "pray describe it."

"Why," replied the old crone, "it's like any other coach, but twice as big, and hung over with black cloth, and

a black coffin on the top of it, and drawn by headless black horses."

"Heaven protect us!" ejaculated Jack.

"It is very strange," remarked Harry.

"But," continued Moya, "it always comes before the death of a person, and I wonder what brought it now, unless it came with the banshee."

"Maybe it's coming for you," said Harry, with an arch yet subdued smile.

"No, no," she said; "I am none of that family at all at all."

A solemn silence now ensued for a few minutes, and they thought all was vanished, when again the dreadful cry struck heavily on their ears.

"Open the door, Jack," said Harry, "and put out Hector."

Hector was a large and very ferocious mastiff belonging to Jack O'Malley, and always accompanied him wherever he went.

Jack opened the door and attempted to put out the dog, but the poor animal refused to go, and, as his master attempted to force him, howled in a loud and mournful tone.

"You must go," said Harry, and he caught him in his arms and flung him over the half−door. The poor dog was scarcely on the ground when he was whirled aloft into the air by some invisible power, and he fell again to earth lifeless, and the pavement was besmeared with his entrails and blood.

Harry now lost all patience, and again seizing his blunderbuss, he exclaimed: "Come, Jack, my boy, take your pistols and follow me; I have but one life to lose, and I will venture it to have a crack at this infernal demon."

"I will follow you to death's doors," said Jack; "but I would not fire at the banshee for a million of worlds."

Moya seized Harry by the skirts. "Don't go out," she cried; "let her alone while she lets you alone, for an hour's luck never shone on any one that ever molested the banshee."

"Psha, woman!" said Harry, and he pushed away poor Moya contemptuously.

The two men now sallied forth; the wild cry still continued, and it seemed to issue from amongst some stacks in the hay−yard behind the house. They went round and paused; again they heard the cry, and Harry elevated his blunderbuss.

"Don't fire," said Jack.

Harry replied not; he looked scornfully at Jack, then put his finger on the trigger, and—bang—away it exploded with a thundering sound. An extraordinary scream was now heard, ten times louder and more terrific than they heard before. Their hair stood erect on their heads, and huge, round drops of sweat ran down their faces in quick succession. A glare of reddish−blue fight shone around the stacks; the rumbling of the dead−coach was again heard coming; it drove up to the house, drawn by six headless sable horses, and the figure of a withered old hag, encircled with blue flame, was seen running nimbly across the hay−yard. She entered the ominous carriage, and it drove away with a horrible sound. It swept through the tall bushes which surrounded the house; and as it disappeared the old hag cast a thrilling scowl at the two men, and waved her fleshless arms at them vengefully. It was soon lost to sight; but the unearthly creaking of the wheels, the tramping of the horses, and the appalling cries of the banshee continued to assail their ears for a considerable time after all had vanished.

The brave fellows now returned to the house; they again made fast the door, and reloaded their arms. Nothing, however, came to disturb them that night, nor from that time forward; and the arrival of the dead man's brother from London, in a few days after, relieved them from their irksome task.

Old Moya did not live long after; she declined from that remarkable night, and her remains were decently interred in the churchyard adjoining the last earthly tenement of the loved family to which she had been so long and so faithfully attached.

The insulted banshee has never since returned; and although several members of that family have since closed their mortal career, still the warning cry was never given; and it is supposed that the injured spirit will never visit her ancient haunts until every one of the existing generation shall have "slept with their fathers."

Jack O'Malley and his friend Harry lived some years after. Their friendship still continued undiminished; like "Tam O'Shanter" and "Souter Johnny," they still continued to love each other like "a very brither"; and like that jovial pair, also, our two comrades were often "fou for weeks thegither," and often over their cruiskeen would they laugh at their strange adventure with the banshee. It is now, however, all over with them too; their race is run, and they are now "tenants of the tomb."